

The fiscal cliff avoided for now

While it is good that the so-called "fiscal cliff" was avoided, the manner in which it happened just goes to show how much of a failure the current Washington culture has become.

The deal raises taxes on some, ends tax holidays for others and will shrink paychecks for most of us. The fact that there is a deal that somehow scraped up enough votes to pass is good. The bad part is the deal was only reached after we had technically fallen off the cliff. The deadline had passed and nothing had been done. It seems Congress is no longer content to grandstand until the very last minute then reach a deal, they now have to go over the last minute.

In case you were curious, Kansas Rep. Tim Huelskamp voted against the deal while Sens. Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts voted in favor.

The other problem with the deal is that it doesn't fix the problem. As one CNN columnist put it, it pretty much kicks the can down the road. We expect three more "showdowns" in our future, on spending cuts, debt ceiling and a continuing budget resolution.

Spending cuts will be a problem because no one will follow the sequestration agreement, the debt ceiling is a problem because no one will let the limit be a real limit, and the budget will be a problem because no one will want to agree on anything.

That's not even the worst part. The worst part is the Speaker's refusal to allow a vote on disaster relief for states affected by Hurricane Sandy. Boehner faced a lot of criticism for the decision, especially from a very blunt New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, and, seeing which way the wind was blowing, the Speaker reversed course, opening the bill back up Thursday. Likely not because he cares about disaster relief, but more because he's in fear for his political career.

Both parties are guilty of obstructionism and putting politics before practicality and patriotism in the run up to this deal and in nearly everything else.

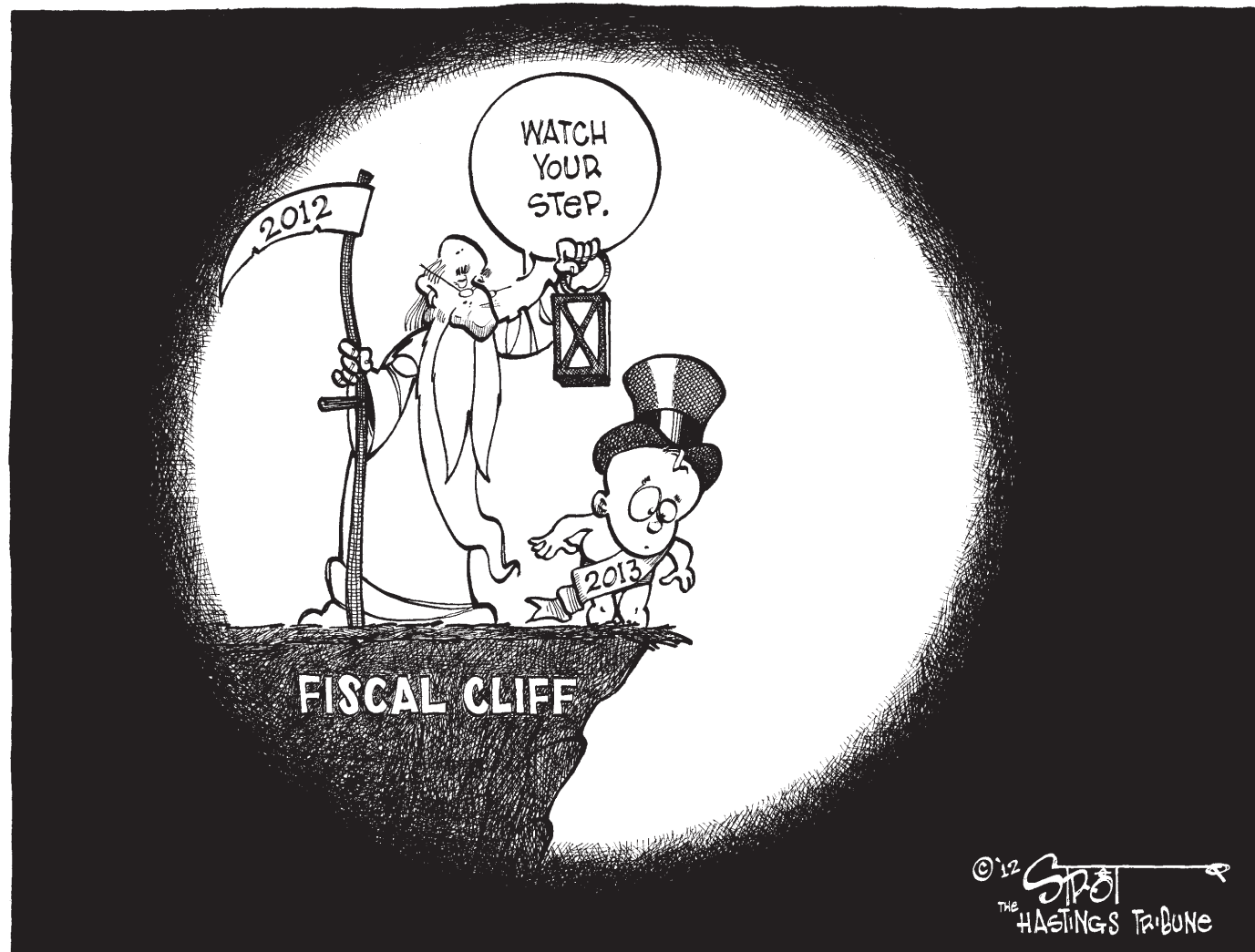
The good news is that some of the chief architects of this failure are reaping the consequences. At press time Thursday, both parties were in a crisis as the House leadership elections for the new 113th Congress heated up. Boehner was still expected to keep his speakership despite conservatives being in full revolt.

In the next election, we must send a message loud and clear that we do not want yes men and we do not want people who will stick to their guns while the country burns down around them. We want people who will look at the facts, look at the options, sit down with each other at a table and by God get something done. Wouldn't you like to just once read a story about the goings on in Congress without the word "showdown"?



Simple tricks and nonsense

Kevin Bottrell



Looking at the issue of mental health

Regardless of where you stand on guns, most would agree mental health is behind the trigger on mass shootings. Shooting an individual in anger is reprehensible, shooting twenty small children is unimaginable. Only a very sick individual can carry out that kind of action.

A friend on Facebook reposted a letter, written as if it was penned by shooter Adam Lanza's mother. In it, "she" described how hard it is to find help for her son. How she lived in fear of his violent outbursts. News organizations picked up this piece and interviewed parents of mentally ill children. They spoke of their child's need for help, not arrest. Jail is not the answer for a mentally ill individual, child or adult. If they are drunk, high on drugs, perhaps for a short stay, but jail is not equal to treatment.

In April of 1988, a House Panel report stated, "Federal support for mental health services had suffered crippling cuts in staff and dollars..." The panel reiterated the importance of not letting

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard



budget concerns dictate staffing needs and cited the importance of the role of federal monies in treatment of the mentally ill.

Between 2009 to 2011, states have cut treatment options substantially. The sixth state from the top for mental health cuts? You guessed it, Kansas. During those years, our state government decreased mental health spending by 16.4 percent.

This is not a political issue, it is a health issue. In the March, 2011 report, the National Alliance on Mental Illness reported, "One in 17 people in America lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression, or bipolar disorder. About one in 10 children live with a serious mental

disorder." According to the report, violence by these individuals is minor. All too frequently, they are the victims of violence rather than the one to commit the crime. A growing concern with the lack of treatment options is the use of alcohol and/or drugs to "self-medicate". This leads to substance abuse and its ensuing problems.

Mental health is not an isolated issue. Its effects on the individual, on families and the community echo around the country. Banning assault rifles may be a start. But finding money to aid in the treatment of those debilitated by mental health is imperative. This illness isn't confined to any one group or family, but rather is a "there but for the grace of God goes any one of us" disease.

Kathleen Sebelius once said, "The essence of good government is trust." Those who need the most have often been mistreated by our government. Now, I trust, we will address the issue and the needs of mental health. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net



Thumbs up to David Kindall and Derek Husmoen for pulling out an older gentleman's pickup in the ditch out by the FSA/Whispering Pines office. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the road crews - City/County/State for getting our roads cleaned up after snows; appreciation even when you are to have day(s) off! Emailed in.

Thumbs up to everyone who decorated your house with lights this Christmas Season- making your home look welcoming; what a treat to drive around and say oooh and ahhh- kinda like fourth of July fireworks. Emailed in.



Dear Editor,
My name is Josef Mayer, I was an AFS student in 1976/77 living with the Darrel Wyatt family and I would like to say hello to all the people in Norton who remember me. I wish all of you a happy new year and I would love to hear what is going on in Norton. My email address is: jo.mayer@bkf.at
Sincerely
Josef Mayer

Happy New Year.
Here's hoping everyone got their heart's desire for Christmas. At our house it was more about what we didn't want: a stomach virus, a cold or the flu.

There has been plenty of it around and around and around. Along with these illnesses we get all kinds of, what I am certain is; highly inaccurate information.

I welcomed the colder temperatures because I've heard the germs don't survive extreme cold. The hubby says that's wrong. Cold weather forces people into close quarters, spreading the afflictions.

The hubby always gets a flu shot. And he always gets sick anyway. I usually tempt fate.

It seems most of those who have doctored are not diagnosed with "flu" anyway. And some of the sickest had flu shots.

Still the carnage of this season's bugs caused me to make a New Year's Resolution: I will get a flu shot at the very first opportunity!

And I'm going to write a couple

This Too
Shall Pass
Nancy
Hagman



of columns ahead of time so when I get all mixed up during the holidays and suddenly realize it is Thursday afternoon not Wednesday it won't be a problem. Thank heavens there was only one paper last week so I was off the hook!

And I'm going to eat better and exercise more! (Oh never mind, there is no sense in getting too carried away.)

It was actually rather easy to avoid overeating this year. Everyone I talked to had to relay the details of their stomach virus. It was a great appetite suppressant!

It seems I'm just bad at resolutions anyway! We got a car for Christmas. I resolved that we would get something not red with the potential for third row seating.

But sometimes you just walk by something RED in the car dealer's lot and think, "WOW!"

The Hubby has a weakness for red, I kept walking. I didn't say a word.

Back in the building, the salesman went off to see if he could find what I resolved we would buy.

The Hubby says, "Did you see that RED car? I'm going back out to look at it!"

So much for resolve! "Okay!" I said, "I'm coming along!"

Goodbye third row seats! Hello RED!

We were (and are) quite pleased with our selection. But perhaps our interpretation of "hot" looking car is not what it once was. Did one of the kids actually say, "It looks like an old people's car!"?

Maybe I have an undetected virus which has affected my hearing!

Old people's car??????

Guess we didn't need that third row seating; I'm not giving her a ride anywhere!

But I am getting a flu shot, if the flu doesn't get me first!

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