

Too much at stake to throw it to the wind

On the
Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



It's fashionable to blame Congress and the president for gridlock in Washington. People say nothing is getting done, and people say everyone is just "playing politics."

And neither is true.

A lot has happened over the last few months in particular, from permanent agreement on many tax issues to actual spending cuts to extension of the Violence Against Women Act. Still, the overall federal budget is growing, not shrinking.

If politics was just a game, the complaining might be justified. But politics is about not just winners and losers, but about who runs the country and which direction they steer it.

And the choice does make a difference.

Republicans in Washington, most of them, anyway, really do believe in smaller government, more economic freedom, lower taxes and less spending. The Democrats believe in social programs and the power of government to boost the economy.

These aren't just abstract ideas; they involve real beliefs and real decisions that have to be made, and neither side wants to let the other go its own way.

But while the sides are represented by the "tea party" on the right, whatever that is exactly, and the very liberal Democrats on the left, whoever they are exactly, the country as a whole is more in the middle, more interested in making things work than in change.

None of that is bad. The ideas which move us one way or another come from near the fringes. The co-operation that "gets things done" has to come from the center.

For a long time now, the country had been more or less on the bubble. It doesn't take much to move the government one way or the other, from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush to Barack Obama and back.

That isn't so bad, either, but true believers think maybe we are near a watershed era, a time like unto the 1930s, when one side or the other gains enough advantage to move the starting gate. Partisans on either side see the possibilities – and fear as much as welcome them.

That fear drives a lot of the defensive posturing. It's left us farther from resolving a lot of issues that we might have been a year ago, even six months ago, when the president at least said he was willing to talk about government spending. Since the election, though his party controls only one house of Congress, the Republicans say his attitude has been more like, "We won. Do things our way."

The sheer size of the budget problem works against a quick solution. The government is a complex and wondrous creature; you don't dismantle and rebuild it in a day. And while "everyone" thinks the budget should be cut, hardly anyone agrees on how.

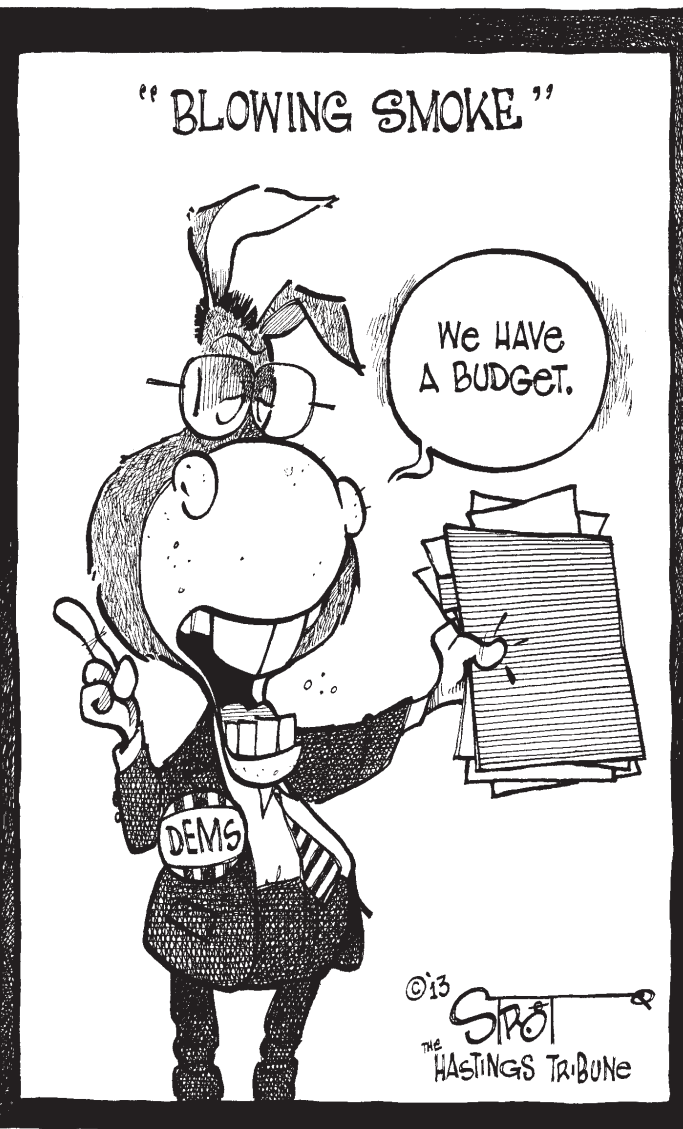
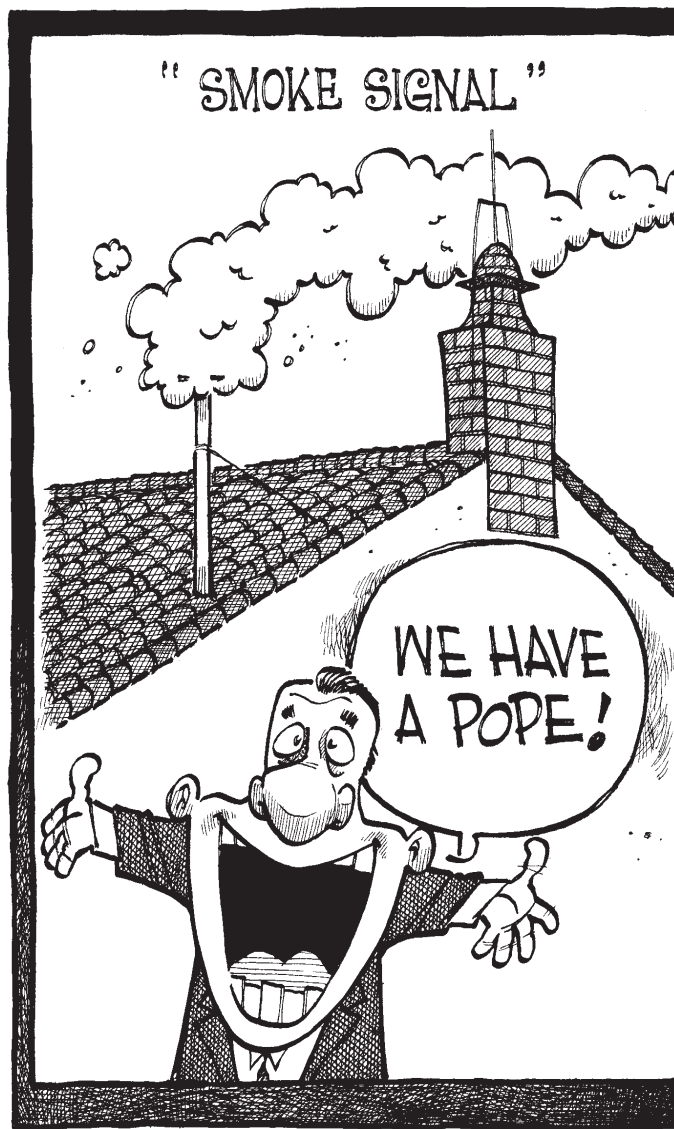
In conversations last week, Sen. Pat Roberts said there's just no way to settle everything at once. There'll be no "grand deal," no single budget "fix" that sets the country on course.

And neither side is going to give an advantage that will tip the scales to the other. Not without a fight, at least.

That may be frustrating to the rest of us, who don't see why they couldn't just sit down and hash it all out. They have made a start with each "fiscal cliff" and each last-minute compromise, but there's a long ways to go before anyone will be satisfied.

And too much at stake to throw caution to the wind.

– Steve Haynes



We are on our way to Guatemala

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



We've been on the road for six days, visiting kids and grandkids across Texas. Taylor looked like she had grown three inches since last summer. Can't believe she'll be in high school next year. Alexandria is 18 and about to graduate, with honors. She toured a local university that is offering her a very nice four-year scholarship.

Chantelle (who some remember as "The Texas Tornado") is in her first year of nursing school and has a boyfriend. Angelia is working in the nursing field. She is the mother of our first great-grandchild, Kayden, who is almost three and about to have our second "great", who has already been named Lucian.

We were able to attend her baby shower along with friends and other family. Practical us, we decided to give her something we made ourselves – money (and diapers).

And, last, but not least, is our six-year old granddaughter, Ani. We took her to the San Antonio Zoo one day. At first she didn't want to go into the reptile house, then it was nothing but

the snakes. Even had to take her picture with a giant boa constrictor. Her only disappointment was no giraffes. Their compound had a sign that said it was being renovated and apologized for the giraffes not being there.

It was Spring Break and the zoo was jam-packed with people. Jim said, "I think God made zoos so people could parade by for the animals to look at."

–ob–

As I sit here writing this at our daughter's house in San Antonio, it is the night before we leave for Guatemala. I can't tell you how many times we have packed and unpacked to make sure our luggage falls into the 50 pound weight limit; our carry-on bags don't measure more than 45 inches;

and neither one of us have more than 34 fluid ounces of liquids or gel sealed in quart-size zip lock bags.

Since we're going on a house-building mission trip, we are taking some tools. Just glad I didn't put the hammers in the carry-on. Try to explain that to a customs official.

This is our first time on an international flight and, understandably, we are a little nervous. I had a brief panic-stricken moment when I couldn't find Jim's passport in my purse. It was there, rubberbanded to my wallet, under an envelope of cash.

Our flight is at 7:30 a.m. and the airline's website said to arrive three hours before scheduled departure. That means we need to be there at 4:30 a.m., which means I have to leave the house at 4 a.m., which means I have to get up at 3 a.m. to get ready, which means, "Good Night."

The next installment of "OutBack" should be coming to you direct from San Raimundo, Guatemala. 'Til then, "Hasta la vista."

Law change provides rural opportunity

Insight
John Schlageck



For farm and ranch families across Kansas the corporate farm bill being worked in the Statehouse represents a unique opportunity to access new markets, to diversify operations and to attempt a new strategy to invigorate rural communities and offer young people a rural alternative.

While no piece of legislation is likely to address all of the issues of out-migration or depopulation, removing the real or perceived hurdles to bringing a new business venture online can encourage growth in the industry and in turn attract jobs and residents to rural communities.

The new proposed corporate law could provide diversification to economies, better markets to producers and a brighter future for families who want to continue to live and thrive in rural Kansas.

Kansas is now one of just nine states in the country that prohibit or restrict certain farms from doing business in the state. Courts have struck down the corporate farming restrictions in three of those states.

The Sunflower now lists 18 exemptions that allow corporations to engage in production agriculture in Kansas. Even with these exemptions, agribusiness, hog, dairy and poultry producers have approached Kansas about the possibility of locating here, only to learn that current corporate farming laws would hamper their

ability to operate efficiently, or at all. Many of these economic opportunities are modern, efficient, environmentally sound corporate citizens.

A crucial part of this story remains the privately held farms in Kansas. When comparing land values from 15 states, both with and without corporate farming restrictions, there was no correlation between land values and restrictions on corporate farms.

Also, the size of farms in Kansas was compared to eight states without corporate farming restrictions. Kansas ranked second largest average farm size at 702 acres. The number of smallest farms among these eight states grew 5.24 percent compared to .35 in Kansas, and the number of large farms grew 55 percent, compared to 110 percent in Kansas.

Our current law has restricted this state's ability to attract and capitalize on the potential in Kansas, and to capture the opportunity to keep families on the farm and rural communities alive and well. For many years we've simply watched as farm consolidation occurred and rural communities ceased

to exist.

For farmers and ranchers of all sizes, the proposed corporate farm bill represents a unique opportunity to access new markets, to diversify operations and to attempt a new strategy to invigorate rural communities and offer young people a rural alternative.

Farmers and ranchers look at real numbers and real value, not emotional, unsubstantiated arguments. It's also why they support existing requirements for environmental measures that ensure they leave the land better than when they began caring for it.

In today's global economy Kansas will continue to struggle if we as a state fail to embrace concepts of free and open markets. This is a concept farmers and ranchers have long supported.

A change in the law will open our state to new development by removing barriers for entering, or in some cases remaining in business in Kansas. It will allow multi-generational family operations to continue to work in Kansas instead of imposing a system in which future generations may be ineligible to own or operate the farm or ranch.

Farmers and ranchers want nothing more than to leave a legacy for the next generation of producers. They want to do everything possible to encourage them to stay on the farm without challenge from an outdated law.

CITY OF NORTON ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor: David Corns
785-877-2990
dcorns@ruraltel.net

WARD I
Jerry Jones
785-877-2170
Harriett Gill
785-877-3051

WARD II
Roberta Ryan
785-877-2182
Donna Foley
785-877-3585
rockonmom_43@hotmail.com

WARD III
Ron Briery
785-877-3807
Jerry Moritz
785-877-3104

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

E-mail: nortontelegram@nwkans.com

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

OFFICE HOURS:
8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.
8 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732

STAFF

Dana Paxton..... General Manager
Advertising Director/Managing Editor
email: dpaxton@nwkans.com
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay Sports
nortontelegram@nwkans.com
Michael Stephens..... Reporter
Society Editor/Area Sports
mstephens@nwkans.com
Vicki Henderson..... Computer Production
Marcia Shelton..... Office Manager

Nor'West Newspapers
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press Association

