



A little high water won't invoke national disaster

It started as just another Washington budget crisis: The Federal Emergency Management Agency, fondly known as FEMA, claimed that with hurricanes and floods, its disaster fund would drop below \$1 billion and it might not be able to help everyone.

Democratic senators called for billions more, then claimed Republicans were "playing politics" when they insisted on following budget rules and cutting something else. The Republicans noted that the House had already passed a FEMA appropriation with more money.

Then the agency "found" \$40 million which it said would tide it over until the new fiscal year began Oct. 1. Why it needed "billions" more when \$40 million would do, no one could say.

Now, the controversy has faded. Hurricane damage is getting repaired. The floods are receding; roads and bridges are being rebuilt.

And this would be a good time to ask just what we expect of the federal government during times of disaster. For more than a century, the government has been involved in flood control and disaster relief. That was an issue in the 1928 presidential campaign, for instance.

But in recent years, the flood of money to Emergency Management - indeed, to all Department of Homeland Security agencies - has been immense. And no one seems to have kept count of where it all went.

Every fire department in the country apparently needed a grant to buy equipment, most of which would have been paid for out of local budgets - or just put off - in previous years. It's not that new breathing apparatus, radios and turnout gear aren't a good thing, just that they're

hardly a federal responsibility.

While that money seems to have dried up some, Emergency Management continues to pump out dollars. Time was when a "disaster" meant something big: a blizzard, a hurricane, a massive tornado, statewide flooding, something truly beyond the local budget.

Not anymore. A few inches of water over gravel roads seems to qualify today. One area county sent people out to take pictures when water flowed over one of its roads last year so it could "get some of the federal money."

Years ago, the commissioners would have dealt with the issue without state or federal help, even if they had to cut somewhere else.

Today, why, if there's federal money out there, might as well get some.

We think those days are coming to an end, and rightly so.

The federal government doesn't have any money to spend, Congress is tied up trying to balance the budget and big cuts loom. It's a great time to look at all these federal programs and ask, "What must we really depend on Uncle Sam to do?"

We suggest the answer is, "To help in time of true need." States, cities and counties should handle their own bills the rest of the time and look to the feds only when they really need the help.

That should not be often. Besides, FEMA has a terrible reputation for messing up its efforts: bad trailers, big delays, poor response, unhelpful attitude. How can you depend on an agency that can't get it right?

- Steve Haynes



Taxpayer says 'enough is enough'

When are we as taxpayers of Cheyenne County going to say enough is enough?

How long ago did Les Lacy, hospital administrator, go to the county commissioners and tell them that he needed the rest of the tax mills for the hospital? We have to give the hospital those mills because they were voted in years ago. I am almost positive that it was within the last three months the Les NEEDED all this extra tax money to keep the hospital going and if he did not get it the "hospital would have to close." Weeks later we build more parking for the staff - how much money did that cost us as taxpayers and could that money not have been used for better reasons for the hospital?

Now the administrator and several board members are trying to buy a house and property right next to the clinic. I personally asked board member Jerry Toler (who looked at the house) if the hospital was trying to buy this property and he said, "yes, we are looking at it for more office space and to house

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doctors when they come to town."

Seriously as a business person I would not beg for money and then weeks later spend thousands for parking and then a month later be looking at property to buy. I guess my feelings are if they need that many offices then maybe they need to get rid of excess office help. We also have three motels in town are they not good enough for a doctor to stay in and how many times do the doctors actually stay in St. Francis? The doctors are paid to come to St. Francis - do we need to house them also?

How much more as taxpayers can we give to the hospital for foolish spending? I seriously think that we as taxpayers should have more of a say in the running of the hospital and we should also be allowed to see where our tax dollars are going - BEFORE they are spent and why they keep needing more and more money all the time. Where do

we cut them off and make them accountable?

We need the hospital and I agree with the majority of Cheyenne County that we don't want to lose our hospital and their limited services but if they keep asking and getting more money and our taxes keep getting higher and people start leaving the county because they can't pay taxes then where will we be? Not only will we not have a hospital but we won't be able to keep St. Francis alive.

It is time Cheyenne County Hospital is held accountable to the taxpayers as to where OUR tax money is going. Maybe it is time for Les Lacy and the hospital board to be more concerned about Cheyenne County residents and our tax dollars instead of trying to jump through hoops for Great Plains Health Alliance.

Pam Bolin, St. Francis

Merger would brighten economy

It is hard to escape the constant bad news about the state of our economy and the lack of good jobs. While it seems like these negative headlines are the only news we see, there is some potential good news out there, news that holds promise to get our economy moving again and deliver thousands of jobs for American workers.

With regard to Steve Haynes' editorial in the Sept. 15 issue of The Herald, it should be noted that one of those bright spots is the proposed combination of AT&T and T-Mobile USA. As part of this deal, AT&T has pledged to bring 5,000 jobs back to the United States that are currently outsourced to other countries.

This is the single largest commitment by an American company to bring jobs back to the U.S. since the economic crisis began in 2008. AT&T has also committed to no job losses for wireless call center workers at AT&T and T-Mobile that are on the payroll at the closing of the proposed combination. America can use this kind of good news on the jobs front to counter unemployment figures stubbornly stuck at near historic highs.

Furthermore, as part of the combination of the two companies, AT&T has promised to invest more than \$8 billion to integrate AT&T and T-Mobile networks and to expand its next-generation 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) wireless network. According to an Economic Policy Institute study commissioned by the Communications Workers of America, that investment will create an estimated 55,000 to 96,000 jobs. Given the job situation of today, those numbers are substantial and encouraging.

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But this is about more than just jobs.

AT&T's combination with T-Mobile means more Kansans will enjoy access to AT&T's 4G LTE network when it is built out. In fact, 92 percent of the Kansas population will be covered by this high-speed advanced mobile broadband network - that's 750,000 more Kansans, and a more than 900 percent increase in geographic area than would occur absent the transaction.

Our world is now mobile, and in everyday terms, the super fast wireless connectivity 4G LTE would deliver means businesses of all sizes will be able to conduct business on the go -- on their smart phones or tablets, from anywhere covered by the network. That kind of mobility injects flexibility into business operations and marketing that can have a real impact on a company's bottom line.

In addition to the impact for businesses, widespread access to 4G LTE technology would be transformative for health care and education. Using handheld devices,

doctors can monitor and interact remotely with patients who can remain in their homes. Physicians standing in an operating room can share data and images with peers who are states, or even countries, away. Students will no longer be tethered to the classroom and can instead access information from around the globe. They'll be able to participate in real-time instruction from their homes. The options made possible by high-speed wireless connections are endless.

The department of labor reported that there was no net job increase in the United States in August. Analysts had predicted an increase of 60,000 to 100,000 jobs during that time, but none materialized. In contrast to this gloomy news, the combination of AT&T and T-Mobile is a bright spot on the horizon poised to deliver tens of thousands of American jobs and tremendous residual economic benefits. That's welcome news for Kansas, and America.

Cindy Zapletal
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AT&T Kansas

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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Could it have been the squirrel?

Since baseball continues to be "the great American past-time" and as another World Series draws near, it deserves a moment of thought. Watching the favored Philadelphia Phillies fall to the St. Louis Cardinals in the National League Division Series, I had to wonder. Did the squirrel who ran across home plate at Busch Stadium in game 4 cause the Phils to loose?

Baseball, like life, can be a little strange. Can an animal affect the outcome of a sporting event?

In 1945, the Chicago Cubs had made it to the World Series. Hav-

ing not won the title since 1908, many thought the drought was ready to end.

A Greek immigrant tavern owner named Billy Sianis had two loves: the Cubbies and his pet goat, Murphy. When the Detroit Tigers came to Wrigley Field to play his team, Sianis bought two tickets for \$7.20. One for him, the other for his goat.

The two made it into the stadium and Murphy was even allowed to parade on the field with a banner that said, "We Got Detroit's Goat." As the game began the two sat in their seats with other Chicago fans.

But in the fourth inning some people began complaining about Murphy's smell. The story goes that the final say was made by owner P.K. Wrigley that the goat had to go.

Infuriated by the slight to himself and his pet, the Greek put a curse on the Cubs that has held till today. For over six decades the Curse of the Goat has haunted the National League team from Chicago.

So I have to ask, did the St. Louis squirrel bring down the Phillies?

GOD SAYS
Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.
Matthew 7:12

The Saint Francis Herald
(USPS 475-960)
A Century of Service to Cheyenne County

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices.

Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

Nor'West Newspapers

8:30 a.m. - noon - 1:00-5:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday
(785) 332-3162 Fax - (785) 332-3001
E-mail - sf.herald@nwkansas.com

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