



Free Press Viewpoint

Obama shouldn't use recess powers

Congress has a recess coming up, and one question that always comes up is, will the president make any recess appointments?

There are dozens of appointments waiting for confirmation by the Senate. Recess appointments give appointees time to get established in the job, and theoretically they would be people the Senate would easily confirm when it returns to work. However, it doesn't always work like that and its often used to get around partisan blocks.

Recess appointments are allowed under the Constitution and nearly every president has made some. Article II, Section 2 grants the president the power to fill any vacancies that come up during a recess. The appointees serve until the end of the next legislative session, and to stay in office, they have to be confirmed by the Senate before then.

The Congressional Research Service says it doesn't know exactly what the Founding Fathers had in mind when they wrote this clause, but later attorneys general said the clause is intended to make sure the government fills any vital vacancies needed to keep it running.

George Washington appointed John Rutledge as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court during a recess, but it didn't take. George H.W. Bush made 171 recess appointments, including a secretary of state. Ronald Reagan made 243.

Bill Clinton had several failed recess appointments. Bill Lann Lee was appointed and then voted down as assistant attorney general for civil rights. At the time, Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch called that appointment a "finger in the eye of the Senate."

George W. Bush said he hoped to circumvent "partisan delaying tactics" when he appointed John Bolton as United Nations ambassador in 2005. Democratic Sen. Harry Reid said Bush was abusing his power.

So, since recess appointments are so fraught with controversy, should President Obama make any?

It seems these days that any move he makes runs headlong into a Republican roadblock, or at least an attempted one. It was the same for President Bush before him, and it'll likely be the same for whomever is elected next.

As the old saying goes, "pick your battles." The Senate no longer has a 60-vote Democratic majority, which means that once it comes back in session, any recess appointee would face even more intense opposition, even if the candidates are well qualified.

It will probably be more beneficial to just leave things be this time. After all, in a budget crisis, does it hurt to leave a few undersecretary jobs vacant?

On top of that, it would look an attempt at circumventing the authority of the Senate in confirming nominees. It really isn't, since it's provided for in the Constitution, but that's how it would be spun.

Sometimes, there's value in strategically not exercising power, and this one of those times.

— Kevin Bottrell

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



'Tea Party' message isn't clear

Well, I've done it. After several days of procrastinating I decided to take a closer look at the new kid on the block in American politics — the "tea party."

I reluctantly started researching this right-wing populist movement Wednesday night. I was dreading this, because I was already sort of depressed about something that escapes me at the moment and I knew reading about the tea partiers would only enhance my somber mood. But I didn't want to be working on this column at 8 p.m. Thursday, so I gritted my teeth and got started.

The one major flaw that troubles me about the tea-party crowd is their militant belief in the private sector and their knee-jerk hatred of government. After a combination of failed self-regulation and deregulatory policies crafted in Washington caused our economy to collapse, I figured the overwhelming majority of Americans would no longer treat the free market like some kind of omniscient deity. But judging by this group's criticism of the federal bank bailout — which even some conservative economists say saved our country from undergoing another Great Depression — it's clear that the tea partiers' support for an unregulated free market is unwavering.

Another flaw of the tea-party movement is the contradictory nature of the group. Many of the people I have seen on television attending tea-party conventions and rallies were older folks. To see some of these people rail against socialism and government-funded health care while stridently opposing any cuts to their own



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

government-funded health care is one of the saddest ironies in today's political discourse.

No matter how people try to paint it, there is nothing patriotic about protesting government attempts to insure those without health care while complaining about possible cuts to the health care they already have.

I'm not condemning these people for not wanting to pay higher taxes or for wanting to protect their own benefits. The high cost of prescription medications would bankrupt a significant portion of our elderly population if it weren't for Medicare, and older people have legitimate fears that any cuts in the government-funded program would lead to significant decrease in their income. But if you are willing to protest policies meant to provide the uninsured with the health care you already have, please don't lecture me about the need to protect the American people from the dangers of big government. Your stance is clearly more about material self-interest than patriotism.

The third problem with the tea party movement is these people's unwillingness to acknowledge the relationship between the federal deficit and the military budget. Many critics

demonizing what they see as out-of-control government spending are the same people who blast the president when he makes even minor cuts to the military.

If government is going to balance the budget while still providing our elderly and low-income citizens with access to health care, then our military budget will have to endure substantial cuts. While it's true that cuts to the military budget might have to be coupled with cuts in Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid if government is serious about balancing the budget, if military spending is not slashed, America's return to fiscal responsibility will take the heaviest toll on our poor and elderly.

I think the health of any society should be judged on how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. To punish the poor and elderly for the government's fiscal irresponsibility would be wrong. So if it comes down to a choice between draconian cuts to Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid, abnormally high taxes or a decrease in military spending, I think cutting defense spending is the most ethical option.

If the tea-party crowd wants to be taken seriously by Washington, they will need to address these flaws and explain to the American people how they would go about fixing the budget deficit without abandoning our country's elderly and poor.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Afghanistan a losing game

Not everyone at the table discussing the surge for troops to Afghanistan agreed. It does appear, however, that this decision was more open and inclusive than similar ones made under the past administration. That is good!

My personal opinion is that this surge is a losing game. It's like getting involved in someone else's family fight. The family will cooperate long enough to kick your rear, and then resume their own fight.

When the family feud is over, if you backed the losing side, you are vulnerable to revenge. And, with a culture like we are dealing with in the Middle East, that means serious punishment.

Either get in or get out! We are like a cat playing with a mouse. While we play, another nest hatches. I have observed that you can't keep enough cats involved to rid an area of a serious infestation of rodents. You have to clean up and remove or destroy the habitat that promotes the rodents' life style.

Whoa now. I'm not calling these people rodents. I'm only using that as an illustration.

That area is inhabited by ethnic groups that have maintained their identity nearly from the beginning of recorded history. Family inheritance and religious blessing seems to be where the feud began. Property rights and religion have kept their feuds alive for all these centuries.

How then do we change the environment and culture — remove or destroy the habitat — of that area?

First of all, you have to convince people there that the ownership of the original inheritance has long ceased to be valid. Due to circumstances beyond their control, those



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

property rights have been sold, lost, regained, traded over and over.

The establishment of the present-day nation of Israel by the United Nations after World War II is an example of that. Modern history is full of examples of colonial attempts of foreign nations to extract wealth from this area. Is it any wonder they are all suspicious of outside interference?

It would be great if reparation for properties lost more than half a century ago could be made, but who is responsible to paying and who determines the value? It would take more than the wisdom of Solomon to settle that dispute.

I guess the only solution might be "possession is nine tenths of the law" and forget the other tenth. We have to start somewhere.

Supposedly religious battles have been waged by radical extremists and outside forces with ulterior motives to satisfy greed for both economic and political power. Those battles are still very much evident at the present time. They will not cease until these groups themselves guarantee absolute religious freedom of each individual so long as it doesn't physically interfere with someone else's health or freedom.

Neither jihad nor resumption of the crusades

is acceptable. The culture of Islam will have to change for that to happen. It could happen.

Incidentally, we need to be jealous of the freedom of religion guaranteed by our own Constitution. That guarantee is being attacked and eroded by both Christian and non-Christian elements of our society.

Separation of church and state is vital to religious freedom. We need to protect our freedom of speech. We can't allow the voice of wealth to drown out the voice of poverty.

I'm not Solomon. I don't have the magic answer. Do you?

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