

Other Viewpoints

Kansas delegation gains new clout in appointments

When Sen. Sam Brownback decided to keep his promise to serve only two full terms, it set off a historic chain reaction of change and fueled concern that the Kansas delegation was about to lose its clout.

Four of the state's six seats in Congress just changed hands, as the average age of the state's House delegation dropped from 56 to 42. What a huge relief then that the state scored assignments last week for three powerful committees in the newly GOP-led House.

Two-term Rep. Lynn Jenkins, R-Topeka, will join the House Committee on Ways and Means – only the ninth Kansan to ever sit on the tax-writing panel.

As impressive, two Kansans were among the 11 freshmen tapped for spots on prime committees: Rep.-elect Mike Pompeo, R-Wichita, for the Energy and Commerce Committee and Rep.-elect Kevin Yoder, R-Overland Park, for a scaled-back Appropriations Committee.

In a statement about his plum assignment, Pompeo vowed to “fight to open markets for the aviation industry in Kansas, preserve telecommunications competition, repeal Obamacare and secure America’s energy future” – all issues of high interest to the 4th Congressional District voters who sent the former businessman to Capitol Hill.

Yoder’s role will be more tricky. The 34-year-old succeeding the retiring Rep. Dennis Moore, D-Lenexa, is well-suited to the assignment, having chaired the Appropriations Committee in the Kansas House. But where Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Goddard, used his Appropriations seat to unapologetically keep defense dollars and other federal largesse flowing to the 4th District, Yoder must be mindful of voters’ disdain for earmarks and high expectations that spending and deficits will shrink.

In any case, the roles chosen for Pompeo, Yoder and Jenkins reflect well on them, as well as on the voters who sent them.

In addition, Kansans should be able to expect impressive results from Sen.-elect Jerry Moran, R-Kan., based on his hard work and pragmatic voting record during 14 years in the U.S. House and eight years in the Kansas Senate. And in Rep.-elect Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, 1st District voters have a new congressman known for his strong opinions and willingness to step out front on issues.

True, since 1996 Kansas has yet to see the rise of another Bob Dole, whose record 11 years as the Republican leader in the Senate included 3 1/2 as majority leader and helped make him a powerful, agenda-setting national figure and presidential candidate.

But as Tiahrt proved with his early success fighting the Wright Amendment and securing appointment to the Appropriations Committee, influence need not depend on longevity or even committee chairmanships.

And talk of Kansas’ clout in Washington should not discount the state’s two members of the Obama Cabinet: Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, who stepped down as governor to take the job, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates, a native of Wichita who has served eight presidents.

All in all, in the coming year, Kansans are well-positioned to make a mark in the 112th Congress and, it follows, the nation. That’s good news for our state.

– *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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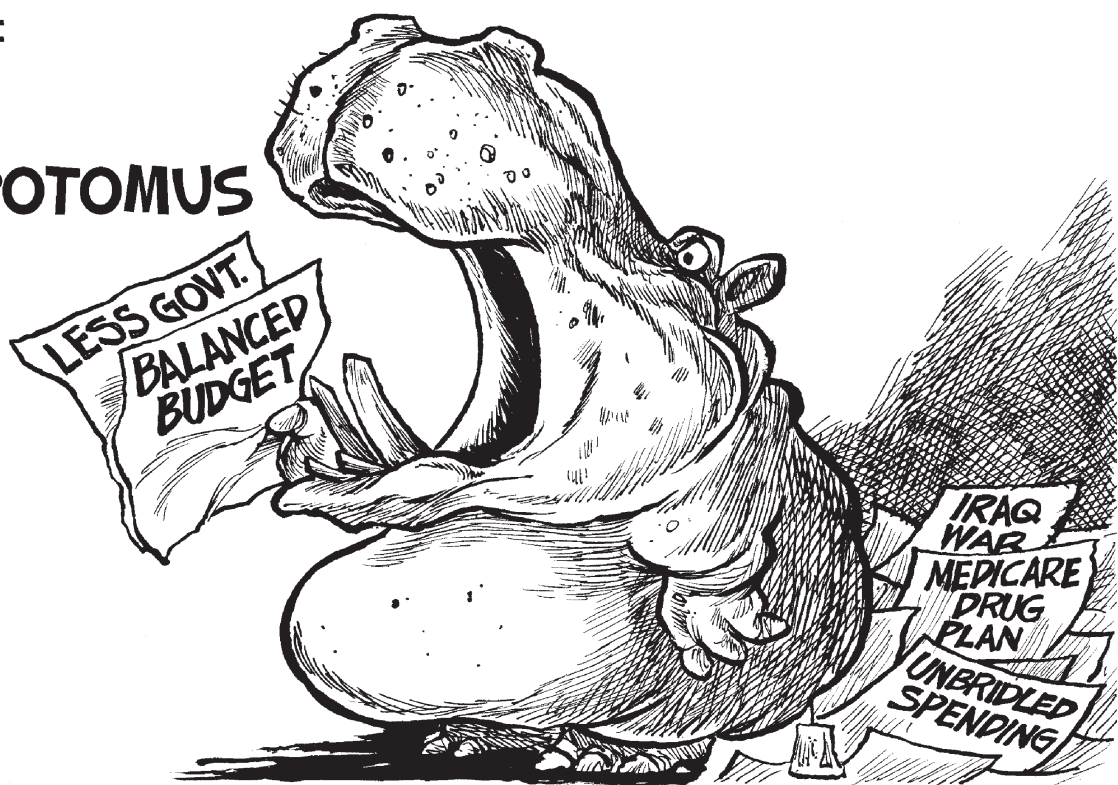
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19TH-CENTURY CARTOONIST THOMAS NAST DREW THE ELEPHANT AS THE ICON FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

HERE IS ITS REPLACEMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY:

THE HIPPOCRITOPOTOMUS



Duffink.com

Taste of Christmas defeats health nuts

We had a column from Cynthia Haynes the other day about Christmas lights, which seem to be an important part of the holiday for her.

For me, it's the food.

There are one or two kinds of homemade candy, five or six sorts of homemade cookies (Chicago chocolate chip – with corn flakes – and molasses – officially soft ginger cookies, and whatever else reaches out to grab me) and eight or 10 varieties of various cakes, pies, breads, rolls

This makes everyone but me ecstatic. After all, they don't know how to make all those things I see as essential, not to mention getting a fair-to-middling shot at gorging themselves on someone else's cooking.

But for me, there's a lot of work involved. Finding recipes, buying ingredients, measuring, stirring, figuring out where to put finished products. That, however, is just the beginning.

Trying to be health conscious, I suffer severe pangs of guilt just looking at a 50-year-old recipe with equal parts shortening and sugar. The original recipe probably had lard, not shortening, which would have been considered a healthy alternative back then. How times have changed.

Now, I look at those cookie recipes and try



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

to figure out what horrible unknown effects would come from substituting oil, applesauce or whatever else I can think of for the offending ingredients.

On the other hand, as a grandmother, I can make it, have one sinful cookie, and give the rest to the grandkids. It's got to be right up there with buying noisy toys that take lots of batteries. I never did it for my own kids because I knew how much I'd suffer for the impulse, but grandmas get special rules.

Of course, it's harder to just give away most of a pan of cinnamon rolls, fresh out of the oven. Those take a LOT of testing. Then there's fudge, and popcorn balls, and

Some years, back, though, I made the accidental discovery that the truly critical component of Christmas for me has to do with aromas. I was in graduate school at the time,

so Christmas preparations had to wait until after finals were over – probably about mid-December.

I was having trouble shifting gears. There's a lot of difference between ignoring everything except the books you have to read and the papers you have to finish in the wee hours of the morning, and going on a shopping-baking-cleaning-wrapping binge.

While struggling to get myself in the mood one year, I looked at the recycled, undecorated artificial Christmas tree sitting there and realized I could cut a live "tree" from the evergreen shrub in the yard that would be bigger and better looking. (That was one very sad artificial tree.) Within an hour, the scent of my vase full of greens had spread through the house, and my mood had shifted from dry academia to carols – and cookies.

It all comes back to cookies. Do I have to share with Santa?

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

Democrats: be prepared to move forward

This is primarily written to my Democrat friends. My Republican friends might ought to read it and not get so overconfident after their recent victories at the voting booth. And, if my enemies want to read it and find something to fight me with, go ahead.

I am very disappointed in our president's performance, as well as the Democratic leadership and team in Congress. I had reservations on whether Barack Obama was ready to be president, but he seemed to be the best choice, in my opinion, and we didn't have time to find or prep someone else. We should have been able to move forward and accomplish most every goal that was set out in the Democratic platform. But we didn't.

Did we have some leadership that didn't have the experience, skill and wisdom to work the arena? Were some of our leaders past their prime and stale? Did the team go in with overconfidence in their overwhelming power of numbers? Did we lack cohesiveness on the team?

We allowed a small minority belonging to the Republican party to bind themselves together and siphon one or two of our Democrats out of the tank and defeat nearly every measure that the majority of the electorate supported before the election.

Forgive me, but I must go back and use some of my own experience to make an analogy that fits our political situation today.

I've raised livestock and learned that to get them where you want them or to keep them out of where you don't want them, you have to outmaneuver those critters, especially those that you can't just manhandle.



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

In the process of raising three kids and supervising 10 years of 4-H for each of them, we selected, tamed and trained some 60 show steers. We never were quite able to take home the Grand Champion honors, but my memory is that we made it into the arena with all but three out of those 60 projects. We only had one that was on the bottom of the show rankings, but that same year, we showed the Reserve Grand Champion.

We had several down through the years that were second or third. We didn't go to any special Club Calf sales and spend big money. We played the hand we were dealt; most all of the steers came from our own herd or a neighbor's herd of commercial cattle.

Now, what was the secret to our success? And, yes, I think we were successful. We raised three kids who learned they had to prepare for the show or game. They also learned, when old Dad decided they needed to do it on their own, that it worked better if they helped one another. They also learned that the judge looked favorably on their helping their competitors who were having problems in the arena. (Now, that rarely happens in politics, does it?)

They learned to follow the rules of success and in order to do that, they had to know what

success would really be. They learned by their own experience, as well as from my experience, and observing the experiences of their competitors. But I think the most important thing they learned was that their success depended on themselves and that neither I nor anyone else could guarantee them success.

Their ultimate success depended on themselves, but they also benefited from the help and success of others all the way through the program. They learned they couldn't do it alone. (Politicians, take note of that!)

Let's don't give up on our president and our Democratic party. They may be a little wobbly on their feet after the severe blows encountered in the last election, but the game isn't over. They need our support. They also need to be held accountable and to stand up and be counted when the showdown comes around.

A fractured political party, regardless of its identity, will fail until such time as the members rally together and complete the task they've promised to do. That party will also fail if they forget the rules and can't define the success they are looking for.

That party had better be sure they have defined their success as meeting the needs of all of society and not just a few, or the masses will rise up and throw them out. Nearly every dynasty in history failed because the masses refused to be used by the high and mighty.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rwinc@cheerful.com.

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Mallard Fillmore

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