



Free Press Viewpoint

Supercommittee needs reprieve soon

It's the latest scare: the "poison pill" in the law creating the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction, better known as the "supercommittee," this fall.

The committee is supposed to come to an agreement cutting \$1.2 trillion from the budget, or automatic cuts totaling the same amount will be taken from all federal programs across the board. And that is going to hurt – a lot.

No one envisioned that the committee would deadlock so tightly that it could not come up with a plan. The across-the-board cuts would be painful for both parties, especially with a possible \$600 billion cut at the Pentagon.

Even measures designed to mitigate the recession and continuing high unemployment would be slashed, including unemployment benefits and aid to states.

The deadlock probably means some sleepless nights for the supercommittee, which includes six senators and six representatives, three of each from each of the two major parties.

The panel has only a week, until next Wednesday, to come up with a bill. Then Congress has until Dec. 23 to pass it without changes – or reject it. If that does not happen, the "poison pill" clause goes into effect, slashing all budgets for 2013.

A poison pill is a provision inserted into a law or, say, a corporate charter that's so bitter, it's assumed no one will swallow it. Corporations use poison pills to prevent hostile takeovers, but this one is designed to force two parties to compromise.

It may yet work. Washington is a place where last-minute reprieves do exist.

But if it doesn't, a lot of lawmakers are going to be sorry they voted for this law.

The supercommittee itself has been deadlocked over party-line issues: Republican opposition to any tax increase, and Democrats' insistence that "new revenue" must be included in any budget solution. Republicans also want to cut or curb "entitlements" like Medicaid and Social Security, while the Democrats want to tax "the rich."

That's the split that prompted Congress to invent the supercommittee to start with. There's been no shift so far by either party. Nor is there any sign of one – yet.

Compromise is required here. The Republicans may need to agree to some "revenue enhancements," and the Democrats will have to come around on retaining some of the popular Bush-era tax cuts. Unless both sides give a little, nothing can happen.

And we're pretty sure, people want something to happen. Like most of Europe, the U.S. needs to learn to live within its means, and needs to start before a worldwide panic sets in, not after.

That means the supercommittee – and the Congress – need to come to an agreement by next Wednesday. If they don't, the price the members pay could be severe, come November 2012.

The rest of us face all manner of problems, from a likely new recession to higher prices and higher interest rates. It's that important.

It's time for something to give in Washington.

– Steve Haynes

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Q. WHAT DO YOU CALL THE SUPER COMMITTEE THE DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING?



A. LEFTOVERS

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Cold in mountains, but fall lingers here

It was supposed to snow, six to eight inches, the weatherman said.

It didn't.

We kept looking outside for flakes, but at 40 degrees, you don't get much snow. It did rain a little. Not even much of that.

Winter would have to wait a little longer. Fall was still holding sway in northwest Kansas.

I wasn't disappointed. I'm not ready for winter, even though I went outside and cut the last of my cabbages and pulled some, but not all, of my root vegetables.

Besides, I was leaving for Colorado, and driving in the snow really isn't all that much fun.

The drive was fine. We had dry roads the whole way, nothing to worry about. The temperature stayed pretty much between 29 and 35 until the sun set.

It started to get colder as we moved into the mountains, and there was more snow by the side of the road. By the time we were an hour from our destination, the temperature had hit 15 and we watched it drop lower and lower. As



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

we pulled into the driveway of our weekend home, the temperature hit 5 degrees.

It was almost 10 p.m., and the inside temperature was a balmy 42.

We unloaded and started a fire in the wood stove. It took another couple of hours for the inside temperature to get up to a reasonable 68. The sheets in the bedroom were still icy, but the room was warm.

Overnight, the temperature hit 0, and as the sun rose in the morning, we looked out on a Christmas-card picture, mountains and trees covered in snow. Icicles dripped from the eaves and smoke curled out of the chimney.

It was pretty, but it was still freezing, and the wood stove needed another feeding before the

living room became tolerable again.

We had gone from fall to winter in a big hurry.

Our stay was more of a long weekend than a vacation. It warmed up each day. By the time we were ready to go home, the daytime temperature was above freezing and it was only getting down to 9 degrees at night.

The locals were all complaining that winter had come early this year.

Hey, they live in the mountains of Colorado, where the temperature falls to 40 below in the winter, and if it gets to be 80 in the summer, everyone complains of the heat.

Me, I'm glad to be back in Kansas, where it's still fall, and winter won't be here for – hey, was that a snowflake? – Noooooooooooo.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Promises need to be kept

Courage is often talked about but seldom witnessed. But there are some whose courage never fails to inspire us all: our nation's veterans.

Each year on Nov. 11, Americans come together to celebrate and honor our nation's veterans – the generations of men and women who have served our country with valor. It is a day when we express our gratitude for the service and sacrifice of those who have protected our way of life and allowed us to remain the strongest, freest and greatest nation in the world. Our nation's veterans did not sacrifice for Republicans or Democrats; they sacrificed for the greater good of our country.

It is an often overlooked fact that Veterans Day came about thanks to the patriotism of a Kansan. It was originally known as Armistice Day, created to recognize veterans who served in World War I. Armistice Day was first recognized on Nov. 11, 1919, when veterans who survived the war marched in parades as hometown heroes. Nineteen years later, the U.S. Congress formally dedicated Nov. 11 as a national holiday.

Several decades later, after thousands of veterans had returned from both World War II and Korea, a shoe store owner from Emporia, Al King, began talking with friends and neighbors about the need to recognize the service of all veterans who bravely defended our country. His fellow Kansans quickly supported the idea, and on Nov. 11, 1953, Emporia's businesses and schools closed their doors to celebrate the first-ever all-inclusive Veterans Day. Six months later, Congress passed a bill introduced by then-U.S. Rep. Ed Rees from Kansas



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

to formally change Armistice Day to Veterans Day. Shortly thereafter, President Eisenhower signed the bill into law.

But the biggest way we can honor our veterans is by keeping our promises to them. As a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, I am committed to helping those who have served get exactly what they have been promised for their service, from disability compensation and pension benefits to education benefits and health appointments. In some instances, we have even helped veterans get long-overdue medals.

Recently my office was contacted by Susan Thomas, the daughter of Charlie Wilber of Belleville. He earned a Purple Heart during the Korean War but never received the medal. In 1951, he was injured in battle when an enemy grenade landed in his foxhole. Although he was wounded, he continued to fight alongside the men of his company until he was no longer able. Like all the men and women who answer our country's call to serve, Charlie wasn't concerned with receiving special recognition for his sacrifice. After his service was complete, he returned home to his family in Belleville and didn't worry about obtaining the medals he had earned.

Decades later, Susan and the rest of Charlie's family decided to try to obtain his Purple Heart, but were told his service records had been destroyed in a fire at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis in 1973.

It was a four-year process for the Wilber family, but this Veterans Day, Korean War veteran Charlie Wilber received his Purple Heart along with several other service medals in a special ceremony in Belleville. I was humbled to have the honor of presenting them to him. Sixty years after his injury, this distinguished war hero received the honor he deserves.

Should you need assistance or know a veteran who needs assistance with getting proper Veterans Affairs benefits, or with long-overdue or replacement medals, please do not hesitate to utilize the services of my casework office by calling (785) 232-2605. You can also submit a casework request by visiting my website at moran.senate.gov.

I hope you used this Veterans Day to honor and celebrate the veterans in your life. Whether it's your sister, dad, grandpa or neighbor, it's important to take a moment to thank them for their courage and sacrifice, which has preserved the freedoms we all enjoy today. May God bless our servicemen and women, our veterans and the country we all love.

Jerry Moran of Hays is the junior U.S. senator from Kansas. His committee appointments include Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Veterans' Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Committee on Aging.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

