



Other Viewpoints

Old advice says find cash where it is

As Congress returns to Washington after the holiday break its members must pick up where they left off by extending the Social Security tax cut and providing unemployment payments to the long-term unemployed for the final nine months remaining in 2012.

Those recession-fighting benefits that go almost entirely to the 99 percent have a price tag of \$160 billion, give or take a billion. Economists worry that letting the cuts expire might shove the country back into recession. But nobody, from the Obama administration on down, has come up with a way to pay for the perks within a reasonable period of time.

Many of the ideas proposed would be permanent changes that would cut spending or raise revenues in relatively small amounts, such as preventing state and local government workers from improperly claiming Social Security benefits or repealing a tax break taken by businesses that buy corporate jets.

Eliminating Saturday delivery of mail and other postal service reforms, for instance, would only pay for two months of the temporary tax cuts but would last forever.

Speaking about an administration proposal to increase security fees for nonstop flights, which would bring in relatively little, a government economist said, “This is definitely a situation in which there’s a lot of pain for not much gain and that trying to do a lot of these things absent a big, broader budget deal is going to be difficult to do.”

Difficult and not smart. Rather than a permanent nickel-and-dime patchwork of tax and tax-break changes that add up to the \$160 billion needed, Congress should pay for the temporary stimulus the payroll tax cuts provide quickly, with substantial, but temporary, levies.

In World War II, Congress inaugurated luxury taxes to raise money for the war.

A similar tactic would make sense today. As has been pointed out over and over again for the past three years, the impact of the Great Recession has been grossly unequal. While the poor became desperately poor, the rich grew richer. The way to pay for the payroll tax cuts is to impose a yearlong “Equalization Tax” on the very rich. Not to punish them, but to make it unnecessary to raise a batch of taxes permanently on the nation as a whole.

Willie Sutton, a notorious bank robber in the 1920s and ’30s, was asked why he only robbed banks. “Because,” he said, “that’s where the money is.”

Sutton’s logic applies to the dilemma Congress faces. It should tap the rich for this \$160 billion because they have it, won’t miss it and bear enough responsibility for the economic collapse to make Congress feel virtuous for sending the bill to them.

— The Iola Register, via the Associated Press

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Why trees – and typos – make the news

If a tree falls in the middle of the forest and nobody hears it ... it won't make the front page.

On the other hand, if an editor makes a typo, it's bound to be noticed.

I stumbled across one in a book last week – actually, more than one, but only one was memorable. Just one innocent little letter was missing. The result? A “loose cannon” became a “loose canon.” I still haven't decided if that's a flexible set of laws or a morally lax member of the clergy! My sympathy goes out to the editor who probably discovered that mistake within two hours of the last possible chance to change it.

That's what usually happens around here. We go over it, We go over it again. We put it on the page and, most days, three pairs of eyes check it. We fix it, pronounce it good, send it to the printers and discover some glaring mistake.

The worst, of course, is a misspelled name, as almost happened the other day. Why are names more important? Because the news is about people, and people are about names. Or-



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

inary names, unusual names – your name is what defines you. And people are what define the news.

That's obvious in a story about a sports hero or a criminal complaint. But it's also true when we print a recipe (without people's interest in new foods that would be pointless) or a piece on astronomy (which is about people seeking to understand the universe).

Whatever is going on in our community, people are a critical part of it. If a block of downtown suddenly disappeared, it wouldn't matter without taking into consideration the people – those who disappeared, those who lost something or someone, even those who had to drive around that new big hole in the

dirt.

You will be relieved to hear that downtown Colby is intact as of the moment, and the people of Colby are going about their ordinary everyday business as far as I know. Any local disasters are smaller than a city block at least.

That's another point about what makes it onto the front page – besides typos, of course. There's a saying I've heard around the paper that news is what happens near a reporter or editor. So if something big has happened in your life, but you can't find it anywhere in the paper, you might ask yourself if you need to tell us about it. Contrary to popular belief, we don't magically know everything that's going on in town.

So, if a tree falls in your back yard, and you hear it ... call us up and we'll come take a picture and interview you.

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.

Tell ag's story and tell it straight

Several hundred young farmers and ranchers from across the Sunflower State will gather in Wichita Friday through Sunday to learn more about leadership and hone these skills.

As these young Farm Bureau leaders continue to grow and progress in their chosen profession, many will step forward to voice their opinions, to say what's on their minds and stand up for their beliefs – to make a difference.

It's not always easy to stand up and voice your convictions. It's certainly easier to go on about your daily business, do nothing and let someone else do your talking for you.

Leadership is not easy. I believe Sam Rayburn, Bonham, Texas, who served as Speaker of the House under eight different American presidents, probably said it best in one of his addresses to Congress.

“Leadership is that intangible quality in an individual that makes men do better than themselves; which makes men dream greater dreams and perform braver deeds.”

Yes, in order to tell their story, whether it be about farming, ranching or any other business, these young leaders must cultivate a working relationship with the media while using every means of social media to tell their story.

The following tips can help you tell your story – a story that only you as young crop growers and livestock caretakers can tell in your own words and from your own perspective.

To begin with, you must provide those outside the farm and ranch gates news with substance and provide them legitimate news about agriculture.

Using agriculture as an example, if you're a farmer you could talk about the practice of minimum tillage to save the land and water. Begin by talking about leaving crop residue (stubble and stalks) in place to hold this soil and moisture in place where wheat, corn, milo and soybeans can utilize it.

Farmers incorporate this practice beginning in April when they plant seeds for the next season's crop. The sprouts shoot through the soil-saving cover, and in turn save soil and moisture.



John Schlageck

• Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

Ag producers will resume this ritual in about another month as they begin spring planting of fall crops. Yes, there is plenty to tell about this conservation practice. As a farmer, it you choose to tell this story, remember to focus on who will hear your story.

Avoid using self-serving material when telling the urban and suburban public about your farming or a specific agricultural issue. Talk instead about the meat and potatoes of the issue and downplay promotion of yourself.

Just as important as what you say or write about is the relationship you foster with your local and regional media types. Invite them to your farm/ranch to share with them how you go about planting corn, feeding cattle or better yet how you care for them.

Give your media contacts your home or cell number. Reporters always appreciate knowing where you can be contacted when they need a quote concerning a breaking agricultural story.

Cultivate urbanites by befriending them on your Facebook site.

Never stick your head in the sand when a difficult situation occurs or bad news hits. As a spokesperson for agriculture, do your homework. Seek additional information and resource people knowledgeable about a controversial issue.

Provide factual information to media types and those you're in contact with via social media. If you run away from bad news, the media and your social media network will remember this the next time you come to them with good news.

If you want success in telling your story, respond quickly to inquiries from those in the news media. Remember it's all right to say, “I don't know,” when you can't answer ques-

tions. But always offer to find the answer and follow up promptly.

Establish first-name relationships with the media in your community. Never hesitate to contact a reporter if you come across a story that may interest and enlighten them about your profession. Members of the media will remember your thoughtfulness.

Above all, remember that trust is the most important ingredient in any relationship, and this includes the media, too. If you're ever caught in a falsehood, your credibility and future relationship with that person may be damaged forever.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Where to write, call

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

