

Other Viewpoints

Alternative plan needed from church

Friday the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said it could not accept President Barack Obama's compromise solution to the flap over contraceptives provided for women employees of Catholic hospitals, universities and other non-church organizations administered by the Catholic church.

The administration passed the buck to the insurance companies.

The companies would be required to provide contraceptive coverage for female employees for no additional cost so that the church-related entities would not be required to pay an additional fee. The companies would be willing to do so, administration spokesmen explained, because pills are cheaper than paying for additional pregnancies.

The bishops said that was not enough. They pointed out some of the institutions involved were self-insured and would wind up paying the additional cost. If they had an alternative compromise in mind, it was not made public.

President Obama apparently has agreed it is not acceptable for the government to require a church-governed institution to act against its core principles. His administration, therefore, was willing to take the churches off the hook and let the insurance companies provide the coverage.

What the administration was not willing to do was to deprive women – of any church affiliation – access to birth control medication and services.

The ball is now in the bishops' court. If they can't accept the administration's proposal, they should make one of their own. To be acceptable, it should take into consideration the moral and medical reproduction decisions that today's women of all religious faiths have made and continue to make.

– The Iola Register, via the Associated Press

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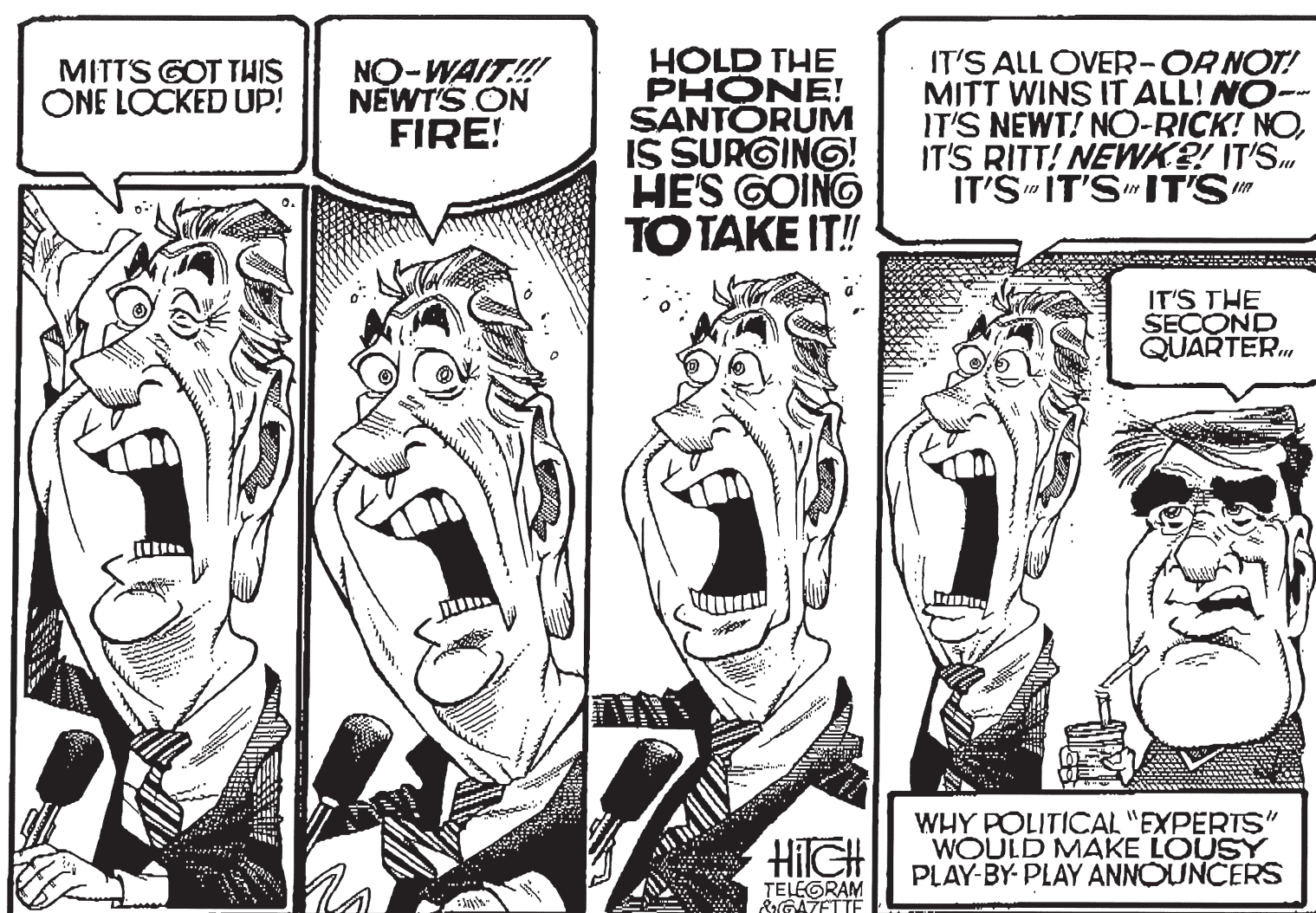
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Rare friend goes home

A few flakes of snow swirled around in the persistent, sharp wind Saturday. The cold crawled through your coat and chilled you.

I had to stop and brush back the tears, but I was not that unhappy. TD was home.

You don't get to meet that many people like Tom Dreiling, let alone get to know them, or call them friend.

TD, as he was known, and as he signed his thousands of columns over the years, was one of the good guys.

A fine journalist, yes. He had a homey touch that gave his editorials and columns a warm feeling. He mentioned dozens of townspeople each week. He knew that community journalism is all about people.

As a newspaper publisher, he was more than adequate. He knew how to set the standard he expected, and had his ways to make sure it was met. He knew the paper had to make money, and he knew the readers had to want to buy it.

He was good at his job, and devoted to it. More than that, though, he was just one of those people you counted it a privilege to be associated with. He always tried to do the right thing, hard as that is. He lived his Catholic faith as well as he could. And his sense of humor made everything a little brighter.

He grew up in Hays in one of those German-Catholic families that once populated parochial schools on the plains, second-youngest of nine. He joked that he never knew exactly how old he was, since he had paperwork which showed he was born Nov. 25 in both 1934 and 1935. That made him 76 or 77, depending, but that made little difference to Tom or his readers.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

His journalism career stretched back many years, to the time right after he came out of the Air Force and worked for the *Ellis County Star*, a weekly in Hays owned by two of his brothers. He went from there to the *Hays Daily News*, becoming sports editor, then city editor.

In 1965, he moved to Goodland to be editor of the old *Goodland Daily News*, then owned by the McCants family, and later by the Seaton family of Kansas and Nebraska. He stayed 24 years, becoming an institution in Sherman County. He might have retired there, but in 1989, the Seatons sold *The Daily News* to an outfit formed by an accountant and a New York investment banker. Not much good came from that union.

After the sale, Tom recalled, they called him in and told him he could stay, but his salary would be that of a new hire out of college, about half what he was making. Tom took a hike, and later won an unemployment case against the company. We found his personnel file and the records from that time when we were cleaning out the publisher's office in Goodland last year.

While he'd grown up and later worked in

Hays, Goodland was home for Tom. His boys were born there, his wife, Jean, died there in 1975 after coming down with leukemia, and the boys grew up there.

The first time he retired, he tried to live in Hays. That lasted less than three months before he wrote us a letter: "I've made a terrible mistake," he said, going on to ask if we could take him back.

The second time he retired, he moved to Goodland, and he said it felt a lot more comfortable. Deteriorating health – his eyes and his feet had been ravaged by diabetes over the years – prompted him to move on to the Denver area, however. That's where his kids and grandkids were anyway.

Through it all, Tom continued to write. Right up to the week before he died he wrote columns that always included reader comments and a little humor. Some weeks he reminisced about the old days in Hays, some days he wrote about politics from his peculiar sort-of-conservative, always-a-Democrat stance.

I always opened and read his e-mails right away. A lot of people did.

As I walked away from the grave, I had to stop and wipe away a tear or two. I will miss him, but I wasn't so much sad as happy. After we left, the workers would lower his urn into the ground next to his beloved Jean, she waiting alone all these years.

I couldn't help but think it was a moment he'd grown to long for.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

U.S. needs to live within its means

We have a problem: The United States government spends too much money. For decades in Washington, members of Congress and presidents from both parties have spent more money than the government took in – leaving us with a national debt of more than \$15.3 trillion today.

In the last three years alone, the national debt has grown by nearly \$4.5 trillion and each American taxpayer's portion now stands at more than \$135,000. This crippling amount of debt has slowed our nation's economic growth and threatens the prosperity of future generations who will have to pay for our irresponsibility.

Last year, the American people endured a painful debate in Congress about whether the debt ceiling should be raised. I had hoped this debate would lead to substantial reductions in government spending and structural reforms to the way Washington does business.

Unfortunately, neither objective was achieved. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office recently announced that the government will run a deficit this year of more than \$1 trillion – for the fourth year in a row. Over the next three decades, our debt is expected to become three times the size of the entire U.S. economy. Clearly this is not sustainable.

The debate about whether to raise the debt ceiling is really a symptom of a much larger problem: Our government's failure to produce a budget. Traditionally, the Congressional budget process begins on the first Monday of February when the president is required to submit his budget request to Congress. But this year, the Obama Administration announced they would miss this legally required deadline for



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

the second year in a row.

My hope is that when the president does submit his request, Congress will be presented with a commonsense budget that reduces our deficit this year, next year and well into the future. But the president's track record is not promising; last year, he proposed \$8.7 trillion in new spending and \$1.6 trillion in new taxes.

Congress is failing to do its job as well. One of the basic responsibilities of Congress is to produce an annual budget using the president's request as a framework, yet Senate Democrats have not put forth a budget in more than 1,000 days – which is 1,000 days too long without a plan to control spending.

Majority Leader Reid announced last week that he will not even allow the Senate to vote on a budget this year. This decision lacks common sense. In this case Republicans cannot be blamed for obstruction when the leadership of the Senate has not produced a budget and won't even let one be considered.

American families and small businesses have to live within a budget. When they have spent too much money, they have no choice but to cut back. Our government should do the same. Instead, Congress and the president continue to ignore our fiscal reality.

The truth is our country is broke; what is happening in Europe should serve as a wake-up call to our nation's leaders. It is time for Congress and the president to make the hard decisions necessary to get our economy back on track. When we continue to fail to balance the budget, it means increasing inflation, higher interest rates, and uncertainty in the economy, which results in less business investment and fewer jobs.

The first step should be to pass a responsible budget, but we must also tackle our national debt. A good starting point would be the recommendations put forth by the Bowles-Simpson Commission, a bipartisan debt commission created by presidential executive order in 2010. The commission's proposals recognize that real reforms and real cuts must take place across the board to get our fiscal house in order. Given the magnitude of the problem and the bipartisan support for many of their proposals, their recommendations cannot continue to be ignored.

Congress and the president were not elected to ignore these problems, but rather to confront them. In 2012, whether we have the willingness to tackle our fiscal crisis will determine the course of our country for the next generation. Our economy can and will recover when we begin to live within our means.

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.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

