

Other Viewpoints

Redistricting mess needs long-term fix

The great redistricting debacle of 2012 might have moved last week from the Statehouse to federal court in Kansas City, Kan., but the spectacle of inept grown-ups squabbling over turf and power was no less embarrassing. Kansas desperately needs to fix this before 2020, preferably by handing off the process to an independent commission.

Because of the Legislature's inability to finalize even one of the four maps required of it during a session that lasted 99 days, it's all up to the three federal judges. During last week's trial, they heard testimony reflecting the views of the case's 29 parties and sounded ready to try their own mapmaking. Secretary of State Kris Kobach, one of two defendants, says new maps need to be ready by June 20 to avoid a postponement of the Aug. 7 primary.

Where most states' struggles with redistricting pit one political party against another, the one in Kansas is all about the split between conservative Republicans, who control the House and governor's office, and moderate Republicans, who control the Senate.

There is plenty of shame to go around.

Senators get a share for proposing maps to protect moderate incumbents by carving out their would-be conservative GOP challengers.

So do House leaders, who broke tradition by meddling in the redrawing of the other chamber's districts.

Also among the guilty parties are provocateurs in the business and pro-life communities, who tried to use the process to shift Senate control to candidates more likely to favor their causes.

Gov. Sam Brownback also shares much of the blame. He said, "I never submitted a map to the Legislature nor have I indicated a preference for any specific map." But his staff members were deeply involved in drawing multiple maps and exerted their influence as maps were being debated and voted on. He wants the Senate more reliably on his side, and clearly saw redistricting as one sure way to get it there.

With its inaction, the Legislature inadvertently demonstrated why a bipartisan redistricting commission is needed. Under a plan proposed by Senate leaders, the majority and minority leader in each chamber would appoint one member each to the commission, with a fifth member selected by the commission itself who would serve as chairman. The Legislature would approve the commission's recommended maps with an up-or-down vote, and no amendments allowed.

Other states have different models to consider for an independent, impartial redistricting commission. Kansas needs to pick one next session, then put it in place.

Federal judges have better things to do than finish the job of lawmakers debilitated by partisanship. And whatever the judges decide on redistricting this time, the Legislature has forfeited any right to claim that it can handle the task.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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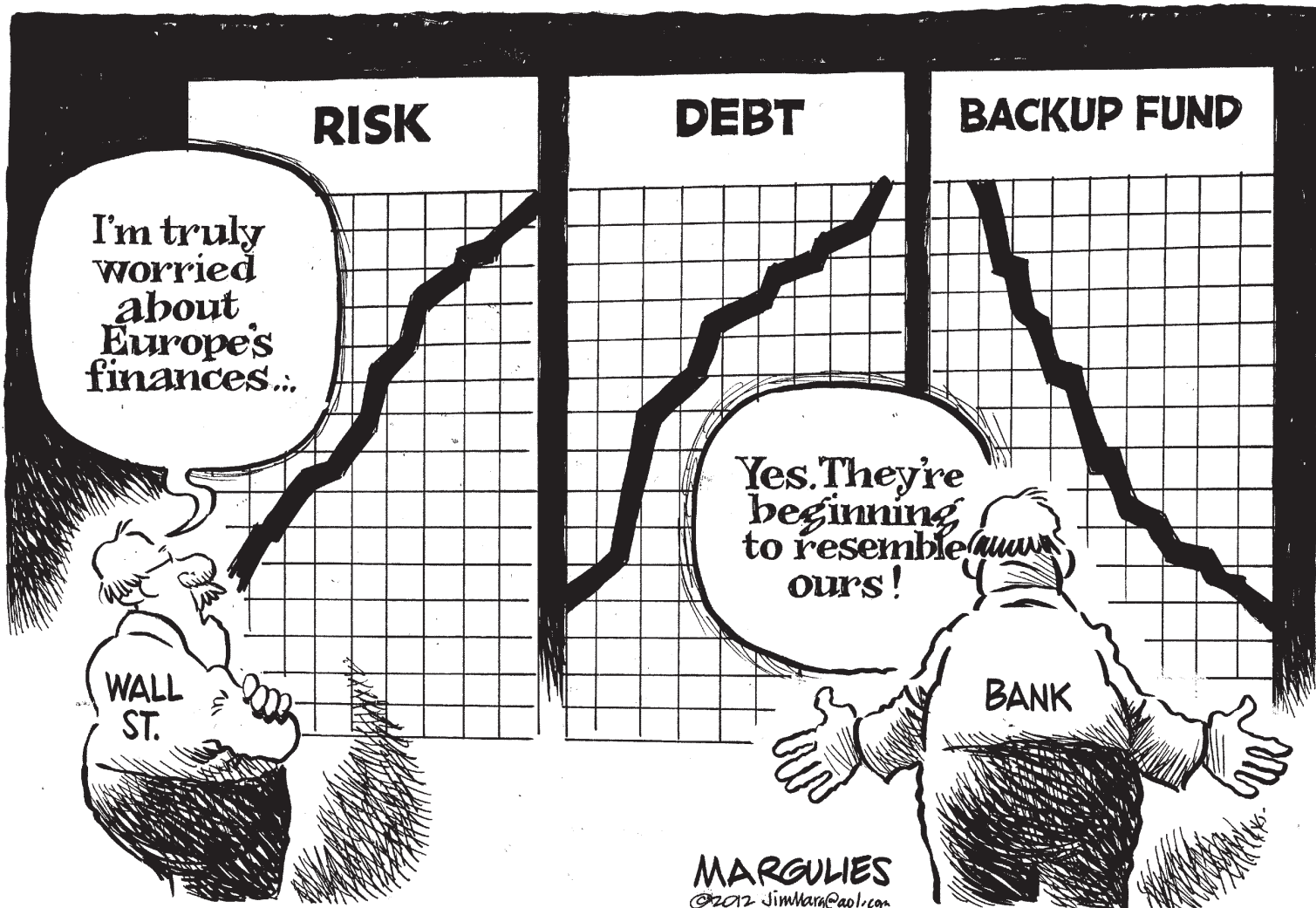
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No fishing in mountains, just smoke

I'm sitting here on the deck, watching the winds battle over the smoke.

It's kind of interesting, and besides, I can't go fishing. More about that later.

We had a couple of days and drove to Colorado to open our house for the year. We turned the water on — no leaks, thank goodness — and got the place straightened up.

We also installed the new oven, which of course was twice as difficult and three times as time consuming as it should have been. We ordered the same size, but in 30 years, a few things had changed.

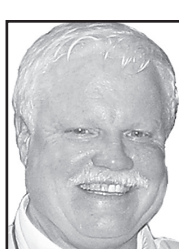
Nevertheless, the oven works, as does the water, and the house is ready for guests. Next time, we'll get the oven level, something the old one never was.

But the smoke. It seems they are burning large parts of New Mexico and a chunk of Colorado right over the Continental Divide, near Pagosa Springs. Each afternoon, the warm southwest monsoons drive the smoke over the Divide. It pours through the passes and creeps over the peaks.

But it is not monsoon season yet, and the last couple of days, high pressure driving a north wind has driven the smoke back. The winds met a couple of miles to the west, smoke boiled up out of a side canyon — you'd have thought it was a fire on this side — and pretty soon it was in full retreat.

Within half an hour, the smoke had fled eight or nine miles up the river. The air around us was crystal clear once more.

It was a perfect day to go fishing, but I can't get to my favorite place just above town. It



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

seems Disney has taken over the canyon. They are shooting a remake of "The Lone Ranger" up there, or will be if the set ever gets built.

Dozens and dozens of workers crawl all over the set. From the guard shack which blocks the county road, you can almost see it. Word is they are building, among other things, a railroad tunnel up there.

Cynthia points out that there are plenty of real railroad tunnels in Colorado they could use, some of which the railroads don't need anymore. But that is not the point. What Hollywood wants, apparently, Hollywood builds, even on location.

Each day, workers descend on town to scavenge a lunch. Trucks haul lights and equipment up the canyon. They are building the tunnel, buildings, the whole set in Albuquerque and trucking it up. The set has its own power plant.

The whole area is closed, and cameras are barred. Don't bother trying to get in; Disney has goons, er, security guards.

It's hard to imagine what it will be like when they start busing dozens of extras in each day to the big wardrobe tent across from the community center, some hired in the area, in Ala-

mosa, even in Denver.

No actors are there yet. Someone named Armie Hammer will play the Lone Ranger. I never heard of him, but I figure they couldn't afford a star, what with what they'll be paying Johnny Depp to play Tonto.

Advance publicity stills show Mr. Depp wearing a dead bird on his head, supposedly a Crow warrior's getup. And lots of makeup, some of it undoubtedly left over from all those pirate movies. Hammer has had roles in recent movies, by the way, playing twins in "The Social Network," and lists himself as a great-grandson of oil tycoon Armand Hammer. Really.

Rumor has it the film is already as much as \$30 million over budget, and union crews are being held to 10 hours a day. They figure that'll change when they get behind, since shooting is to be done by June 29.

By the time I return, Johnny and Armie should be gone, along with the tunnel and the rest of the set. I'll be able to go fishing, if they haven't built anything in my creek. The road should be open, anyway.

We'll have to wait until 2013 to find out if any of this gets into the movie. (There is another location set in Utah.)

The town should have calmed down by then, unless, of course, they decide to have a big premiere up in the mountains.

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. history shows no Cristero War

The preview of the movie "For Greater Glory" at Washington's Newseum was packed. The Catholic Association had invited a Who's Who of Catholic leadership in the nation's capital, including two former U.S. Ambassadors to the Vatican. As a non-Catholic, I counted it an honor to attend the screening of this film about Mexico's Cristero War.

The movie is grim but gripping. I had no idea the Mexican government had so brutally cracked down on the Catholic Church in the 1920s. Shooting priests, hanging altar boys, it's all shown in graphic detail. And it needs to be. The movie earns its "R" rating for the violence of the civil war on our border. As a student of American history, I was stunned by the severity of the religious repression there.

And I thanked God that we Americans had been spared that. Yes, there were anti-Catholic Bible riots in Philadelphia in the 1840s, but these were never sponsored by the U.S. government. Nor had the federal government attempted to crush private religious schools — as happened with a Klan-backed referendum in Oregon in the 1920s. There, the U.S. Supreme Court vindicated the religious freedom of all by striking down state law.

Last week's Religious Freedom conference of the Ethics and Public Policy Center featured distinguished speakers from across the spectrum of America's religious communities. Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Mormon, Orthodox Christian and Jewish leaders spoke on contemporary threats to religious freedom here.

The health and Human Services mandate that would force Catholic and other religious

Other Opinions

• Robert Morrison Family Research Coun.

institutions to provide drugs that can kill unborn children held center stage, of course. The mandate is unprecedented. And it is a mortal threat to religious freedom in America.

It not only threatens all Catholics, it threatens me. My granddaughters were recently born in a Catholic hospital. When they were stricken with the life-threatening RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) on Christmas Eve, they were rushed back into that same hospital.

Health Secretary Kathleen Sebelius would only exempt St. Mary's Hospital from her pro-abortion dictate if they close their doors to non-Catholics like me and my family. She would thus crush our religious freedom, too.

How can an administration that prides itself on being "pro-choice" deny to millions of Americans — Catholic and Protestant alike — the choice of pro-life health care? This is in fact the most dangerous assault on religious freedom in 225 years.

More than that, this administration has defined religious freedom more narrowly than any administration in history.

In the recent Hosanna Tabor Supreme Court 9-0 decision, the Obama administration contended that it and not the Lutheran Church

— Missouri Synod would decide who is and who is not a "minister" in that church body. No matter that the synod has designated its teachers as ministers since 1847 — and has had that "ministerial exception" respected by the federal government from its beginnings — the Obama administration wants to substitute "freedom of worship" for freedom of religion. The Supreme Court unanimously rejected this attempt.

Freedom of religion includes freedom of worship, of course, but it also allows us to witness to our fellow Americans through works of charity and love in public. We pray daily for our leaders, including President Obama and Secretary Sebelius. But we will resist their unconstitutional and unprecedented crushing of religious freedom. The Soviet Constitution supposedly guaranteed "freedom of worship," but only if Christians stayed inside their churches and inside their own homes. We pray as well that there will never be a Cristero War here. Fighting in the courts and in the public square against such oppression is the best way to avoid such tragedies.

Robert Morrison is senior fellow for policy studies at the Family Research Council. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia. He has taught high school and college and served at the U.S. Department of Education under Secretary William Bennett. Robert led the historical research for Bill Bennett's book, "America: The Last Best Hope."

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

