



## Free Press Viewpoint

# Feds should help only in emergency

While the jury is out on performance after “superstorm” Sandy, one thing for sure is that the much-maligned Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, needs to realign its priorities and pull back from trying to help every time the wind comes up a little.

If you don’t think the agency has grown bloated and lost its sense of purpose, consider the fact that last year, right here in northwest Kansas, one of our counties suffered a disaster. Yes. Six inches of water running over a gravel road.

The commissioners, with straight faces, reminded the road boss to get someone out there to take pictures and assess the damage “so we can get some FEMA money.”

Every time it snows, every time there’s ice, every little local flood now, public officials try to record everything because there might be some federal money.

What ever happened to doing things for ourselves?

Well, if there’s federal money out there, officials are going to try to get it. It’s only human nature. Still, you’d think we had some pride.

The genesis of the problem, we suspect, goes back to the Bush year. Congress and a president who’d been burned badly when Hurricane Katrina all but washed New Orleans away, just threw money at Emergency Management. Standards were lowered; they had to spend it.

So counties and cities began to add up the cost of little storms.

Katrina and Sandy are the kinds of events that this agency was designed to battle, yet oddly enough, these are the hardest to prepare for. In a real emergency, it’s usual that no one is in charge, no one gets much done at first and confusion reigns.

We need an agency to deal with disasters, true emergencies. But if the one we have is ill prepared or spends its time and money replacing gravel washed away by a thunderstorm, we’re in trouble.

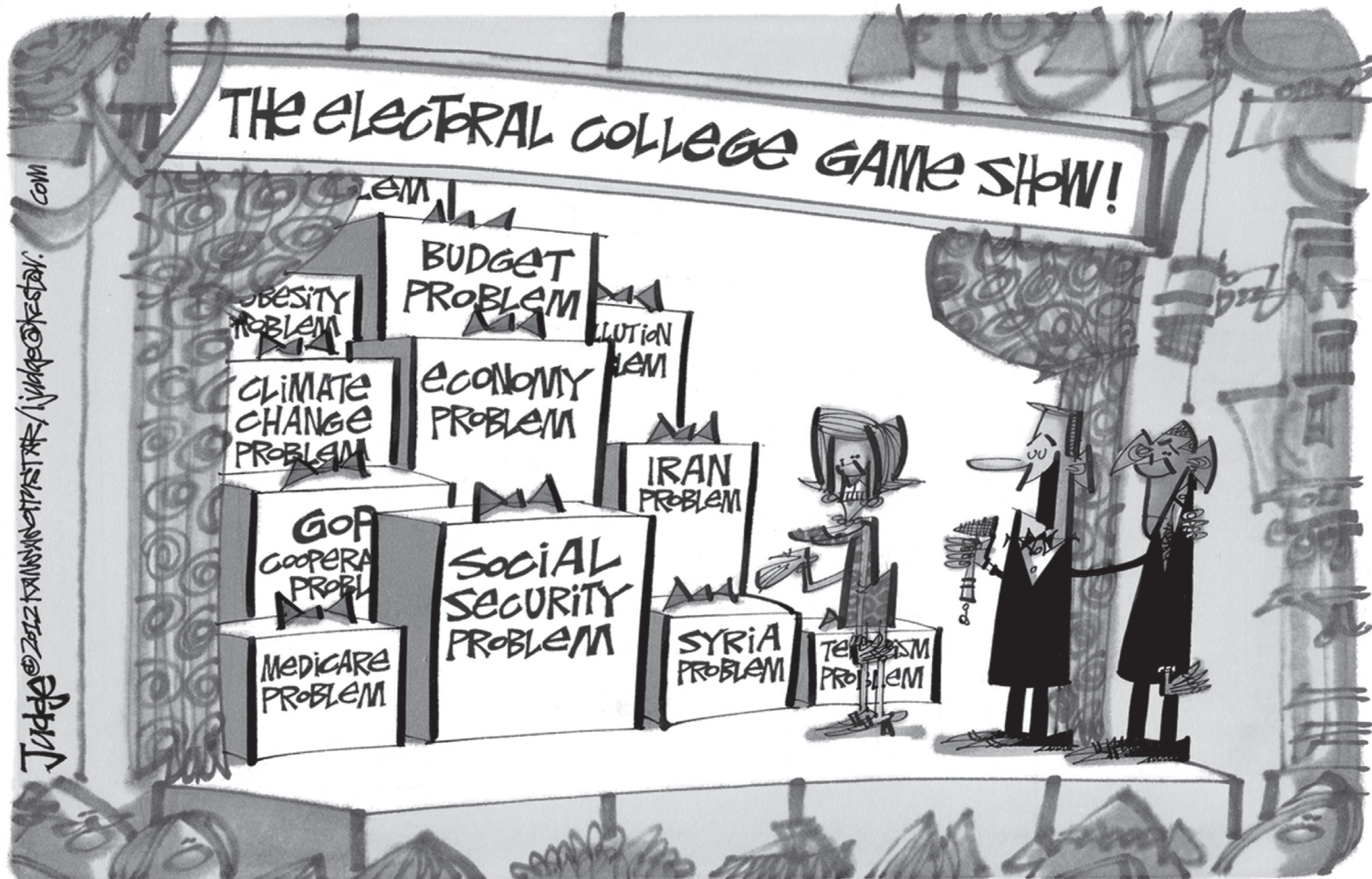
Let the cities, states and counties take care of the little problems, even the big ones. Federal aid should be reserved for when it’s really needed, not frittered away on minor problems.

And with the need to cut federal spending, the bloat in this agency ought to be a prime target. We’re not talking about Sandy or money held for the next superstorm. Those rightly are federal issues.

But plowing snow, grading and graveling roads, fixing things up after a big wind, those are things a federal agency should never hear about – let alone pay for with money the government has to borrow.

Let’s rein this agency in and point it at its real mission.

– Steve Haynes



“LET’S SHOW OUR CONTESTANT WHAT HE’S WON!”

# Old South charms her again

From its great plantations to the harbor that gave it birth and prosperity, Charleston, S.C., is a fascinating city.

Steve and I got to visit this belle of the South last month during the annual National Newspaper Association convention.

This was not our first visit to Charleston, which is just about three hours from Augusta, Ga., where both our daughters live. During the many visits we’ve made to the South, we’ve gotten to see many of her gracious, old cities, including New Orleans, Birmingham, Savannah, Ga., Columbia, S.C., Nashville and Chattanooga, Tenn., and of course, Charleston.

But, this visit was longer and more intense, with tours by horse-drawn carriage and boat of the waterfront area and a visit to a working plantation.

We also got to tour a historic home, built in 1808 for the fantastic sum of \$80,000.

Out in the harbor sits Fort Sumter, where the Civil War began. The Union garrison refused to surrender the fort, hoisting a huge U.S. flag. Southern forces astounded by this affront bombarded the brick fortress for 34 hours. When reinforcements and the expected supplies failed to materialize, the garrison surrendered. No one was killed in the battle.

Broad Street is one of the main thoroughfares downtown. Anything on the south side of the street is near the waterfront and considered top-notch property. SOB is a popular designa-



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

tion for those business and people living South of Broad.

At the fancy restaurants South of Broad, we found fried green tomatoes, grits, collared greens and crab cakes on every menu. I think Steve tried them all. He dove into the myriad of seafood available in a coastal city.

Personally, I kept looking for a hamburger. What I came up with was a low-country boil. It’s sort of like our cream-can dinners, only with corn, potatoes, sausage and shrimp. This is where Steve is very useful – he eats the shrimp and I get the sausage.

Our tour of Boone Hall Plantation was a visit back in time. The plantation is still a working farm. The land was given to Maj. John Boone in the 1680s. It produced cotton and bricks in the pre-Civil War days, and was a major pecan farm for many years until hurricanes destroyed most of the trees.

Today it exists on tourism and tourist-related agriculture, like pick-your-own strawberries and peaches and hay rides in the fall.

Beside the big house, where we saw a wedding party getting pictures taken on the front steps, there is a row of small brick buildings – the old slave cabins. I was a little surprised that they were brick, a sturdier building material than you would think would be used, but since that was manufactured on the plantation in the early days, I suppose it was cheap.

The cabins have been turned into a series of museum rooms, each telling a story of slavery and plantation life including a list of the price of merchandise – horses, cattle, corn, whiskey, men, women and children. It was both fascinating and chilling.

Our entertainment for the evening was a storyteller, a woman who told us about the Gullah, a language and culture created by the slaves in the low country, as this area along the coast is called.

I know we just scratched the surface of this wonderful city and I’m hoping to go back again some day. There are more homes, churches, gardens and the aquarium to explore. I want to visit some of the islands and go crabbing.

Maybe next time. Our girls still live just three hours away.

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@nwkans.com

# Reader to Sleepless: take a nap

To the Editor:

Dear Sleepless in Goodland, Congratulations on your first official position as Sherman County commissioner. Sir, you ran for office and were elected. President Obama ran for office and was re-elected. There doesn’t seem to be the need for your loss of sleep, or for the millions of others you allude to either. Our democracy seems to be alive and well.

Our democracy has survived in spite of the attempt to suppress the vote through unnecessary voter ID requirements and the cynical attempts to use millions of dark dollars to buy votes. A very healthy democracy was on display with citizens all over America standing in long lines for hours to exercise their right to vote.

Now I couldn’t help but notice the word “depend” in the title of your recent letter to the *Colby Free Press* entitled “Majority depends on government.” It confuses me why you would go to such great lengths to espouse the same 47 percent argument that cost (Gov. Mitt) Romney the election. Are you, like he, casting aspersions on recipients of Social Security or disabled veterans?

Americans still vote with their pocketbooks. The new Affordable Health Care Act is a pocket-book issue. By the way, it asks that you pay your own way, that everyone be responsible for their own health care. Isn’t that a conservative principle? So, no, government is not paying for your health care. You are.

A woman’s right to choose is a pocketbook issue. Certainly government staying out of the bedroom and not legislating a woman’s reproductive rights is less government, not more. Surely you can agree on less government.

The auto industry bailout, however you may personally feel about it, must have seemed like a pocketbook issue to the Ohio and Detroit



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

auto workers. So, people did vote for pocketbook issues. The demographics may have changed, the faces of Americans may have changed, but the electorate still remains the same hard-working Americans of yesteryear. They’re not all white, but that makes them no less American.

You speak of “dictators and tyrants the world over” not being worried about interference from the “Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.” Ask Osama Bin Laden about that. Oh, but I guess you can’t, can you? He’s dead. Seal Team 6, on the President’s order, did indeed interfere with his twisted designs, and the twisted designs of a slew of other al Qaida mini-tyrants.

If you do care about America, as I am sure you do, do you really think that the loose and irresponsible use of language advances your cause with ordinary, decent folks? I believe in freedom of speech as much as you do, but playing fast and loose with the truth to falsely label an opponent doesn’t seem all that American, does it? By the way, neither Karl Marx nor Mao TseTung were freely elected to office in a democratic society.

I should think that Republicans would take pride in fulfilling Abraham Lincoln’s great and historic accomplishment, not only freeing the slaves but guaranteeing their right to vote and hold office. How can you not think that America’s first black President would not

make Lincoln proud?

Jefferson, too, because of his saying, for the world to hear, that in this country, all men are created equal.

The fact that a majority of the country elected and re-elected a black President is an affirmation of our American values and a trumpet call to the world that in the United States of America, everyone has a chance to succeed.

Yet, it isn’t the historical significance of the first black President or empty idealism that won his re-election. He was re-elected for his vision of a fiscally balanced approach of revenue and debt reduction and his unwavering belief in the American people.

You, sir, have been duly elected to office. I pray that you will take your position seriously, abandon your doomsday rhetoric, reject old and worn arguments and strive to bring people together rather than drive them apart.

Please don’t forget, God loves us all, and patriots come in all sizes, shapes and colors.

Get a good night’s sleep. God Bless America.

Not a “taker,”

Judith E. Green Colby

## Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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