

Other Viewpoints

'No' vote on treaty disappoints senator

Former Kansas U.S. Sen. Bob Dole certainly needs no introduction to the vagaries of politics or the whims of today's elected officials. And presumably he wouldn't want anyone feeling sorry for him in the aftermath of what no doubt was a personally disappointing vote in which the Senate rejected a United Nations treaty on the rights of the disabled.

Dole, himself a disabled World War II Army veteran, was on the Senate floor, in a wheelchair, to support adoption of the treaty, which is modeled on the Americans with Disabilities Act. Thirty-eight members of Dole's Republican Party, including both Kansas senators, Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran, were among those who voted against the treaty. Only eight Republicans voted for it, although it was supported by veterans organizations and the disabilities community.

A number of reasons were given for not favoring the treaty. "I do not support the cumbersome regulations and potentially overzealous international organizations with anti-American biases that infringe upon American society," said Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe. Others cited conceding America's sovereignty to international control, or possibly overriding state laws dealing with the disabled children, and even a fear the treaty would interfere with home-schooling children.

Much of the emotional reaction to the vote, however, has been focused on the perceived slap at Bob Dole. Dole, once referred to as "the abominable no-man" by a Kansas editor upset with his voting record when Dole was in the House of Representatives, knows the rough-and-tumble of politics.

The quick-witted Russell native who was his party's presidential nominee in 1996 also has demonstrated he knows how to work for what's best for the American people, and how to get along with leaders in both parties. In Lawrence, we take proud pride in having the Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas. The former senator is regarded fondly and favorably by most Americans, and especially, it's fair to say, fellow Kansans. They admire his service to our country and his growth as a statesman.

Let's hope others now in the Senate but not yet capable of filling his shoes experience that growth as well.

— *The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press*

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- U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/
- U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov
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Fiscal cliffhanger may be continued...

So, are we going to fall off the fiscal cliff at the end of the year?

You can hear about any opinion you want these days, and the signs from Washington are anything but encouraging. The president glowers at the Republicans in Congress, and they glower back. No one smiles.

And this hand is being played closed to the vest. Neither Speaker John Boehner nor Mr. Obama will say much about what might happen. Neither wants to give an inch before actually sitting down to the table.

Jim Kuhnhen, an Associated Press White House correspondent, speaking to AP publishers in Kansas City last week, said he thinks there'll be a deal.

"Not a big deal," he said, "no overall solution to the entire budget-debt-economy problems, but maybe a step toward a solution."

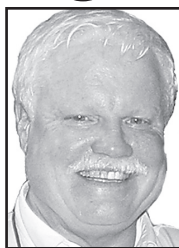
"It'll be a small deal," he said, "with a play-er to be named."

"What they'll probably do is set up another 'fiscal cliff,' maybe in August."

And while the head of the International Monetary Fund spoke out Sunday against just that kind of solution, it seems more and more likely that Congress and the president will go for a small deal again.

Christine Lagarde, managing director of the fund, was on CNN's *State of the Union*.

"If the U.S. economy was to suffer the downside risk of not reaching a comprehensive deal," she said, "then growth would be



Steve Haynes

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zero. It would be much better to actually have a more comprehensive approach and to deal with all the issues."

Lagarde, a former finance minister of France who grew up, oddly enough, in Washington, went on to say she thought the uncertainty of not having a deal could put the U.S. back into a recession.

But while you have to believe in miracles, they're not common. And this problem is so big and so persistent that it's hard to see how the opposing sides can solve it all at once.

Like the proverbial eating of an elephant, it'll have to be done one bite at a time.

What we've been hearing from the parties so far has been mostly posturing. Speaker Boehner said another week had been wasted. President Obama said he had to have a tax increase on the rich.

And then the two met Sunday behind closed doors at the White House. No one would say what transpired, which seemed oddly reassuring. Instead of blasting each other, it at least looked like they were talking.

A growing consensus seemed to point toward a deal that would let the president have the tax hike for "the top 2 percent" he campaigned for in return for some serious reforms of entitlement programs such as welfare, Social Security and Medicare. That might include raising the retirement age some and backing down the formula for automatic increases to payments.

One Republican said he might agree to trade a symbolic tax hike "for something that might really save the country."

For Republicans who've vowed there'd never be a tax increase, that might be tough to swallow, but most observers agree the increase would be mostly symbolic. The rich simply don't make enough to pay off the deficit, and any hike would be relatively small.

But Democrats have trouble backing away from cherished New Deal and Great Society programs, even when it's obvious the country can't afford continual increases. No one is arguing that a 40 percent deficit can be sustained.

And no one wants another recession so soon.

So, we're betting on a deal at the edge, not a leap off the cliff. Cross your fingers and keep watching. And write your congressman.

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.

Virginia's pressure pushed Bill of Rights

In the just-completed 2012 presidential election, Virginia played a key role as a "swing state."

The race between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney was too close to call in several states, so the candidates spent much time jettisoning back and forth, trying to convince voters in those "battleground states" they were the best choice.

The race went down to the wire, and Virginia's electoral delegates eventually were awarded to the president.

This isn't the first time Virginia has served a significant role as a "swing state." In the days leading up to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1789, representatives from the "Old Dominion" led a valiant effort to include basic individual rights in the nation's founding document.

While a listing of those rights we cherish today didn't make it into the original document, Virginia's delegates placed considerable pressure on their peers to promise they would be addressed by the first U.S. Congress.

Serving as the chief catalyst for this movement was a man who never got much credit for it. He didn't become president or vice president and certainly was seldom mentioned in the same breath with the other Founding Fathers.



Other Opinions

• Doug Anstaett
Kansas Press

In fact, you've probably never heard his name except for when the university named for him advances in the NCAA basketball tournament.

But George Mason extracted a promise from fellow Virginian James Madison, a future president, to make sure those rights — freedom of speech, press and religion, freedom from search and seizure, the right to a fair trial by a jury of one's peers and the right to bear arms — were spelled out.

Mason, who had been a Virginia delegate to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, already had affected the American Revolution by writing the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Many phrases from that document can be found in slightly altered form in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including "all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people,"

"the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety" and his call for "frequent, certain and regular" elections.

Mason believed government power should be limited and that the rights of citizens should be paramount. But his proposal for a bill of rights fashioned after Virginia's was defeated. At the first session of the first Congress, however, Madison, also an elected representative from Virginia, introduced a Bill of Rights that reflected Mason's ideas.

Besides the rights already mentioned above, those first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution also outlawed excessive bail or fines and cruel and unusual punishment and reserved some powers to the states.

Today, some 221 years later, Americans exercise those rights each and every day. Maybe this year we should say a word of thanks to the state of Virginia and especially to the delegate who wouldn't take no for an answer on our most cherished rights: George Mason.

Doug Anstaett, formerly an award-winning editorialist at the Topeka Capital Journal and the Newton Kansan, is executive director of the Kansas Press Association in Topeka.

Write us

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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.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

