

Free Press Viewpoint

High-stakes game shows deep divide

As Congress moves toward a compromise on spending after nearly two weeks of the partial government shutdown, people need to realize that this is not some frivolous tiff or indolent inaction in Washington.

Rather, it is a high-stakes game where the chips involve the philosophical differences between the two parties. Democrats want to defend their favorite spending programs, especially the huge new health-care law. Republicans keep trying to cut spending and move toward a balanced budget, and big items are on the table for both.

For the Democrats, it's continued growth in social programs. They want the GOP to drop or ease the "sequestration" cuts which have barely made a dent in federal spending. For the Republicans, it's a burning desire to derail, or at least modify, the health-care law, curb its cost and keep spending down.

It's not like either side was fighting for the sake of the fight. It's that they started poles apart, and while Congress might want to get things moving, President Obama on one side and the tea party group on the other both vow not to compromise.

Our bet is that a settlement will keep the government limping along, with short deadlines that will mean another fight over the debt ceiling and a continuing resolution before the end of the year. Congress should be able to prevent default on the debt, but that will only put the underlying issues off.

And while it's common to hear that "there's not a dime's worth of difference" between the two parties, in fact, the distinctions have seldom been more sharply defined. Democrats, led by Mr. Obama, are insisting that tax increases on "the rich" need to be part of any move to a balanced budget, though that goal is distant indeed.

Republicans say any tax increase in the face of a weak economy would be foolish. They want to curb burgeoning costs of "entitlement" programs such as Social Security and Medicaid, which they see as programmed to go up year after year.

It's OK for people to demonstrate against the shutdown. It's everyone's right to petition the government, after all, and a little heat should help push things along. Just remember that there are real differences at stake, and both sides in a divided government are trying to defend their own sacred turf.

This division on spending is not likely to go away, as deeply as it is intertwined with the structure of the budget and the federal spending process. These are the basic tenets of the parties.

That does not mean compromise is impossible, or that one won't be reached. Far from it. It simply means no one is going to roll over easily. That is why this debate seems to go on forever, and why nothing seems to get resolved as the sides kick this can down the road.

Whichever side you fall on, or lean toward, if you are tired of all this uncertainty, remember it's been five years since Congress actually passed a budget and longer since appropriations bills were routinely passed before expiration of spending authority in major areas. Everything has gone on temporary authority, "continuing resolutions," for years and the dispute has made permanent changes difficult.

Everyone agrees a "balanced budget" should be the goal, but how to get there? Which way will we go? Evenly divided as the country is, there's no way to tell. So far, neither side has the power to jam something down the other's throat.

But the show is far from over, and the long-term consequences are great. — Steve Haynes

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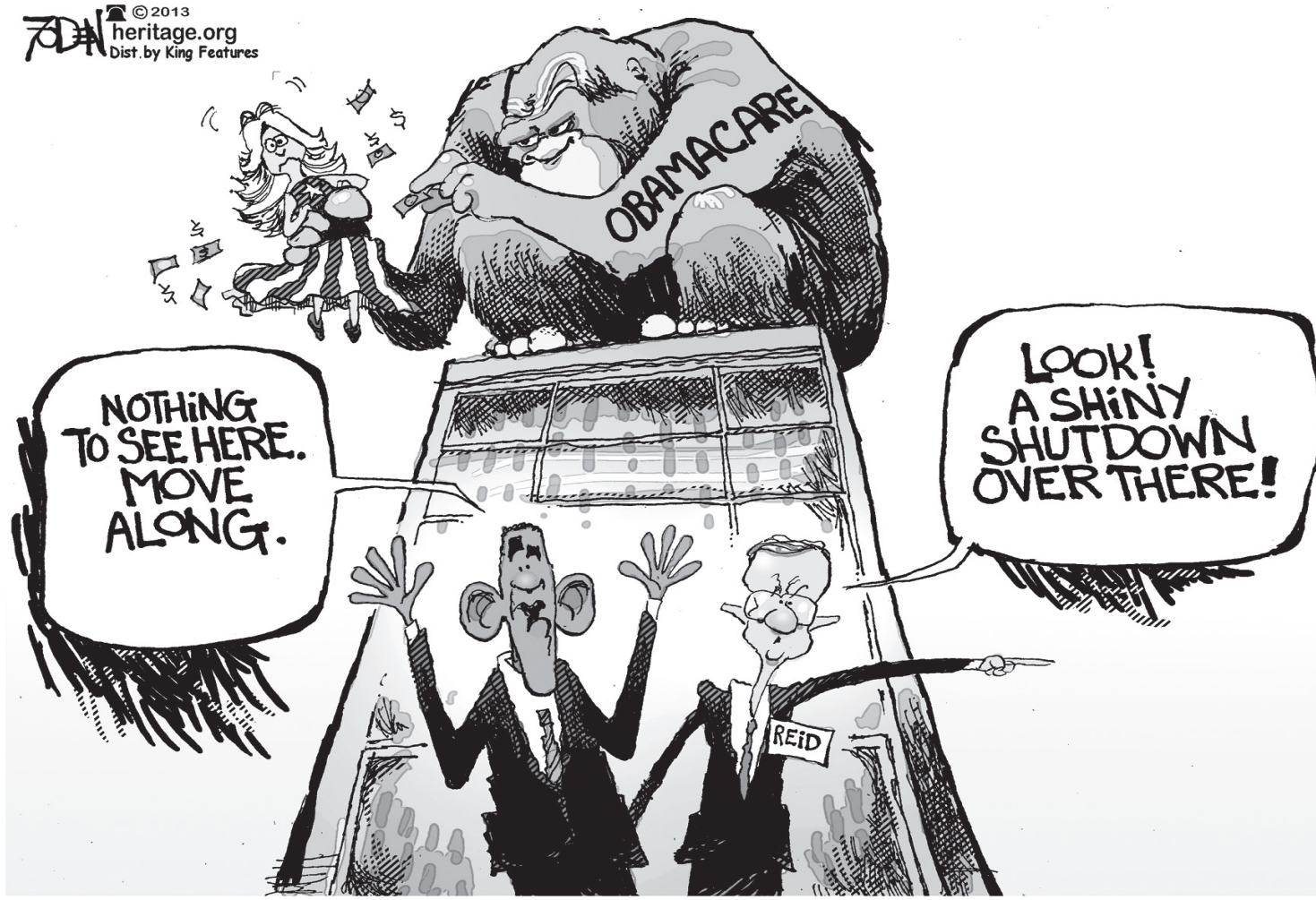
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Visit to family revives old ties

My sister and I left our husbands last week. I got in the car and drove to Concordia picked up Marie, and we left the state for Arkansas. This is a trip we take in the fall every couple of years.

We have an uncle and aunt and several cousins living down there, and we try to visit at least some of them every couple of years.

Uncle Jeff is mother's younger and only brother. He and Aunt Frances have been married for 62 years and are the last of that generation left in either our mother's or father's families.

We figured while they are in good health, you never know. We'd better go see them while we could.

At the same time, we could visit with cousin Judy and cousin George and his wife Vonda, all of whom are a little older than us.

Our first stop was George and Vonda's home, which they call General's Retreat, on Greers Ferry Lake near Clinton in north central Arkansas. Judy drove up to join us one day.

Judy only lives about two hours away but can't leave her six dogs and 20 cats for more than part of a day. She's the consummate animal lover and can't stand to pass up a sick or wounded dog or cat. The dogs live inside and



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

the cats outside in a "cat-a-tat" which takes up her entire carport.

George and Vonda's home on the lake got its name because it is where they ended up after George spent more than 20 years in the Army.

The highlight of the visit to the lake was a speedboat trip to a restaurant on the other side for supper. Neither my sister nor I had been in a speedboat for years, and it brought back pleasant memories of our childhood, when we learned to water ski and boat in Kansas.

Next stop was Newport, Ark., for the main event — Uncle Jeff and Aunt Frances. Jeff is 87 and a World War II veteran, and Frances is four or five years younger and a former home economics teacher.

Both still drive and keep busy. Uncle Jeff is a master wood carver who specializes in birds, especially ducks, while Aunt Frances keeps

the house without any help. Both are active in their church and civic organizations, including the Lions and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

They took us to the Ozark Cultural Center in Mountain View, Ark., to listen to folk music and watch the crafters work. It's a state park and quite amazing. They have people making baskets, soap, knives, guns, glass beads, brooms and any number of other household items needed by our pioneer ancestors. The whole place is dedicated to keeping the arts, crafts and music of the Ozark Mountain region alive and well.

The center was well worth the two-hour drive from their home.

Probably the biggest thing we got out of our trip, though, was the companionship. While I'm six years older than my sister and sometimes have lived hundreds of miles away, we've always been close, and the long drive was a great opportunity to talk and reconnect.

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@nwkansas.com

Is it time for a second revolution?

To the Editor:

My dad, Dr. Jay B. Seyferth, veterinarian, passed away in 1988.

He was 50 years old then and involved in the American Agriculture Movement. He and others who were trying to inform people about what our U.S. government was doing to us were laughed at, made fun of and labeled "crazy." This was in the '70s and early '80s.

A year or two before he passed away, I remember something he said to me: "Jari, there will come a time when we will have a second American revolution. It may not come in my lifetime, maybe not even in yours, but the time is coming when people will be so fed up with government they will revolt."

Well, with all that is going on in Washington over the last few weeks, more people are waking up to the corruption, fraud, lies, cronyism, payoffs, scandals and broken promises.

John F. Kennedy once said "You can tell the character of a nation by the way it treats its veterans." World War II veterans and Americans in general are being blocked out of a memorial that servicemen and -women and Americans across the country donated money to build. All Washington did was let them place it on the Mall in D.C. where everyone could visit.

D.C. may have paid for a guard or two just to keep the place clean and litter free, but no federal money was used to build those monuments. The people — Americans — paid for them. Locking out our veterans is an outrage and embarrassment.

There have been over 20 shutdowns of government in the last 30 to 50 years and never have those monuments been closed to the public. Nor have places like the Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore and all our national monuments and parks ever been closed because of a government shutdown.

In my humble opinion our Narcissist-in-Chief president is just mad because his precious Obamacare might be defunded. It's an outrage and the American people are getting to the point of "I've had enough; \$17 trillion in



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

debt and now the Prez wants another trillion?"

When will Congress grow a backbone and impeach this tantrum-throwing, "It's my way or no way 'cuz I'm the President" individual? He and his buddies have had long enough. It's time to rein him and the Senate in. They have cost the current generation — and two, three or more future generations — their life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, until America pays its \$17 trillion debt to China. God help us all!

Do you honestly want the Internal Revenue Service and Washington bureaucrats in charge of your health care instead of you and your doctor? I don't! (Don't get me started on that!)

Jari Skiles, Colby

State works to bridge gaps

To the Editor:

As the federal government shutdown continues, uncertainty is growing for citizens across this great nation as the effects of the shutdown begin to hit close to home.

Here in Kansas, our advance planning for a possible government shutdown means we are able to mitigate these effects for our citizens.

Since taking office, this administration and the legislature have worked hard to put our fiscal house in order. When we took office in 2011, we faced a deficit of \$500 million. Kansas started this week with more than \$430 million in the bank. This strong ending balance provides us with flexibility in cash flow management that we can use to minimize the effect of the federal government shutdown on programs critical to the citizens of Kansas.

We are taking steps to ensure unemployed Kansans continue to receive scheduled unemployment payments and to minimize any disruptions to programs needed by our most vulnerable Kansans, including Temporary Aid to Needy Families and the Women Infants and Children programs. An extended federal shutdown puts these and other programs in jeopardy. Friday, I instructed the Department of Labor not to proceed with plans to furlough 119 employees. This ensures unemployed Kansans will continue to receive scheduled unemployment checks.

The National Guard and Kansas Highway Patrol will continue to fulfill their critical public safety roles. The National Guard is closely managing the use of maintenance repair parts, supplies and other items that they will not be able to replace while the government shutdown continues. In some cases, employees performing similar job functions are being rotated to minimize financial impact and loss of benefits. The state has assumed the responsibility for the costs of some operations, including utilities costs at National Guard facilities which are expected to be reimbursed when the continuing resolution or appropriation is passed.

The supplemental nutrition WIC program which serves low-income mothers and their children will operate through this month. We are reassessing our available options if the shutdown continues into November.

These actions will preserve critical services through October. My administration continues to assess our resources and identify solutions to the problems created by the ongoing government shutdown.

The Kansas economy is strong, just as its people are strong. I am committed to minimizing the effects of this shutdown on Kansans. At the same time, we must continue our forward progress by developing a skilled workforce, creating a robust economy and investing in making Kansas an even better place to raise a family.

Sam Brownback, governor

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

