

commentary

from other pens...

Recovering economy toughens Dems job

Hopes Democrats had of riding a wave of economic worries to victory in the 2002 elections are fading as consumer confidence rises.

Democrats think a number of pocketbook issues, combined with rising budget deficits and underlying economic weaknesses, could be a potent combination, but they face a tough job making that case to voters.

Democrats have a one-seat edge in the Senate and need to pick up six to take control of the House.

"If you're in recession, the story tells itself," said Will Marshall, president of the Progressive Policy Institute, a think tank linked to the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. "This is a more ambiguous situation."

"Right now, President Bush is not paying a big price for the weakness of the economy," said Marshall, who helped oversee a critical report just issued on the Bush administration's economic policy. "With patience and persistence, Democrats have a real opportunity to make the case this administration is mismanaging the nation's economy."

Marshall said the economic formula of the 1990s "worked spectacularly well — a combination of fiscal discipline, trade and investment in the economy's capacity to innovate." He said Bush's refusal to back off tax cuts as a huge surplus melted away has undone that formula.

Confidence spiked in March in both the Consumer Confidence index, done by the New York-based Conference Board, and in an ABC News-Money Magazine poll. Republicans point to growing confidence as a sign the president's efforts to stimulate the economy are working.

"What Republicans have been focused on," said Jim Dyke, a spokesman for the Republican National Committee, "is continuing to stimulate the economy so that those who want a job can find a job."

The president has a plan that strengthens national security and protects homeland security while creating jobs and protecting Social Security, said RNC deputy chairman Jack Oliver. Republicans, he said, are working to pass that agenda, "and if it doesn't pass, come November the American people will be asking Democrats why."

The public's growing economic confidence is in its early stages, with lingering doubts about the nation's job market. A March poll by the Pew Research Center showed by a margin of more than 2-to-1, people think the nation is losing ground in creating good-paying jobs.

Andrew Kohut, director of the center, said, "The question remains whether the public will feel improvement in their own lives, especially with regard to jobs."

Those reservations give Democrats hope the economy will remain a potent campaign issue. Terry McAuliffe, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said voters are interested in more than statistics about economic growth.

"The issues that will drive this year's election," McAuliffe said, "are pocketbook issues like health care, prescription drugs, retirement security and pension protection."

Increased confidence in the economy could provide opportunities for Democrats to argue for more investment in programs like health insurance, prescription drugs and Social Security, said Celinda Lake, a Democratic consultant. People aren't blaming Bush for the economy but might have had he not addressed the nation's economic woes publicly, Lake said. "But he was never going to make his dad's mistake," she said.

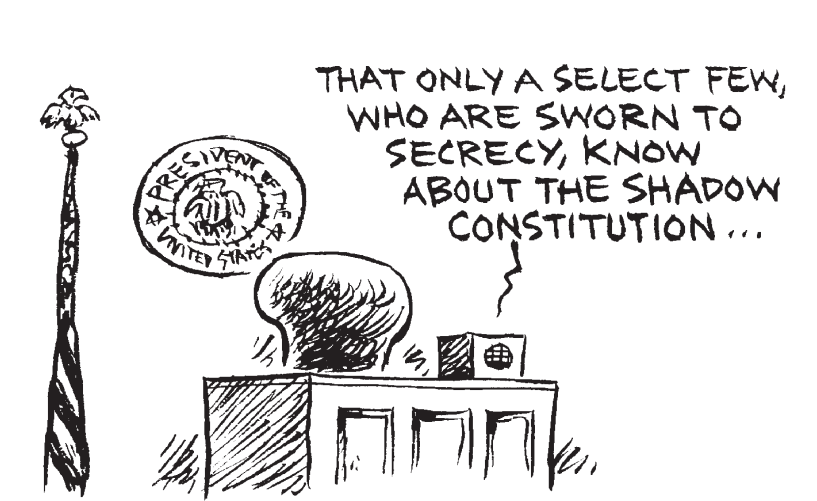
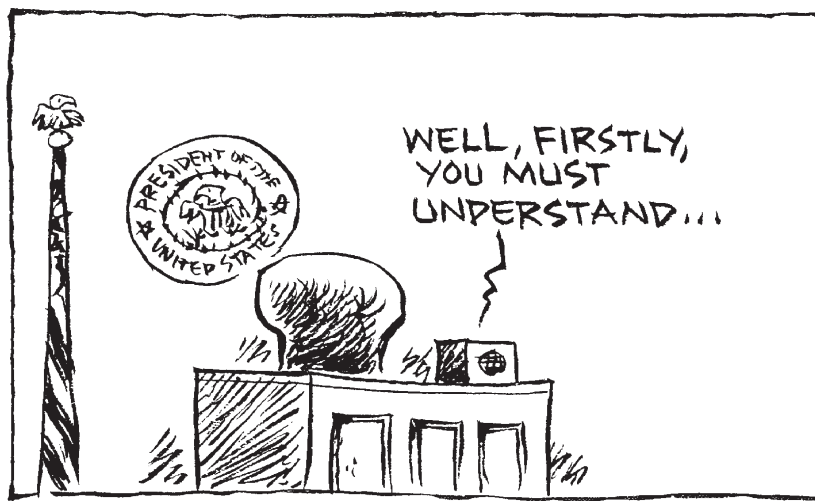
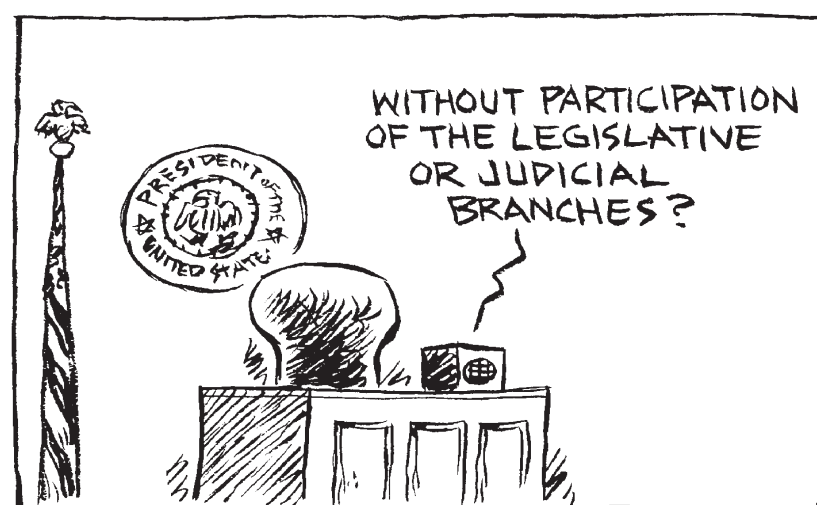
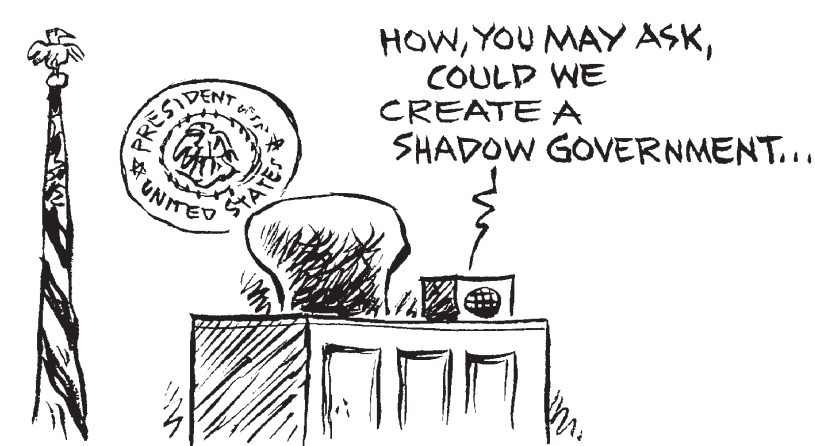
Former President Bush lost the public's support in 1992 amid perceptions of economic troubles despite huge approval of his handling of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf crisis.

Rutgers University political scientist Ross Baker said Democrats should diversify their strategy. "Democrats will have to cobble together a whole bunch of other things in the absence of a weak economy," Baker said.

He said Democrats would have an easier time "picking up seats in a bad economy. But to be able to pick up seats when the economy is on the mend takes a great deal more skill — and luck."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Will Lester covers politics and polling for *The Associated Press*.

ETTA @ 2002 FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM
MULME



What would the old historians say today?

I don't know about you, but I've sometimes wondered what people from past history might think if they saw some current posters or bumper stickers. I tried to get into the mind of John Wesley with this:

Letter to the Editor:

It has come to my attention that there is a poster being attached to numerous structures around town. It reads: "Heaven is a bargain at any price."

In the interest of encouraging educational and theological thinking in myself and others, I implore you to publish my analysis of this glib theology.

"Heaven" is not a place or condition to be obtained. It is a state of living. No human being can, by his/her own merits, earn or buy heaven (salvation). However I feel compelled to urge all people to seek it, as it comes through faith. This begins with a recognition of wretchedness and the real-



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• commentary

ization of being totally undeserving.

It is accessible to all but unavailable by actions or merit. "Bargain" has the connotation of being a "markdown." There is nothing cheap about grace. Grace is a free gift from a loving God. It is all around all people; they have only to reach out and accept it.

"At any price" indicates value. Jesus Christ set the standard for pricing. We are invited to participate in distribution, by testimony and example. Humans should look on heaven as a desired con-

dition worthy of any and all sacrifice. However the "purchasing price" has already been paid, and claiming the charity requires obligations to God and to others which any believer will want to honor.

I speak the plain truth so that plain people may understand and be assured of God's presence here and now, instead of in a distant destination.

I hope this has clarified this poster so that no one can ever again glibly recite it without acknowledging a far deeper meaning than that of a first-sight reading. For further illumination, please read the Holy Scriptures, investigate the common Christian traditions, and apply reason coupled with your own experiences.

I challenge each of your readers to examine her/himself and his/her worthiness of the gift of grace. Have faith; heaven can be yours. In the service of Christ in this world,
John Wesley

Trash problems become hot topic again

To the Editor:

Trash: It seems this is the magical topic in all households lately. The coffee bunches have discussed the trash problem so much it was getting cold. Then along comes one day this week and it becomes a hot topic again.

I don't know the answer but it would seem that one way to solve the situation is individual trash containers for every household. If every household had their own container you would know who is responsible for some of our problems because it would be in their own yards with them in charge of what is deposited in it. I know this would cause the city to purchase more small containers but something must be done before the County Commissioners, and a couple of their employees, will say we can no longer deposit our trash. (They forget they don't own the ground it belongs to all us taxpayers, they are only the care takers.)

I also agree with the City Commissioners and Manager that who knows what they will come up with next to forbid us from dumping our trucks.



**from our
readers**

• to the editor

Maybe buying our own ground is one answer and maybe we as taxpayers should pay the \$150 dollars under protest for a couple of years and see just what will happen. Surely somehow we can solve this situation without both committees coming to blows.

Harold L. Van Vleet
Goodland

To the Editor:

I would appreciate it if you would print my letter in your newspaper.
I am a fifth grade student at Coronado Beach El-

ementary School in New Smyrna Beach, Fla. I have adopted your state as a class project. Please send me one postcard from your state. Please do not send me anything but a postcard. We are unable to accept letters or packages due to safety precautions. I am writing in hopes of getting a postcard from as many different people as possible. It would be great if some will take the time to write a short note on the postcard telling me something interesting or special about your state.

I hope your readers can help me with my project. Send postcards to Brandon Spaulding, Coronado Beach Elementary School, 3550 Michigan Ave., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169. My classmates are also doing this project. Each of us has chosen a different state. I would like to become an expert on your state. Please accept my thanks in advance for your help.

Brandon Spaulding
Coronado Beach Elementary School
New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

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Washington squirrels respond to western accent

It may sound a little nutty, but my wife talks to squirrels.

Really.

She has been doing this for years. She says she learned the lingo when she was a kid.

She had a prairie dog as a pet. She's told that story. Her father had gone out to sight in his rifle and found a young dog he had only stunned. He put it in his pocket and took it home.

They turned the little critter loose in the yard, but it started to dig holes. Lots of them. Then they kept it in an old hamster cage until it got too big for the wheel.

Prairie dogs, you may know, are not dogs. They are big ground squirrels, and that is how Cynthia learned to talk squirrel, from her pet prairie dog.

I guess she spent hours talking to the little guy and got pretty good at it. I don't know if that means she has a prairie dog, rather than a tree squirrel, accent, but the squirrels in Washington the other day seemed to understand her pretty well.

We were crossing the Capitol grounds, on our way back from a meeting with Rep. Jerry Moran's staff. (The House had finished the budget and the Congressman had gone home already.) Just two prairie sophisticates, strolling back to our hotel.

Then she started talking to the squirrels. I don't know what she said. I never had a prairie dog, and I don't speak more than a word or two of squirrel. You know, maybe "good morning" and "where is the bathroom," stuff you need to get by.

She was chatting up a storm with one nearby specimen, and pretty soon, squirrels were looking up all over the place. More than that, they started moving our way — at a trot.

Pretty soon, we were surrounded. I thought that we were maybe going to be mugged. Some of them were looking at us that way.

These were not, by the way, the little red squirrels you see in Kansas, and sometimes even in Oberlin. In Washington, they have big, furry gray squirrels with a little red in the undercoat. The Capitol grounds are thick with them. I don't suppose



**steve
haynes**

• along the sappa

they allow hunting, and it looks like someone may be feeding them. Feeding them a lot.

I don't know what she said to them, but maybe she accidentally mentioned food, I don't know.

But here we were surrounded by a horde of hungry squirrels, four or five at least. Squirrels who are not the least bit afraid of humans. Squirrels who obviously were expecting something.

What would we do if they rushed us all at once? They weren't saying anything to her, just looking expectantly.

After a couple of seconds of silence on her part, though, they backed off and went back to whatever they had doing. I was relieved.

Then a couple of blocks later, not having learned her lesson, she started talking squirrel again. I told her I thought we were late for lunch, we hadn't brought anything for her little friends and I thought

Letter Policy

The Goodland Daily News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with phone numbers, by e-mail to: daily@nwkansas.com.

things might get ugly if she kept raising their expectations.

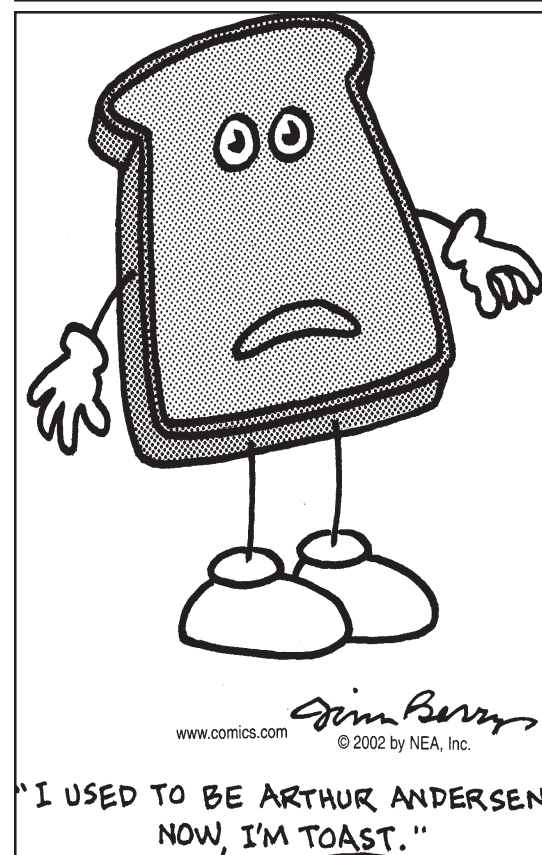
We were, after all, outnumbered. There was not, amazingly enough in Washington, a security guard or capital cop in sight.

I felt pretty lucky when we made it back out of the park.

I told her from now on she should stick to talking with one squirrel at a time unless she brought some acorns.

I told you this story was a little nutty.

berry's world



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