

from our viewpoint...

No matter who wins the debt will grow

One thing that seems certain, no matter who becomes president, is that the national debt will continue to grow over the next couple of years.

That's a frightening prospect, with the debt now estimated at \$10.3 trillion and growing at a rate of \$3.45 billion a day. That's nearly \$34,000 for each American, man, woman and child — and growing at more than \$11 a day.

While both major parties will give lip service to balancing the federal budget, the deficit for this year is estimated at \$438 billion. That's likely to grow next year for a couple of reasons.

One, the Democrats will have control, maybe even "veto-proof" control, of the House and Senate. The temptation to pass pet spending bills and "economic relief" projects will be just too much to resist.

And two, both parties will be running scared of the economy. They will pass any bill aimed at rescuing us from disaster, whatever it takes. And witness the recent bailout bill, which grew from \$400 billion the government didn't have to nearly \$600 billion the government didn't have.

Around of vetoes isn't likely. Neither Sen. John McCain or Sen. Barack Obama will veto any spending bills next year. Priorities in Washington favor spending over thrift, since spending for a member's own state or district, or for a member's backers, is what earns approval and keeps congressmen in office.

Many go to Washington with a fine set of ideals, but few can resist the allure of spending, either pork-barrel project for the home folks or big programs to rescue the economy, help the poor and the downtrodden — or corporate America.

Spending is the quickest route to a campaign war chest these days, and for most congressmen, staying in Washington becomes the main, sometimes the only, goal.

Money is the fuel that corrupts the system, and it gets worse every year. It's not likely to change soon.

For one thing, few in Washington see a problem. Members' interest is mostly in staying there, not in reforming the system.

Until Americans wake up and realize what we are doing to ourselves, that won't change. Until we give the president a line-item veto so he or she can excise the worst spending excesses, Congress will keep passing bills loaded with pork, using untouchable "earmarks" to get money for everything from bridges to corporate tax breaks.

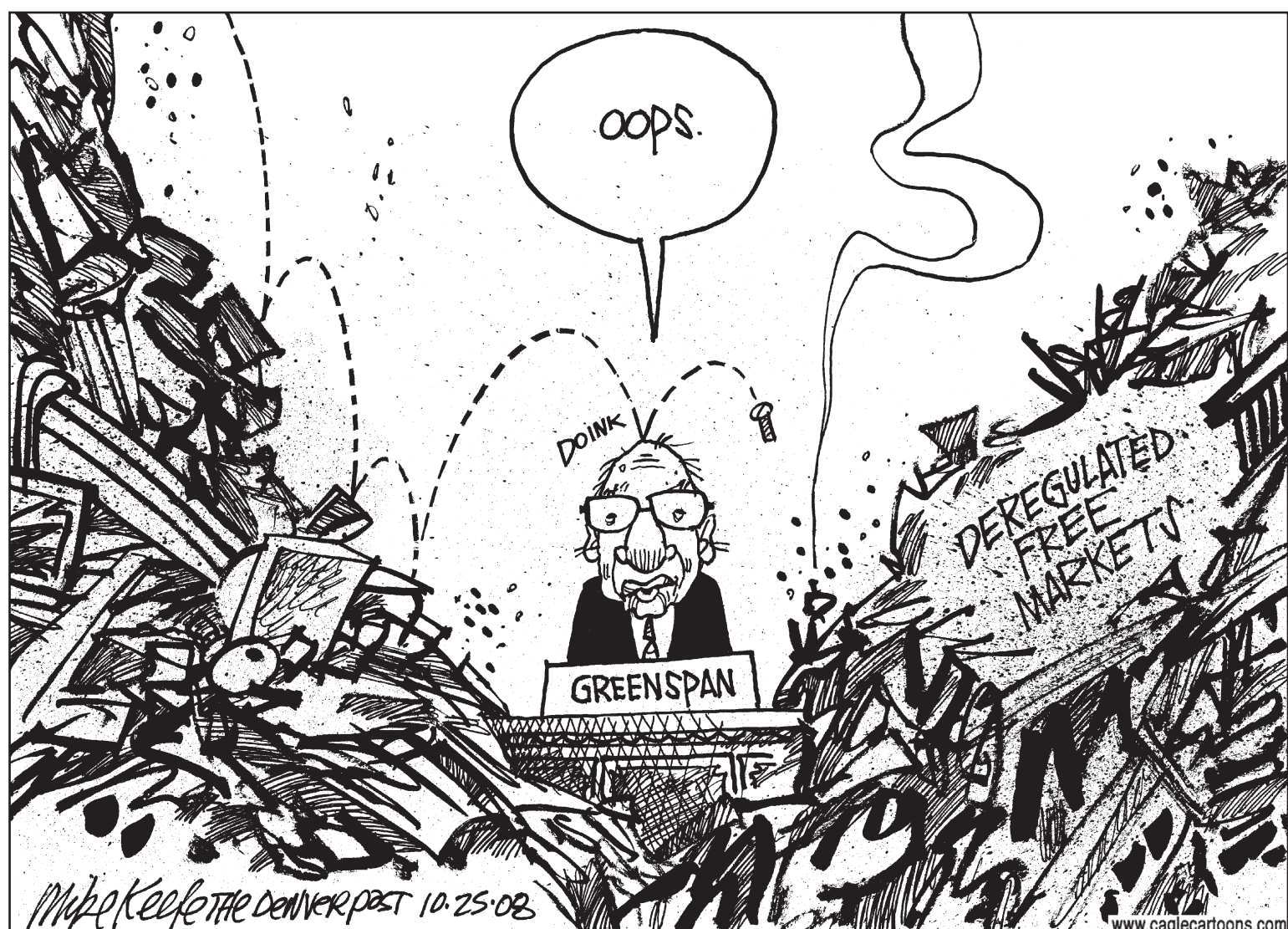
Until we start caring about the deficit and the debt, Congress will assume things are just fine. It would be easy to argue that at \$10 trillion, the debt is so huge it's beyond our comprehension already.

But in tough economic times, the lure of pumping up the economy may trump fiscal responsibility anyway. Who's going to vote against a better economy?

This nation is digging its own grave. We're spending our grandchildren's income and our great-grandchildren's while borrowing to finance our need for foreign oil. We're sending what's left of our wealth and our jobs abroad to fill SUVs and run air conditioners.

It's not just Congress that's bought into this corrupt and debilitating system. It's all of us. And until the American people demand better, things are liable to continue this way.

There's little to show that who wins and who loses in next month's elections will make much difference in what happens, for neither party has an answer or a plan. — *Steve Haynes*



Election brings up old questions

I have exercised my right and voted early, and with a week to go to the General Election would encourage everyone else to do the same.

It is probably not a news flash to most people, but I am a Democrat and voted for Barack Obama.

I have been a Democrat all my life, but on a rare occasion I have voted for a Republican or two. In an extremely rare instance, I even changed my party registration to vote in a Republican primary before switching back to where I am more comfortable.

In this election season, I was a Hillary Clinton supporter, and felt she was the best choice for the nomination. When the convention nominated Obama, I was a bit skeptical about his chances to win, and part of that was a feeling that it would be hard for many people in American to elect an African-American even before they would elect a woman to the highest office in our country.

The polls indicate Obama is in good shape, but I don't expect that Kansas will be among the states swinging away from the Republican, conservative base. I do think the increased registrations in the state may improve the percentage of the vote Obama and other Democratic candidates will receive. It would be amazing to see Obama come within 10 percent of winning



tom betz

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Kansas on Tuesday.

I grew up in the 1950s and was in sixth grade in 1960 when Richard Nixon lost to John F. Kennedy. At our school, we held a straw poll with people voting for Nixon or Kennedy and allowed each side to campaign for a week before the vote.

I was the Kennedy campaign manager. One of the questions the Nixon people brought up was that Kennedy was a Catholic, suggesting he would bow to any order from Rome. I thought that was outlandish. Nixon won the straw poll, but I was pleased Kennedy won the general election.

I believed our country had grown beyond these stereotypes over the past 40 plus years, and feel Obama should be elected because he is the best leader for the time and not because he is the first African-American candidate.

However, I was amazed to hear over the weekend comments from people talking about "those people" and that we should never have "brought them here." It was even suggested

that "those people" should be sent back where they came from.

Being of Cherokee descent myself, I wondered what "these people" think about the American Indians, who were here long before the United States.

I served in the U.S. Navy from 1969 to 1973 with a lot of people from different ethnic backgrounds, including a full-blood Sioux from South Dakota, servicemen from the Philippines, American Samoa and all over the country.

I got to know these people and was glad to call them mates and friends as we served our country during the Vietnam War. I did not serve in Vietnam, as the Navy decided it would be better for me to spend my time in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. On the base, I met people who had exiled themselves from their homeland because of their beliefs and could not go home.

I hope everyone votes. It does not matter to me whether you are a Republican or Democrat. As you go to vote, you might think of those sixth-grade kids nearly 50 years ago who said we should not elect Kennedy because he was a Catholic.

I believe America is a better country because of the diversity of our people, and that the Melting Pot is an important part of a history that has given us some of the most intelligent leaders in the world.

Blankity blank banks

Boy, are my mother and father uncharacteristically agitated lately.

I made the mistake of visiting them while they watched the cable news. Democrat Sen. Chris Dodd was on the tube blaming the market collapse on President Bush. Father jumped out of his recliner and began barking at the TV.

"That is blankity blank blank!" said Father, shouting words I never heard him say before — words he never permitted in our Christian home.

Father complained that Dodd, and other Democrats in Congress, pressured lenders to originate subprime mortgages, then pressured Fannie and Freddie — government-sponsored organizations — to buy up packages of the risky mortgages.

"Lots of people are to blame, but Dodd and his friends helped kick off the mess we're in," shouted Father, "and now they're benefiting in the polls from the economy they helped damage!"

There wasn't much time to discuss the matter, however. An interview with Democrat House Leader Nancy Pelosi came on. She also blamed our current woes on Bush.

"That is blankity blank blank!" said my otherwise dear, sweet, classy, church-going mother. She said words I never heard her say before.

Mother cannot understand how the public would want such partisans running the White House, House and Senate.

"Pelosi wants to spend \$300 billion on another stimulus package when the last one didn't work!" said Mother. "Liberal Democrats are going to raise taxes and spend billions more on top of the trillion or more we're already spending to bail out the financial institutions!"

There was little time to discuss Pelosi, however. Another Democrat congressman was on the tube explaining why taxpayers must bail out people who took on mortgages they cannot afford.

"That is blankity blank blank!" said Father, jumping out of his recliner again.

Father told me he and Mother spent their lives scrimping and saving and living within their means. He worked hours of overtime to meet his obligations. It makes no sense to him that the government will tax his tax contributions and give them to people who made bad



tom purcell

• commentary

decisions.

About then Joe the plumber popped up on the tube. His question to Obama prompted Obama to say that it's OK to tax people some more to spread the wealth around.

"That idea is a bunch of blankity blank blank!" said Mother. "That sounds like socialism to me and haven't we learned by now socialism doesn't work!"

There was no time to mull over her argument, however. The next news report explained that the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN, was accused of fraudulently registering voters.

"This group registered Mickey Mouse," said Father, laughing now in a disturbing manner. "Every stolen vote disenfranchises someone else who plays by the rules. That's just a bunch of blankity blank blank!"

Thankfully a commercial break came on the tube. I was unable to calm Mother and Father, however.

They told me why they're so angry. They raised six children. They played by the rules.

The America they know rewarded hard work and thrift, not stupidity and bad decisions.

They said they don't want the government to tax oil companies more to send subsidy payments to people who buy gas. It's not a subsidy. It's a bribe!

They said it isn't right for the government to take more from people who earn it and give it to people who don't. It's not a tax break. It's a bribe!

They said it's insanity to jack up capital gains taxes, especially when countries we are competing with — China, Singapore, Taiwan — have zero capital gains taxes, which are fueling massive investment and growth in those countries at the expense of ours.

They said they are frustrated that so many Americans are favoring politicians who will take us the wrong way — frustrated that the simple middle-class values upon which they lived their lives are under assault.

"It's amazing that more people aren't angry!" said Father.

The commercial break ended. Democrat Rep. Barney Frank popped onto the tube. He began blaming Bush for the financial meltdown. Mother had but one thing to say to that:

"That is blankity blank blank!"

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The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, July 4th and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com.

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

