

from our viewpoint...

Maybe that was a flicker of hope

Apparently it makes no difference where you are. The political mess is there.

In Washington, the Democrats control both the House and the Senate and thus are the target of an angry public. And rightfully so.

In Topeka, the Republicans control both the House and the Senate, and thus are the target of an angry public. Or they should be.

How in the world did we ever get ourselves in such a pertzelized condition?

Most of us would point the finger at Topeka and Washington. And that's probably fair.

But we the people are not without blame.

Aren't we the people responsible for those who serve us in Topeka and Washington?

Darn right we are.

Do we individually challenge our elected officials?

Rarely.

"Hey, they're one of us. They're good old boys."

Therein lies the problem.

Apathy.

Easily satisfied.

Don't make waves.

If you're a Republican in a Republican state, dare you vote for a Democrat.

If you're a Democrat in a Democrat state, dare you vote for a Republican.

And so it goes, like a merry-go-round.

The end result is record breaking debt.

Harsh words.

Jobs in the millions lost.

Budgets cut to the bone.

Fingers pointing all over the place.

We've gotten so far away from accountability of those we elect to represent us, that the wound causing the bleeding is in fact self inflicted.

Is is going to change?

Don't think so.

The only time we seem to show any interest at all in what's going on is during an election year.

What about those years in between?

Don't they count?

When you hear people talking over a cup of coffee about "Kicking the bums out" whose bums are they talking about?

Certainly not theirs.

So collectively, the bums are safe.

But it doesn't look like we are.

Nothing's going to change.

Stay the course.

But isn't that the way it was intended to be all along?

Whoa. Not so fast, there. Didn't the most Democratic state in the nation just elect a Republican to the United States Senate, to fill a vacancy left by the death of probably the most prominent Democratic figure in the country? Massachusetts now has Sen. Brown sitting in the chair occupied by Sen. Ted Kennedy for more years than a lot of people can count.

Maybe that was a flicker of hope. -TD

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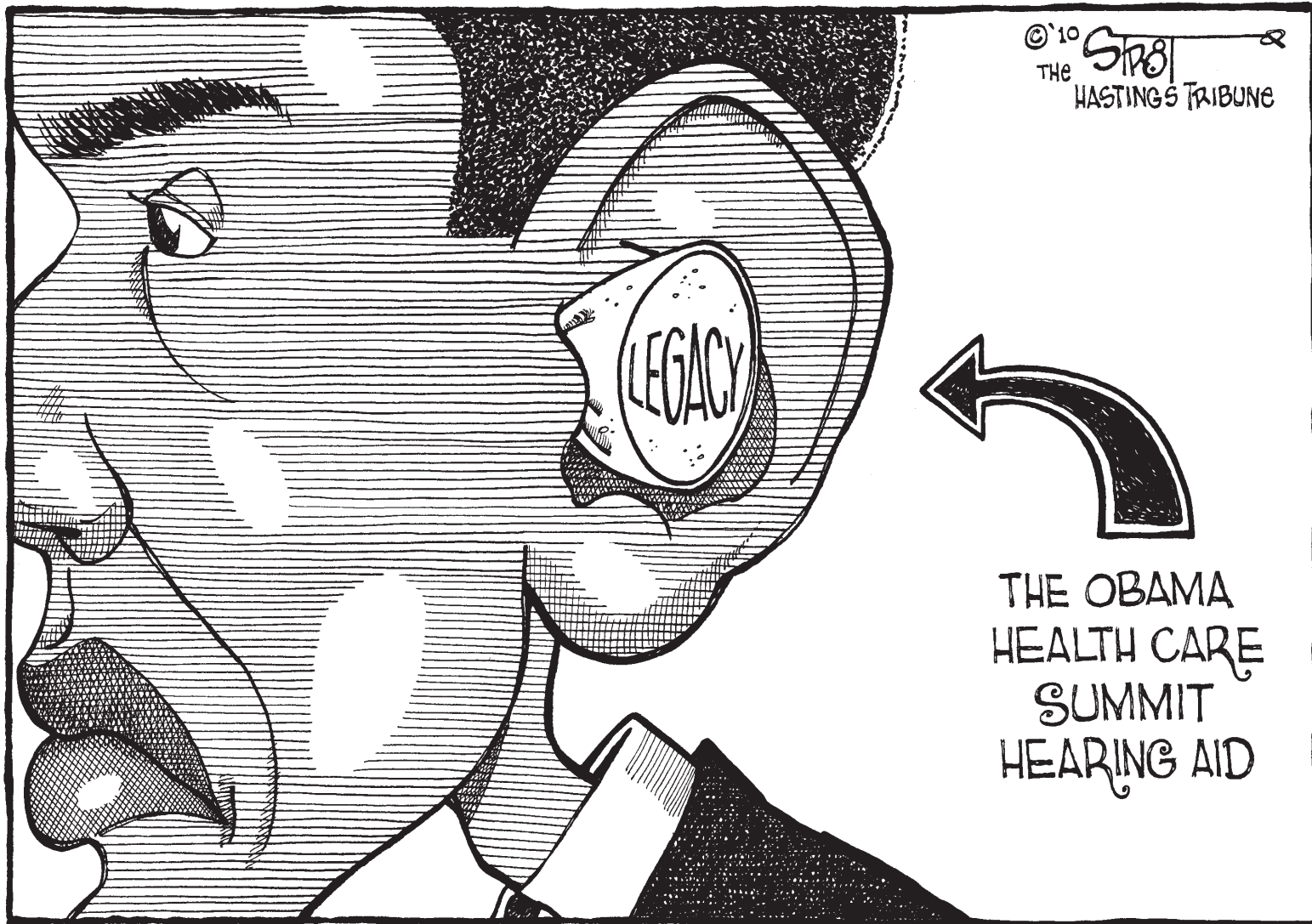
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THE OBAMA
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Cowboy wrestler leads off today's salute

Thumbs up to Jay Cotter, on your fourth-place finish at the state wrestling tournament at Hays, Good show!-(3 e-mails); to the gentleman looking to place a grocery store in downtown Goodland; we welcome you!-(e-mail and telephone); to those spearheading the benefit for Blayze Bahe at the Goodland Elks Lodge on Saturday.-(e-mail); to the ladies at the Goodland Public Library, for the free movies they show on Tuesday afternoons; super idea and this week's was a 1935 classic starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert in, "It Happened One Night." (e-mail); and to the Kiwanis Club, for reminding everyone of their U.S. Flag project. Details were on Page 5 of Tuesday's Star-News.-(td). (To render a thumbs up, e-mail tad1@st-tel.net, call 890-2475 or mail to TD at 516 E. 6th St., Apt. 212, Goodland 67735. There is no charge.)

-td-

The church's sanctuary needed a paint job badly, so the minister called for bids from members of the church who made their living by painting. One of those was a guy named Duke who always seemed to submit the lowest bid on community projects. No one knew his secret: he would thin the paint to make it go further. Duke won the job. When he finished the sanctuary it looked absolutely beautiful. The minister and the congregation were in awe and high praise of Duke's work. Six months had gone by and the paint started peeling off the ceiling and the walls. The sanctuary looked awful. The minister confronted Duke to find out what the problem might be. Duke knew



tom dreiling

• time out with td

he had to come clean, after all this took place in the house of God, so he confessed his little secret. Rightfully angry, the minister looked at Duke, hesitated for a few seconds, then yelled as loud as he could looking Duke right in the eyes, "Duke! Repaint! Repaint! And thin no more!"

-td-

He is 36 years old. Due to circumstances at birth, his life has been one of challenges, including neurological and developmental disabilities, autism, speech and motor skill difficulties and later in life severe Crohn's Disease. Hospital stays have been long and engaging. Despite the handicaps and ongoing challenges, this young man has worked at a pizza place for the last 10 years, and has lived independently in a shared apartment for the same amount of years. He is now excited about becoming a member of the 4th Degree Knights of Columbus in April.

Richard J. Zerza, of Orange Park, Fla., is my nephew and despite the handicaps that confront him each day, he brushes them aside as he looks for things to do that will challenge his brain. His latest was to put together a booklet of brief poems at Christmastime that best describe his grandmother, his parents, his siblings, his aunts

Smart Business



Insight this week

• john schlageck

Tapping into this ever-changing consumer landscape, today's food producer — especially those located near large-population, urban areas — must not miss the opportunity to reach the hearts, minds and stomachs of consumers who feel strongly about their food.

Some consumer-savvy producers are already honed in on this concept. They've retooled their farming operation from a conventional commodities-only business to one that includes pick-your-own sweet corn, pumpkins, flowers and strawberries. They're giving people what they want.

Others now provide home deliveries of fresh produce and sell their produce at local farmers' markets. Still others have added a corn maze, day-on-the-farm activities, ice-cream socials and chuck-wagon cookouts, while inviting everyone from school-aged kids to wedding rehearsal parties — all to enjoy the farm and ranch way of life.

This new direction in farming is being driven by farmers and ranchers who are attempting to be less dependent on cheap land and vast acreage. This pioneer is tapping into the population surge and wealth of consumers who shop online, drive a couple cars including a pick-up

and uncles, nieces and nephews. He had assistance with this 'secret' project, but the words were his, no help was necessary. Richard is a good example of what the handicapped, severe handicapped, can do if given the opportunity and family support. It's not easy, at times frustrating, but in Richard's case he keeps looking beyond today, looking for the next challenge that will keep him going.

Here are three of his poems, from the booklet titled, "Families are Forever.":

• Mom and Dad — "I'm So Happy, I'm So Glad, To Have A Wonderful Mom and Dad, We May Sometimes Not Get Along, But the Love We Share is Forever Strong."

Grandma — "Roses are Red, the Sky is Blue, I Know That Your Heart is True, Look at the Sky, the Stars and the Moon, I Hope to See You One Day Soon. Ever Since I was a Little Boy, Being in Your Company is a Thing of Joy."

Uncle Stevo and Aunt Cathy — "When I Look Around the Room, Up at the Stars the Sky and the Moon, It May Be Morning Night or Noon, I Do Hope to See You soon. Life is Tough and Hard Times May Come, It is Through Those Times that Victories are Won."

And so to Richard this uncle would say, "I shined a little light on you today."

-td-

Have a good evening! And don't forget your date this weekend at the house of worship of your choice. And don't worry about peeling paint! (tad1@st-tel.net)

and don't mind paying a premium for the food they feed their families.

Another common element of this non-traditional farmer is the belief this shift in production style may not make them rich, but will keep them out in the open spaces, running their own business and doing what they enjoy and want to do. A large percentage of those willing to try something new are younger farmers. In many cases, a young farmer is often considered someone who has yet to reach the half-century mark.

For some, traditional farming became too expensive. Others decided traditional farming was no longer worth the effort. Whatever the reason, any farmer will tell you farming is a difficult process. Still most would agree they are glad they bought their land, and glad they're doing what they enjoy and want to do.

No doubt, more and more farmers will be looking at a different direction to stay on their land in the future. The land will continue to be farmed. There will no doubt be fewer farmers but those who are determined to stay in this business of agriculture will have to find innovative ways to farm.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

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