

from our viewpoint...

Where are winners in debt vote deal

We expected the Senate, House and President Obama to reach a last hour agreement to avoid the country dealing with breaking through the debt ceiling, but where does this leave the average citizen looking in from the outside.

One pundit said Sunday night Congress always seems to get to work when there is a deadline looming over them. That is not a good way to look at either party as being a leader in getting things done.

When the final votes are taken on Monday and today we expect leaders in both parties to have a list of members who they can let vote against if the margin is very close. We would not be surprised to see last minute vote switching depending on whether the issue is narrowly passing or to increase the margin to give it a bipartisan majority.

No one in the leadership of either house or either party wants to see this final deal fail, and the real work to convince members of both parties to vote for the deal will be the main feature and theme before the votes take place.

President Obama said the process took too long and was too messy. That is certainly what it looked like from the outside as both parties tried to push for their plans, and accused the other side of not being willing to compromise.

Most Americans did not know much about the nation's debt ceiling or that it has been raised many times since first established in 1917 when America entered World War I. Over the years the nation's debt was pretty small compared to other things going on. When we entered World War II the nation's debt was about \$45 billion. At the end of World War II the debt had grown to \$275 billion, and by the end of the Korean War when Eisenhower was President the debt was \$281 billion. The nation's debt hit the trillion dollar limit in 1981 under President Ronald Reagan. The debt limit crossed over the \$5 trillion mark in 1997.

The nation's debt began to increase faster with the United States entered wars in Afghanistan and Iraq reaching \$10 trillion in July 2008 under President Bush. The debt crossed \$14 trillion in 2010.

Nearly every time the debt limit has been raised it has been a simple vote in each house of Congress, and usually a simple one sentence bill.

We agree the nation's debt is larger than it should be, and we as a country need to work at getting it down. Tying deficit reduction to raising the debt ceiling has brought our country to the brink of default.

We hope when the votes are taken in both houses the margin is large and both parties sign on to get this country moving ahead.

The real test of the ability to govern will be what comes out of the next three months and the super committee created. A pundit said the super committee designated in the agreement would be similar to the base closing commission in that the recommendations will be brought back to Congress for a yes or no vote without many changes to be allowed.

Everything will be on the table for the super committee, and we are sure Democrats are crossing their fingers behind their backs knowing the Bush tax cuts are set to expire at the end of next year.

Compromise is not a dirty word, and as Americans we need to press our elected officials to learn how to reach across the isle and spend more time working to improve the country rather than demonizing the other party. — Tom Betz

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Member: Kansas Press Association
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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

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Thanks to community for helping find dog

To the Editor:

I want to tell you how great the businesses and people are in Goodland.

Our St Bernard puppy disappeared from our yard Monday morning. My family looked everywhere and could not find him.

My daughter and I made 100 flyers and took them to the businesses all around town, motels, restaurants, stores, camp places, etc. Almost everyone we asked gladly said yes they would put a flyer in their window. They all seemed concerned about him.

This morning (Tuesday) my husband was driving around and saw JJ in a yard playing with someone so he came and got me and we went and got him.

I want to thank all the people and community for their help. I love living in a town where there are these kind of people!

Brenda, Gary and Brittany Fisher
Jason Siebert
and of course JJ

To the Editor:

I've thought often over the last 18 years of my father, Lowell Chatfield's, 95 years of life in Sherman County how very thoughtful many of you have been.

My loving family has been very helpful in filling in his empty hours since my mom, Thelma Chatfield, died in 1993.

Many of you helped him in so many ways. I wish I could list those of you who gave him special attention, but you know who you are, and I'm afraid I might leave out someone.

In my nightly conversations with him he was always telling me of some special favor or chore someone had done for him.

My family and I want to thank you for being the neighbors and friends who make a small town so special.

Janet Johnson
Estes Park, Colo.



from our readers

• to the editor

To the Editor:

For over 236 years, we Americans have owed our freedoms to the men and women of the United States Army.

Now, at long last, the American Soldier will be honored with the National Museum of the U.S. Army near our Nation's Capital.

Many members of our community have proudly worn the uniform of the U.S. Army. As a Founding Sponsor of the Museum, I ask you help make everyone in our Community aware of this long overdue national project. Plans are to build and open this important new Museum on June 14, 2015, the Army's 240th Birthday.

For more information, please contact the Army Historical Foundation by calling (703) 562-4173 or visit www.armyhistory.org.

James Ross
Goodland

To the Editor:

We have been involved with AFS-USA for many years as host parents of exchange students. All of them have left with abundant luggage, memories and a place in the heart of our family.

It has been one of the best activities of which our family has ever become a part. Our decision to host wasn't always the long-thought-out process I had imagined it would be.

We know the economic downturn is profoundly affecting those foreign teenagers who dreamed of coming to the U.S. After looking through the photos and brief descriptions of

the students, we are often smitten. It doesn't take long for a family to be willing to try this "experiment."

It turns out hosting and our family values of supporting peace and sharing knowledge entwined; and we have learned about many countries including Chile, Switzerland, Japan, Indonesia, Turkey, Germany, Thailand, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Italy and Portugal. We have learned some of the language, food and culture of each country from a resident expert! You can travel without leaving home, in your own favorite chair!

In the course of hosting many years, I have met with some other hosting agencies, read the State Department guidelines for hosting, and I am left feeling impressed with AFS. Among other benefits, hosting with AFS includes direct local support by volunteers, many of whom have experienced exchange first-hand as young people. Volunteers do a wonderful job of placing these students in our local high schools, and giving them orientation support throughout the year, so at the end of the day, the role of hosting is integrating the student into your family and enjoying a new daughter or son. Reviewing our years, we have felt well prepared and well supported. And yes, we plan to host again.

Don't think of hosting in terms of how I can fit another thing in my hectic life. Think of how blessed you will be. Please consider hosting a student through AFS.

If you are interested in learning more about hosting with AFS, please contact me, local AFS Volunteer Hosting Coordinator, Carol Ann Zimmerman at carol.zimmerman@af-susa.org or call (620) 271-8534.

Carol Ann Zimmerman
Allen Zimmerman
Sublette

Making the case that Medicaid works

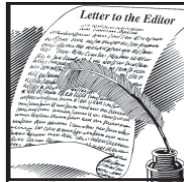
You never know what obstacles life is going to put in front of you. When I was 25, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Before I turned 30, I was using a wheelchair. When you have a disability, it takes a fair amount of creativity to make life work. Like millions of other Americans with disabilities, I found a way. I continued to work, volunteer and live my life.

After a few years, my MS progressed to the point where I could no longer get in and out of the wheelchair on my own. I was still the same person and still wanted to contribute something. But without help transferring from my bed to my wheelchair, I couldn't even get out the door. The world beyond my bedroom would be lost to me, and all I have to offer the world would go to waste.

Fortunately, Medicaid gives me the missing piece I need to make my life work. An aide comes twice a day to help get me into and out of my wheelchair. This doesn't just make a difference in my life: It makes the life I have possible. I work at an independent-living center and I volunteer with organizations that serve people with disabilities. The assistance I get means I can help others live meaningful and more independent lives.

For me, a meaningful life includes contributing to my community. Recently, I was appointed to serve on the board of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority. Many people with disabilities, seniors and others would be unable to get to work or to their doctors without public transit. Without Medicaid, I wouldn't even be able to leave my home to get to a board meeting. I think that says it all.

Medicaid helps me buy medications to control my MS. Without Medicaid, I could not



from other pens

• commentary

afford my medications, treatments or specialized wheelchair. No amount of creativity or effort would be enough to make my life work if I lost that care. In fact, I might be forced to live in a nursing home – which would not only take away my quality of life, it would cost the taxpayers more than the help I now receive.

As I said, you never know what kind of obstacles life will throw into your path. Our country is facing the greatest economic challenges of my lifetime. Life has gotten much harder for millions of people. I know what that's like. People are making sacrifices to make life work, and I know what that's like, too.

Lawmakers in Washington are now negotiating a debt-reduction deal that will likely include massive cuts in federal spending. Medicaid as we know it is at risk, and some proposals would gut the program. To put it bluntly: Cutting Medicaid would end the life I know. Taking away my benefits amounts to telling me that our government does not value the contributions I make. That would be wrong, and I don't believe it's what Americans want our government to do.

I am not a policymaker but I do know that slashing the kinds of benefits I rely upon is bad policy. Medicaid makes sense because it helps people live up to their potential. Eliminating the opportunities it provides is bad policy.

Not every American has as much at stake in this discussion as I do, but we should all be

concerned about the future of Medicaid. In America, we recognize each person's potential to contribute. When a person is working hard to overcome a roadblock, we don't throw another one up in her way.

Our elected leaders need to hear that cutting Medicaid is not what we need, and goes against everything that we are. I am the face of Medicaid: a woman who is not ready to give up on herself and is asking the government not to give up on her.

Anna Liebenow is a member of The American Association of People with Disabilities and a disability rights leader in Rhode Island.

The American Forum, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational organization, provides views of experts on major public concerns in order to stimulate informed discussion. The American Forum, 1071 National Press Building, Washington, D.C. 20045.

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