

from our viewpoint...

Debt deal a start, not out of woods

So, at nearly the final hour, Congress and the president reach agreement on a budget compromise that will save the economy. We are not yet out of the woods.

The agreement calls for cuts of \$2.5 trillion, which sounds like a lot of money, but that's not enough to balance the budget. It will take real structural change to do that.

The deal is a start, but only a start. The first billion or so is the low-hanging fruit. It comes from capping all spending except the so-called entitlements – Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, government pensions – at 2012 levels.

That is not a spending cut, in other words; it's just limiting the formerly unchecked growth in the budget.

In fact, \$2.5 trillion in cuts over 10 years averages out to just \$250 billion per year, while the country faces a projected deficit just this year of \$1.645 trillion. The government is borrowing 40 percent of what it will spend this year, and \$250 billion won't begin to change that.

It's pretty easy to see, we've got a long ways to go until we can balance the budget. Congress and the White House will have to find some way to cut another \$1.4 trillion a year.

Part of that is projected to come from growth in the economy, but in the present situation, that's not happening. The government projects the deficit to drop by more than half, to \$650 billion a year, by 2016.

A bipartisan committee is to be appointed to craft another \$1.2 trillion in cuts over the next 10 years, to be voted on by fall. But that's just another drop in the bucket, maybe \$120 billion a year.

Still, it's a start. We owe the "Tea Party" people a favor: they went to the brink to show the country how important solving this problem is. Until they did, and it's not been a pleasant experience, neither party paid more than lip service to deficit reduction.

With government spending, everyone wants some, but no one wants to pay. Republicans stand against any tax increase, while Democrats say, simplistically, "tax the rich."

Any approach that includes tax increases will have to include us all. Relying on growth in the economy might work for a while – until the next recession, at least – but eventually, that, too, will fail.

Cuts will have to be deeper, much deeper. What has to happen?

- Most of the budget is tied up in "entitlement" social programs that are dear to Democrats. We will have to let go, not of the programs, but of the way they are planned to grow and grow. That means caps on spending and cuts in the formulas for automatic increases.

But as we've seen the last couple of years, increases in Social Security and other programs have become an "entitlement" in themselves. Supporters cry that retirees "need" this money. But to cap borrowing, we'll have to face reality.

- Tax reform. Sometimes a euphemism for a tax increase, this means rewriting the tax code to make it less complex. But will people let go of favorite deductions?

- Real cuts, across the board, in programs from defense to farm subsidies. Those who depend on federal spending will have to suffer. But just as your family has to cut back when bills grow and income shrinks, we'll all have to take a piece of the pain.

None of this is going to be easy. We may have to go to the brink again. But the compromise shows the system, slow and cranky as it is, still works. All sides will have to keep the pressure on to move us toward a sane and rational budget, a less complex and more fair tax policy and – some day, down the road – a chance to reduce the burdensome debt that put us in this hole.

The country will have to take it one step at a time, but this is a – very small – first step. A great deal more effort – and a lot more pain – will be required. – *Steve Haynes*

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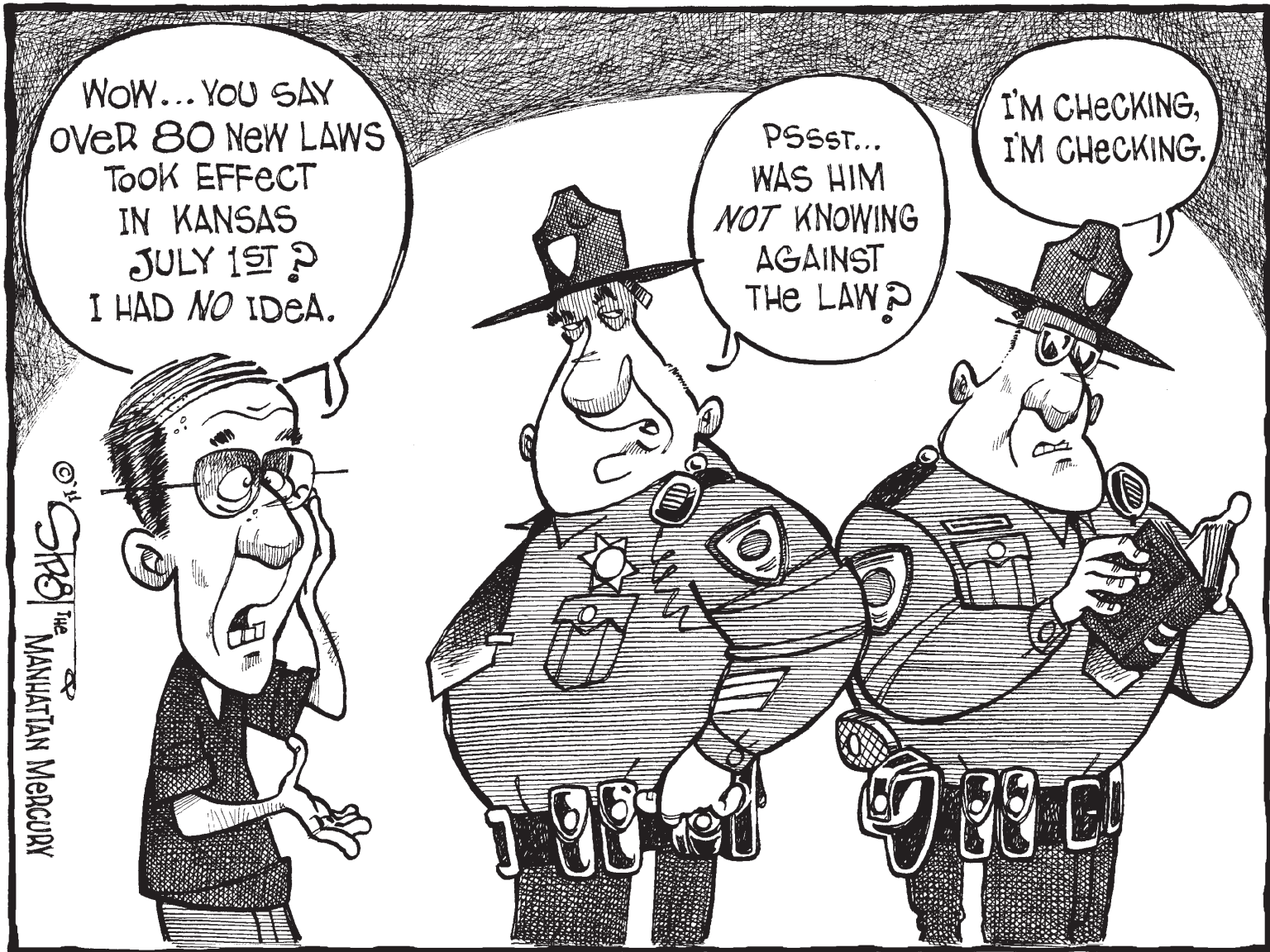
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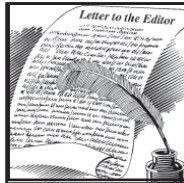
I see why they call it Goodland

We took off driving into the sun – a much later start than we'd like because of soccer games. We couldn't go as far as we'd like so we pulled off for a night of rest in Goodland.

We've always liked that name. It's rich, Americana kind of stuff.

Of course, our stay was in one of those Holiday Inn kinds of hotels – just right off the freeway, fast and convenient. So fast you never have to venture into town – just on and off. But because we had time, and because I'm always up early, I got up before everyone else and ventured into town.

It's like so many small farming towns. It's got a Ford dealership, a Chevy dealership – all with lots of trucks. There's plenty of farm implement and farm supply related businesses. Diesel is at every pump. And the grain elevators are not remnants of the past. They are real and active. The car washes are not automatic. I suspect they anticipate the need for mud to be washed off; one car wash even calls itself



from other pens

- commentary

the "Farmers Car Wash."

And in the early morning, Main Street is quiet. The brick pavestone is clean and neat. The storefronts show off with clean glass and all the things you might expect. A lawyer's office. A title company. The small town newspaper. Even a movie theatre is still alive and kicking. There's a woman out walking her dog, and there's no worries for her. It's safe.

The local McDonalds has the usual crowd. Or at least they seem to know one another: they greet each other by name, with hellos, and all seem to know something about one another's lives. They like their coffee black, and the same order most every day. They warn of the hot weather coming. Some talk of memories.

Red Cross blood services says thank you

To the Editor:

The words "thank you" will never be enough to express the true appreciation the American Red Cross Blood Services has for our blood donors throughout Goodland and the surrounding area. We would like to thank the volunteers and everyone else involved in making the drive on Tuesday a success.

The people of Goodland came out in force to support the blood drive held at the Methodist Church. We wish we could have taken everyone who made the effort to come to the drive.

Please know how much your efforts are appreciated. A total of 69 pints of blood were collected, Tuesday which may help up to 207 hospital patients. Every single day, the Central Plains Region must collect 500 pints of blood to meet the needs of patients at more than 100



from our readers

- to the editor

hospitals throughout our Region including patients being treated at the Goodland Region Medical Center.

EMS was the winning department for the Battle of the Badges and will be rewarded with the bragging rights and trophy from the Red Cross.

I sincerely encourage those of you who were unable to donate blood on Tuesday, to come back and attempt to donate at the next Goodland Community Blood Drive on Tuesday,

Debt ceiling deal doesn't solve problem

Any household or business with the type of debt history of The United States is toast unless they take a big haircut in the spending department.

The debt ceiling deal on the table now (as of Monday) is a joke and does nothing to solve the real problem. It only helps solve a short-term liquidity problem (at great expense to our kids and grandkids). It helps solve the professional politicians' political problem of getting re-elected as it puts off the next debt ceiling battle until after the 2012 presidential elections. Great, thanks guys for caring about my kids.

Even if 100 percent of the promised spending cuts were made it won't make even a down



guest columnist

- ken klemm

payment on the debt. The promised cuts are to be made over 10 years whereas the increased spending will happen now. Furthermore, the projected spending is greater than the debt increase.

Ronald Reagan cut a deal on the debt ceiling when he was president. It was to be \$1 of additional debt for each \$3 of spending cuts. He counted this deal as one of the greatest mistakes

where to write

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Some talk of today.

I'm just an observer – one passing through. And it's a mixture of emotions. I can't help but feel we've lost something in our incredible busyness. It's the power of things that are good, that are about growing, about neighbors and holding on. It's about fighting through – wondering whether the rain will come and the crops will come in, whether business will hold, and maybe that enough passerbys will wander through and remember.

Oh, I know that it's not perfect. There are still marriages that fail inexplicably, and youth who feel they want to leave – even if they should realize things are good, really good here. There's trouble of disease and businesses that will fail. But there really is something grand – something grand in this symphony we call Goodland, Kansas.

By William F. High
Kansas City, Kan.

Sept. 27. This drive will be held from noon to 6 p.m. at the Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 12th and Sherman.

Appointments can be made by calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or online at www.redcrossblood.org. The first hour is the busiest part of the Goodland drive, if you are not able to make an appointment the "best time" to walk-in is the last hour.

By supporting Red Cross with your generous gift of blood, you are supporting your community, state and country. You help us save lives every day.

Terri Dunaway, CEO
American Red Cross – Blood Services
Central Plains Region

of his presidency. You see, he's still waiting on the cuts Congress promised him (he's been dead since 2004). He was conned and it seems we soon will be as well.

We're in deep do-do unless we can get some adults involved who care about our kids' and grandkids' future more than their next election.

Thomas Jefferson nailed it on the head when he wrote "With respect to future debt; would it not be wise and just for that nation to declare in the constitution they are forming that neither the legislature, nor the nation itself can validly contract more debt, than they may pay within their own age."

It looks like our 75-year experiment with socialism (which includes generous amounts of crony capitalism and welfare, since that's part-and-parcel of socialism) is running out of air. Even recent history shows things can get ugly real quick unless we act boldly and swiftly.

We need true statesmen who have the guts to face these tough issues with true courage and steely resolve to save our Nation before it's too late. Maybe we should send the politicians a dictionary so they can learn that it's called a debt ceiling because a ceiling is a limit!

Ken Klemm is a local buffalo rancher concerned with restoring Constitutional principles of liberty. He can be reached at (785) 899-5804 or by e-mail ken@thebuffaloguys.com