

from our viewpoint...

Pressure obvious to spend tax money

We understand the pressure on public officials to spend more, especially on programs that federal and state governments push on them, including homeland security initiatives, emergency preparedness and the like.

But we're not sure taxpayers want, need or can afford everything local government wants or is told to do.

It may seem a small thing to increase taxes "just a little," but board members need to consider that many, maybe most, of those they serve cannot do the same.

People can't "raise taxes" to generate more income. In this economy, the boss would just laugh at them. For many, including teachers and most health workers, and many at small businesses, there have been no regular increases in the past few years.

Many businesses are still hurting from the recession. Unemployment remains high and this area's population continues to plummet.

A business can raise prices, of course, but that does not mean customers will pay. Many can and will go elsewhere.

Time was when our public officials were very conservative when it came to spending and tax increases. That's been less so in recent years. Often, when a city or county has had a windfall from increased assessments, it has kept tax rates high and spent much of the money. When assessments have gone the other way, board members feel they need to raise taxes to maintain spending.

Particularly in a bind are businesses and homeowners. The share of county government they pay for has increased in recent years as the state's complicated system for assessing farmland lags years behind reality. Farm-land values are through the roof even while taxes on ag land fall behind, leaving the county with less valuation.

The decision board members make goes beyond whether people can afford a "small" increase in taxes. The question is whether the cost of government - city, county, school, state, federal - should continue to increase, year after year, while the pool of taxpayers continues to shrink.

The level of local government we can afford may not match the level we are used to; we understand that.

It's not a matter of whether government employees need or deserve a raise. We know they deserve one, the same as many others do. It's not whether the county or city needs new computers or new equipment.

The question is whether taxpayers have received any kind of increase where they can afford to pay more.

What we know is that many taxpayers have no way to match any kind of tax increase in these times. And if people are not tired of higher taxes, they ought to be.

- Steve Haynes



We shouldn't be picking on truckers

With what our country is going through right now let's pick on the truckers. Why don't Goodland people leave them alone? They are just trying to pay our high taxes and make a living. They could get on the band wagon and live on disability, unemployment or welfare. What are they hurting? They are not holding out their hands and asking for someone to give them free this and free that. But let's stick it to the ones that are already here and make it hard for them. No wonder people move out of this town.



from our readers

to the editor

-Darlene Bauman
Goodland, KS

To the Goodland Fire Department:

I humbly apologize for the problem that I

had caused Tuesday night (8/24) and all the trouble you had to go through.

I commend you for your dedication. I truly appreciate the Fire Chief understanding and leniency. Thank you.

Once again, I am sorry. I also apologize to my surrounding neighbors for the inconvenient situation that I had caused.

Cordially,
Aaron Baker
Goodland, Kan.

Big deal or no big deal?

As the Aug. 2 deadline for a debt-ceiling deal drew near, many expected a big deal that would significantly change the direction of federal fiscal policy. After weeks of tumultuous negotiations, partisan bickering, and impassioned histrionics, the agreement that finally emerged was, to put it bluntly, no big deal.

Ironically, the most accurate assessment I read about it was Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's comment it "was not that great overall because it simply delayed the adoption of a more systemic solution."

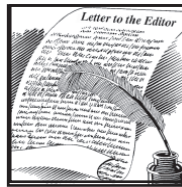
In exchange for raising the debt ceiling by another \$2.4 trillion, federal spending will be cut next year by all of \$21 billion (that's from projected increases, not an actual cut) and \$42 billion (ditto) in 2013. It will be business as usual in Washington. Political gridlock has preserved the status quo of rapidly escalating federal spending and debt remains intact. After an unprecedentedly emotional rendition of what I term "the debt-ceiling dance," the big spenders prevailed yet again.

Washington's failure to forge a big deal over the debt-ceiling issue is turning out to be a very big deal for the rest of us. In a year when we are on target to pay more than \$500 billion (close to 40 percent of personal income-tax revenues) in interest on the existing federal debt, our elected leaders have authorized \$2.4 trillion in additional debt over the next year-and-a-half.

Anyone who thought a debt-ceiling deal would reassure markets was sorely mistaken. Stocks cratered. Gold, which has been warning of serious political/economic/monetary malfunctions since its price was much lower, has exploded to over \$1800 per ounce, signifying a grave deterioration of conditions.

One outcome of the debt-ceiling agreement has been Standard & Poor's downgrade of federal debt from the highest rating, AAA, to the still very high rating of AA+. S&P's announcement has turned out to be a really big deal, triggering panics in financial markets around the globe and eliciting indignant denunciations from Democrats and Republicans alike.

Team Obama adopted a "kill the messenger" tactic. Treasury Secretary Geithner cited a



from other pens

commentary

hastily produced Congressional Budget Office statement asserting S&P had made a \$2-trillion miscalculation. Defenders of S&P claim that CBO manufactured the discrepancy by using a different time frame. Regardless, in today's fantasy world, when Uncle Sam is on the hook for a total financial shortfall of \$75, \$150, or \$200 trillion - depending on one's time frame and other assumptions - \$2 trillion, though a colossal number, really doesn't alter the picture.

The Senate Banking Committee appears to be trying to intimidate S&P by raising the prospect of a senatorial investigation.

Even conservative Republican Steve Forbes has blasted S&P. While Forbes is technically correct the United States can't default, because the Federal Reserve can always create more dollars, cheapening the dollar amounts to a stealth default. Furthermore, a downgrade to AA+ in no way suggests there is an imminent danger of default, but for S&P not to look down the road and report the possibility all federal debts may not be repaid in full would be a dereliction of duty.

What has happened since the debt-ceiling agreement is people around the world have voted "thumbs down" on the current government policy of racing further into debt. The agreement, as per President Obama's insistence, was designed to schedule the next debt-ceiling debate for after the 2012 election so it wouldn't be a big deal in next year's political campaign. That is astounding. There could hardly be a bigger deal for Americans than making the choice between spending ourselves into the poorhouse and shrinking the federal leviathan to forestall such an outcome.

I anticipate the debate over federal spending will be the principal election issue regardless of when the next debt-ceiling dance begins. If a majority of Americans want to be the western

hemisphere's Greece, a banana republic suffering from the mass delusion that government can economically support everyone indefinitely, then the Democrats will prevail. On the other hand, if a majority of Americans truly want less government, they will vote Republican (assuming the GOP can convince enough voters they really would slash spending).

I wonder whether the GOP really would significantly cut federal spending. Ultimately, it is the voters, not the political parties, who decide how much government we'll have. Polls may show a majority of Americans favor less spending, but the real test will be whether a majority of Americans will support reforms that include cuts to programs that personally benefit them. I hope I'm wrong, but I don't think a majority of Americans want that kind of change.

Dr. Mark W. Hendrickson is an adjunct faculty member, economist, and fellow for economic and social policy with The Center for Vision & Values at Grove City College. Contact Hendrickson at www.visionandvalues.org.



Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-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 and letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: star.news@nwkansas.com.

The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Pat Schiefen, Society Editor

Advertising Department

Jessica Corbin, Jeff Dreiling

Sheila Smith, Circulation Manager



Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager

Jim Bowker, James Jackson,

Lana Westfahl, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel,

Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight

nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

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

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving 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

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; E-mail address - <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=EmailPat>

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966. E-mail address - <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., 20515-1601. (202-225-2715) E-mail address - <https://huel>

skamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking State Office Building Rm 724, Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7659, cell (785) 899-4770, home (785) 899-5824. E-mail rick.billinger@house.ks.gov.

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785-296-7399; e-mail address - ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767