

from our viewpoint...

'Supercommittee' let people down

So the so-called "Supercommittee" lets us down, failing to reach an agreement on how to chop the federal budget.

It joins the presidential commission and Congress as a whole in disappointing us. Both parties are playing politics coming up to next fall's elections. Some say it's not likely there'll be any compromise before then. It's a dangerous game for incumbents, however.

People want the country to move toward a solution to the debt crisis. They want progress, they want compromise, they want answers. And politics as usual won't provide them.

Voters are likely to go into the elections in a surly mood. The nation's wars will be over, but the fiscal fight not yet really begun. And that will make it yet another season for challengers.

The "tea party" Republicans elected last year will cry "We told you so," but even they may be vulnerable. Democrats and Republicans who've done nothing will be in real danger; neither party stands to gain as much as it might lose.

The stakes, in short, are high, and the country is not likely to get what people want before the election. After the election, there could be a whole lot more new faces in Washington.

Why the deadlock?

Campaign rhetoric, mostly. Republicans cry for cuts to "entitlements," welfare, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Democrats reject that and demand tax increases on "the wealthy."

Both parties put up a smoke screen that they are fighting for us, but in truth, they are fighting to hold onto - or increase - their power. To a point, there is nothing wrong with that. Voters may feel both passed that point years ago, however.

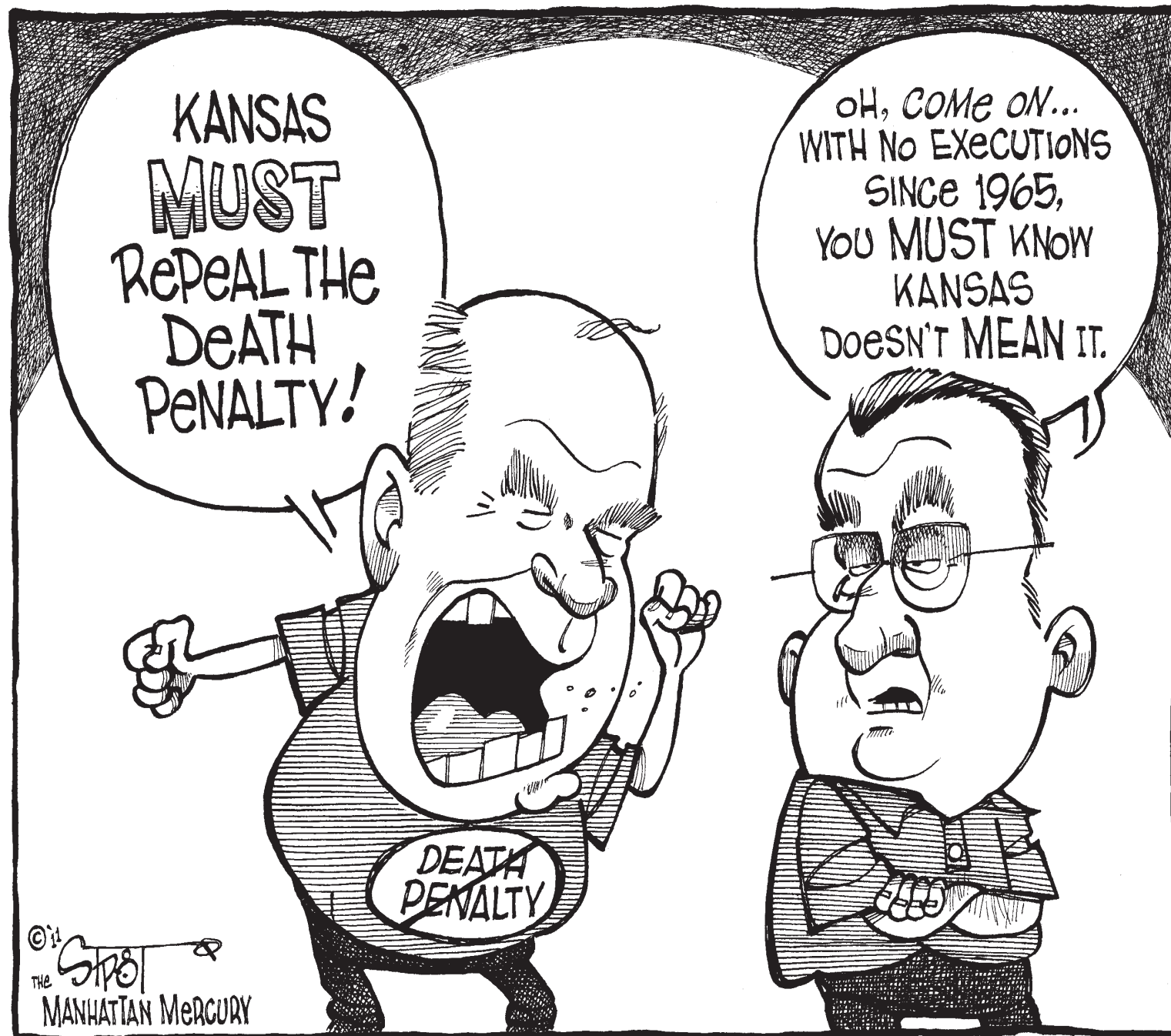
Having a government that works demands compromise, the ability to work together, a concern for the good of the nation. Those things are rare in politics, rarer still in our history. But this is one of those times that demand we pull together, not just pull for votes.

Democrats have to admit that automatic increases to "entitlements" must be curbed. Republicans are going to have to give more than \$3 billion in new revenue. Some other rifts need to be patched over.

The congressman or senator who ignores those truths risks the wrath of voters who are simply tired of games and tired of waiting.

It will take, as Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas said Monday, courage, more than anything, to work together with the other party and put the good of the whole nation first.

Ladies and gentlemen, the time is now, not two years from now, to start solving this problem, curb spending and balance the budget. Let's get with it. - Steve Haynes



Temperature dropped going west

It was supposed to snow, six to eight inches, the weatherman said.

It didn't.

We kept looking outside for flakes, but at 40 degrees, you don't get much snow. It did rain a little. Not even much of that.

Winter would have to wait a little longer. Fall was still holding sway in northwest Kansas.

I wasn't disappointed. I'm not ready for winter, even though I went outside and cut the last of my cabbages and pulled some, but not all, of my root vegetables.

Besides, I was leaving for Colorado, and driving in the snow really isn't all that much fun.

The drive was fine. We had dry roads the whole way, nothing to worry about. The temperature stayed pretty much between 29 and 35 until the sun set.

It started to get colder as we moved into the mountains, and there was more snow by the side of the road. By the time we were an hour



cynthia haynes

• open season

from our destination, the temperature had hit 15 and we watched it dropped lower and lower. As we pulled into the driveway of our weekend home, the temperature hit 5 degrees.

It was almost 10 p.m., and the inside temperature was a balmy 42.

We unloaded and started a fire in the wood stove. It took another couple of hours for the inside temperature to get up to a reasonable 68. The sheets in the bedroom were still icy, but the room was warm.

Overnight, the temperature hit 0, and as the sun rose in the morning, we looked out on a Christmas-card picture, mountains and trees covered in snow. Icicles dripped from the eaves

and smoke curled out of the chimney.

It was pretty, but it was still freezing, and the wood stove needed another feeding before the living room became tolerable again.

We had gone from fall to winter in a big hurry.

Our stay was more of a long weekend than a vacation. It warmed up each day. By the time we were ready to go home, the daytime temperature was above freezing and it was only getting down to 9 degrees at night.

The locals were all complaining that winter had come early this year.

Hey, they live in the mountains of Colorado, where the temperature falls to 40 below in the winter, and if it gets to be 80 in the summer, everyone complains of the heat.

Me, I'm glad to be back in Kansas, where it's still fall, and winter won't be here for - hey, was that a snowflake? - Noooooooooooooo.

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 and Jeff Dreiling and Michelle Etrick

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

Protect the prairie



Insight this week

• john schlageck

Like the grass, wind, tumbleweeds, tornadoes and drought, prairie dogs have long been a part of the northwestern Kansas landscape. At the same time, farmers and stockmen have lived and thrived in this short-grass environment for more than a century.

In the early 1900s, the first landowners and settlers broke out some of the native, short-grass prairie to grow crops. Many introduced livestock into this region to eat the nutrient-rich grass and provide the world's finest beef.

During this same period farmer and stockmen who lived in Logan County controlled the prairie dogs on their land so the cattle could remain productive. Left unchecked, prairie dogs breed, overpopulate and soon destroy the native buffalo grass. It is replaced by weeds or other plant species livestock find less palatable than the grasses that were replaced.

When the prairie dogs continue to thrive and reproduce the ground sometimes remains bare and the precious topsoil blows away in the wind. There are accounts of numerous days that are reminiscent of the Dust Bowl days of the '30s on some of this barren land.

Located in Logan County the region of grassland runs from the western edge of the county to the eastern border - approximately 40 miles long. It stretches nearly eight miles wide along this band - more than 280 square miles of grass. Buffalo, blue gamma, side oats and little blue-stem grasses thrive here

on the High Plains - all favorites in prairie dog town.

Like many of his ranching neighbors, Logan County stockman Lynn Kirkham knows prairie dogs are vagabonds and cross roads, under fences and into new territory. He understands they continually move thus exacerbating the problem.

"Prairie dogs come in and establish their colonies, dig holes and eat the vegetation," Kirkham says. "When the prairie dogs come in here and establish themselves it almost looks like a moonscape."

In Logan County, an average cow/calf pair requires 10 acres of grassland. In a pasture with prairie dogs, this number can increase to 15 acres to feed each cattle pair.

"With prairie dogs on your land, you can't run as many cattle because there isn't as much grass," Kirkham explains.

Another western Kansas stockman, Cameron Edwards, Logan County is a fourth generation farmer/stockman. Like so many early inhabitants of this part of Kansas, Edwards' great-grandfather purchased their land to serve

as a ranch and to raise cattle.

"We've tried to do everything we can to keep the prairie dogs out," Edwards explains. "They eat the grass our cattle should be eating. Prairie dogs are to grassland like weeds are to cropland."

Not only do they compete for the grassland but they damage the environment and surrounding beauty of this unique High Plains landscape. So it comes down to those who do not want prairie dogs and ferrets versus those who want to use them in this region of Kansas.

What is the solution?

The key is to have a good control method for the prairie dog, and to keep the native grasses in place that also allow for livestock production.

"We've had prairie dog out here as long as I can remember and we've been able to keep them at a manageable population until now," Kirkham says. "If everyone out here would control their prairie dogs, we wouldn't have a problem."

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.

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., 20575-1601. (202-225-2715) E-mail address - <https://huelskamp.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

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.