

from our viewpoint...

Political money can be better spent

They say money and politics is like water on pavement, it finds every crack and crevice.

But with mounting national debt, spending run amok, poverty around the world and here at home, couldn't that money be better spent elsewhere?

There are a few elected officials who are at least starting to think down these lines. Rep. Tim Huelskamp pledged last week to return 10 percent of his Member Representational Allowance – The \$1.4 million he gets to run his office – to the federal government.

When it's returned, this money usually goes to wherever the U.S. Treasury wants to put it, but Huelskamp requested it be put toward paying down the debt. The amount is small, about \$140,000, compared to the size of the debt, but it was more a symbolic gesture, and to his credit, Huelskamp doesn't portray it as anything else.

While there's nothing with that, how about a more sizable gesture? What about 50 percent? What about all that campaign money. Surely we can find a better use for that than paying for attack ads on other candidates or fancy paint jobs for campaign vehicles. For the 2010 campaign, Huelskamp raised \$1.19 million and spent \$1.3 million. His opponent, Salina Democrat Alan Jilka, raised only \$162,130. Huelskamp beat Jilka by a hefty margin. Did he need all that money to do it? It's hard to say. And that doesn't even cover the primary, where Huelskamp was running against six other Republicans, all with their own fund raising machines.

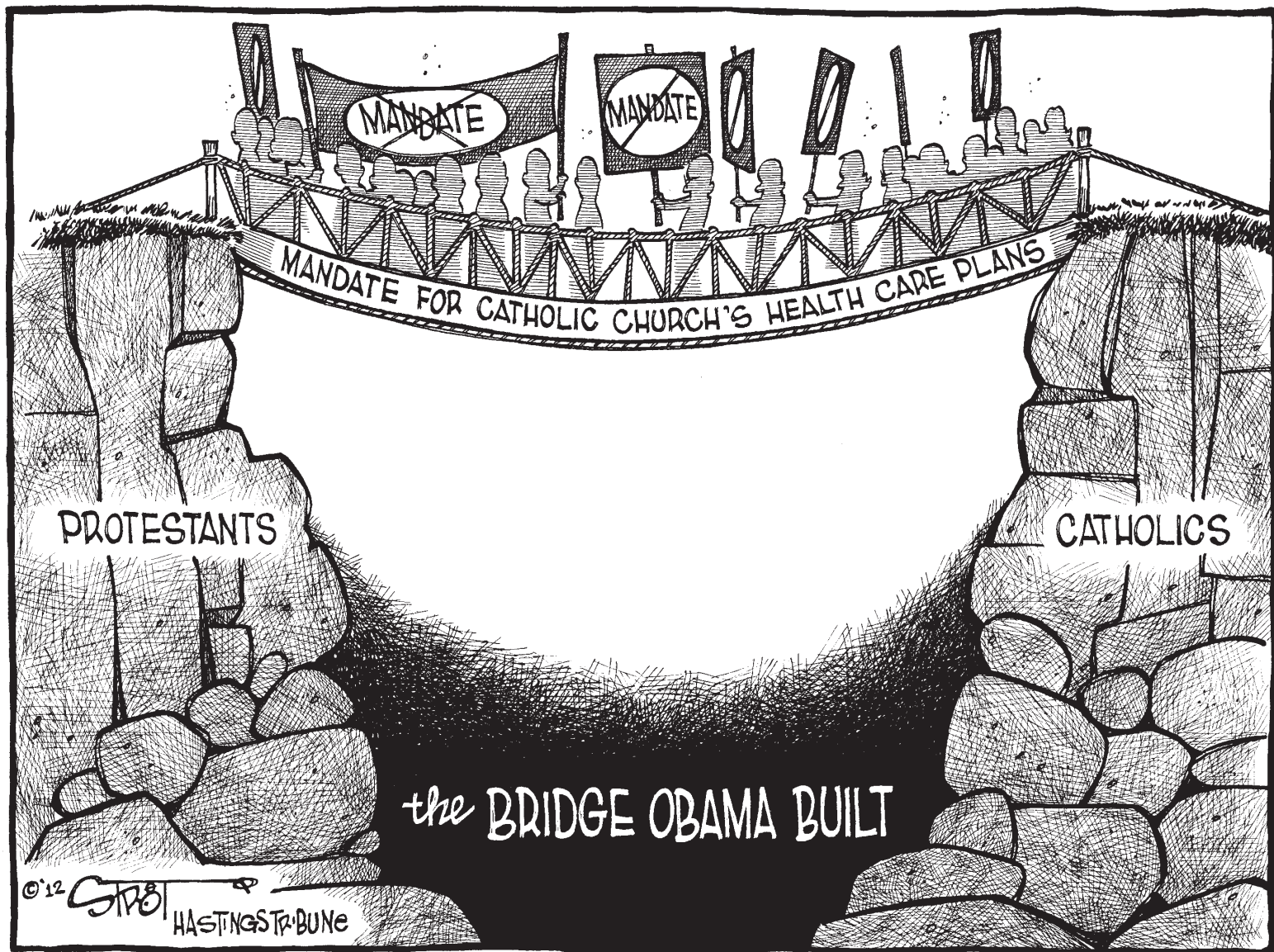
The dollar figures got a bit bigger elsewhere in the country. In congressional races, House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, is the biggest culprit. He raked in \$12 million and spent \$7.2 million. Other big spenders in the House include Allen West, R-Fla., \$3.1 million; and Eric Cantor, R-Va., \$3 million. It's not as though Republicans are the only culprits though. In the Senate, Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., spent \$5 million.

Altogether the Center for Responsive Politics estimates the 2010 midterm elections cost about \$3.7 billion. The money went to ads informing the public that Christine O'Donnell is not, in fact, a witch; an Ohio gubernatorial race where one candidate spent \$140 million of her own money only to lose; and a multi-million dollar unsuccessful race to unseat Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid in Nevada.

What about in a presidential year? Estimates vary but it could cost between \$6 and \$8 billion. That kind of money would go a lot further toward paying down the debt. Again, it wouldn't cover all of it, but put in all the money raised over the past decades in presidential and congressional elections, and it'll make a significant dent.

Don't like that idea? How about giving it directly to the people. The amount of money the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spent on the 2010 election – \$66 million – could keep 1,500 families of four at 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold for a year, and that's just the money from one Political Action Committee.

Would elected officials survive without their multi-million dollar war chests and congressional office allowances? As they keep telling us, ordinary Americans have had to make due with less, and so can they. —Kevin Bottrell



The good, sad memories of two mentors

It was a wild week with news about two people who have had a profound effect on our life in the newspaper business. For one it was a wonderful honor, but for the other it was announcement his journey through life had come to an end.

The two men Roy Robinson and Tom Dreiling had different connections to our career. Both were mentors we enjoyed working with and learned from each in their own way.

It was a thrill to read that almost life long friend and mentor Roy Robinson had been inducted into the Texas Newspaper Foundation Hall of Fame in January. Robinson, who grew up in Goodland and graduated from high school in 1957, became our mentor when he moved to Lamar, Colo., in 1961 to work for the Betz family-owned Lamar Daily News.

When Roy arrived in Lamar I was sort of beginning my journalism career as a newspaper carrier. Roy remembered his early days in the remarks he gave at the Texas Hall of Fame induction:

"My journey began with tools and technology I suspect are unknown to many of you," Robinson told his audience. "In my early years, hot type formed from molten lead filled heavy chases that had to be carried from a stone top table to the flatbed press. Five-hole punched tape replaced many Linotype operators before the advent of new technology – cold type – replaced the clunky Linotype machines. I recall my Dad, a lifelong newspaperman, firmly stating, 'I'm not cutting out – expletive deleted – paper dolls!'"

"Friden Justowriters, Selectric typewriters, Varitypers, Compugraphics and various other cold type devices didn't create paper dolls, but they provided the cut-and-paste type that launched higher quality offset printing technology. Gone were the makeup rule, type stick, casting box, lead pigs and, yes, scars on hands and arms from a Linotype squirt or from a splash in the lead pot.

"Reduction wheels were found on most desks. Ens, ems, leads, slugs and picas were heard less often, although the handy pica pole



tom betz

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has survived through the generations and is used today for various measuring and slitting tasks.

"My reason for brief reflection on our tools of the trade over the past six decades is to point out that today's and tomorrow's changes in technology are just the next steps in the ongoing evolution.

"An unknown voice said some years ago, perhaps to a linotype operator wearing the customary green visor, 'If you don't like change, you're going to enjoy irrelevant even less.'"

During his few years in Lamar it was Roy who talked my father and grandfather into investing in the offset technology with construction of a darkroom and purchase of the first offset commercial press. He taught me how to run commercial printing presses including a hand-fed press to print fancy wedding napkins and a variety of other products.

I learned a lot about the offset system that literally became the wave of the future when the historic flood of June 1965 sent about two feet of water through the Lamar newspaper building. The Lamar Daily News became an offset newspaper almost instantly making use of the darkroom, camera and plate burner Roy had purchased a couple of years before. Roy was moving to Cripple Creek when the flood hit Lamar.

I enjoyed visiting his parents home in Cripple Creek and his father B.G. took the Betz kids on several jeep tours of the Gold Hill mining area. At that time Roy was living in Woodland Park and running both the Ute Pass Courier and the Cripple Creek Gold Rush.

I remember on one trip to Woodland Park during a summer watching Roy try to ride a bucking horse in the local rodeo. I don't remember him making it to the eight second

whistle.

As a Past President of Colorado Press Association Roy was called on many times to help various committees. When I was elected President I asked Roy to head another attempt to settle the "free" newspaper membership question. Reluctantly Roy took on the task, and as we both expected it was a contentious issue at the convention with no apparent resolution. I thanked Roy for his effort despite not solving the issue.

Roy continued to be someone I enjoyed working with and looked forward to our chance to catch up at the annual CPA Past President breakfasts.

Over the past 14 years it has been a pleasure to meet Roy and Carol Lee when they returned to Goodland especially for the Sherman County Alumni reunions.

The other news of the week was not as much fun with the announcement former Goodland Daily News editor Tom Dreiling had died in Denver.

TD as he liked to be known had been in Goodland many years before I arrived in 1997. He became the publisher of the Colby Free Press the next year and I enjoyed working with him during his years there and when he moved to the Norton Telegram.

When TD retired from Norton and moved to Goodland it was a pleasure to have him write his column and help proof stories for the Star-News.

Over the year I grew to enjoy working with TD and his special brand of humor. When we would drive to various meetings, he would recount Dreiling family stories, and we would discuss the latest political happenings. TD always said he considered Goodland to be his hometown.

I will be in the tearful crowd on Saturday when TD makes his final trip to town and to be laid next to his wife Jean.

I know TD will now have the "Peace" he always wished his readers at the end of every column.

Kansas Day includes traditional food

One hundred fifty fortunate grade and high school youngsters attended the annual Kansas Day Celebration at the Logan City Building on Jan. 27. This celebration is designed to provide students and the public with knowledge about the heritage Kansans all have in common.

More than 20 displays, complete with hands-on activities included period clothing, Native American artifacts, the art of bobbin lace, fur displays, an old-fashioned milk separator, fur harvesters, farm-life reenactments, butter churning, chickens and eggs, storytelling, farm machinery and historical photos and memorabilia from Phillips County's past.

Long-time participant and one of the key organizers of the Kansas Day event, Doug Zillinger says the Kansas Day Celebration teaches youngsters that the city of Logan and its people have been an important part of the fabric and history of Kansas.

"There's plenty of history and education represented here today for our young people," Zillinger says. "After attending one of our Kansas Day Celebrations, you seldom see students who don't walk away with a greater appreciation of our state's heritage and a better understanding of our farm and ranching industry."

In addition, Zillinger believes the youngsters are genuinely happy and excited to be part of the celebration. He's convinced they should have an opportunity to learn more about and understand their Kansas heritage.



Insight this week

• john schlageck

As an example, one of the Farm Bureau displays included a corn sheller, a corn grinder that made corn meal and muffins. As with most of the demonstrations at the Phillips County Farm Bureau Kansas Day Celebration, those attending were able to watch their food move from a raw product out of the field to a finished product warm and ready to eat.

"They see the entire cycle of where our food comes from," Zillinger says. "This is something most children don't have an opportunity to see because of our large integrated agricultural system."

Another integral cog in the agricultural history of Kansas displayed at the Phillips County Kansas Day Celebration was a working cream separator. Students from the schools of Plainville, Phillipsburg and Logan saw firsthand how cream is separated from milk from a cow and churned into butter. Once the butter was churned it was spread directly on home-made biscuits and the students received samples of the tasty treats.

Farmer/stockman Leland Rundle brought his mom and dad's old International cream separator to the celebration. His early 1950s

vintage machine purred like a kitten as it separated the cream from milk.

Rundle told the students how extra cream on the farm in those long-ago days was poured into metal cans, hauled to town for grading and then dairy producers like his parents received a check for their product.

"Mom always kept some of the cream for us to pour over fresh peaches and strawberries," Rundle recalls. "We poured the wonderful cream on green peas picked right out of our garden. There's absolutely nothing like this wonderful taste today," he told the youngsters.

Phillips County resident Janet Gottstine organized the day's celebration and thanked all the volunteers for their talent, time and energy. Gottstine said without all of these dedicated folks the Kansas Day Celebration wouldn't be the success it is each year.

"Our celebration has something for anyone and everyone," Gottstine says. "I believe the youngsters absorb what interests them from each and every display we feature during our Kansas Day event. I'm so happy we can provide them with an activity that is steeped in our rich, Kansas heritage."

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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