

from our viewpoint...

What will curb the federal deficit?

How do we curb the federal deficit, clearly out of control at \$423 billion a year and climbing?

That's more than 15 percent of the \$2.7 trillion budget. Making cuts has proved difficult. As President Bush points out, every program has its backers, and when they put the pressure on, Congress has a hard time saying "no."

Nearly half the budget is tied up in so-called "entitlements," programs like Medicare for the elderly, Medicaid for the poor, welfare, Social Security and farm subsidies. Unless Congress changes the law, most of these go up and up every year.

The president proposed cutting \$40 billion in growth from these programs — not a cutback, just less growth — over the next five years. His budget met with a howl of protest.

Congress needs to make those cuts, though, because we simply can't afford continued growth in every program. And what are the chances that Congress will do that?

You guessed it.

Democrats have called instead for repealing Bush's tax cuts. Bush counters that raising taxes could mean less revenue, not more, if the economy slows down. Besides, he said, more money would just mean more spending, not lower deficits.

"That's not the way Washington works," he said last week. "Washington will raise your taxes and figure out new ways to spend your money. That's how it works."

"The best way to balance the budget is to keep pro-growth economic policies in place, keep the taxes low so the economy grows, which generates more revenues for the treasury, and set priorities on the people's money."

But priorities have no place in Congress, where "every program sounds worthwhile. Everybody's spending request is necessary."

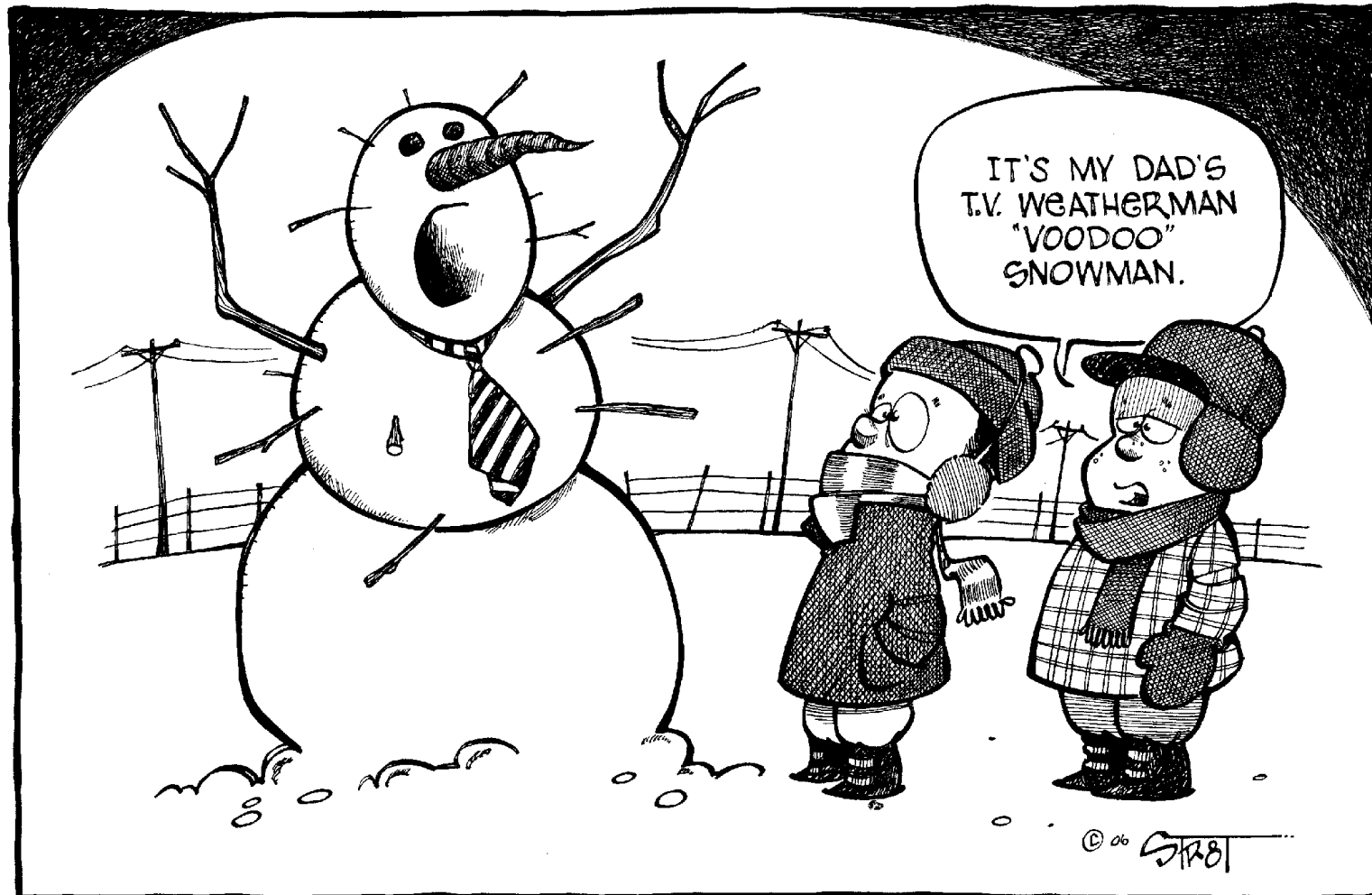
If Congress needs some help with priorities, he said, they ought to give him the line-item veto, where the president could pencil out individual spending items rather than vetoing an entire, often vital, spending bill.

"That way we can bring budget discipline, help keep budget discipline in Washington," the president said.

That'll be the day.

Still, with the national debt at \$8.3 trillion and soon to top \$9 trillion, something has to give. Even Bush expects only to cut the deficit in half by 2009 — and that only if Congress goes along.

Yes, programs will have to die. Others will be cut. Some will be the programs we want. Some will be important. But the country simply can't afford to keep spending as it is. — Steve Haynes



Visiting our daughters in the South

We visited our daughters over the weekend — in South Carolina and Georgia.

Youngest daughter Lindsay is a graduate student at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. She'll be graduating in May with a master's degree in library science.

Oldest daughter Felicia and her husband Nik live and work in Augusta, Ga., in the Internet department of a large newspaper company. Hey, at least she stayed in the business, even if I can't get her to come home and let me retire.

We're here to attend the South Carolina Press Association meeting in Greenville.

I'd never heard of Greenville, S.C., before and couldn't figure out why a state with such beautiful places as Columbia, Hilton Head, Myrtle Beach and Charleston would go to someplace that nobody had ever heard of.

However, as these things usually go, Greenville turned out to have a vibrant downtown full of fun shops and nice restaurants. The trees had started to leaf and the spring flowers were



cynthia haynes

• open season

blooming. Residents and tourists were strolling down the streets. We had a great time.

After the convention, we headed back to Augusta to meet our new granddog, Khan. (With three children over 25, you'd think we'd do better than four cats and two dogs, but so far our grandkids all purr or bark. Oh well, Khan's a great kid.)

We had a great time with Felicia and Nik and the cats and dogs. We spent Saturday night in Augusta and we even had Louie, one of Felicia's cats, sleeping with us. I appreciated that. After three nights in hotel rooms, I was missing my kitties.

Sunday, we headed for Columbia to spend the night with Lindsay.

There are no cats in Lindsay's house because they're all living at my place. (Well, two out of three are. She gave the third one back to her Aunt Barb after she found out that her boyfriend is allergic to cats.)

While Lindsay's house is sadly lacking in felines, it has a lot of memories.

She had my Grandmother Desilet's buffet and china cabinet.

I have to smile, since they are heavy, dark pieces of furniture crammed into her tiny apartment. She'll still have those pieces when she had a nice home in the suburbs, I'm sure.

Steve and I had my parents' oak table and a roll-top desk crammed into our tiny place when we were first married. We never did get that house in the suburbs, but they no longer look quite so crammed.

It was nice in the South. Nice to see our girls and nice to visit new beautiful places, but I'm ready to get back to Kansas. After all, there's no place like home.

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Hillary can win with cultural forces support

The Republican Party appears to be coalescing around the happy assumption that, while Hillary Clinton will win the Democratic nomination, she cannot be elected.

So, the self-delusive logic says, she is really God's gift to the Republican Party.

This optimistic set of assumptions comes through loud and clear in the comments the president and Karl Rove made to Bill Sammon as he interviewed them for his new book "Strategy." But their confidence indicates simply that they don't even begin to understand what they will be up against in a Hillary candidacy.

It has always been Mrs. Clinton's "strategy" to wrap herself in the generic. By embracing a set of liberal issues, she avoids personal scrutiny. By identifying with working women who are "trying to balance career and family," she buys a pass on charges of a conflict of interest over Rose Law Firm representation of Arkansas while her husband was governor. And now, by hiding behind the generic question of "Are we ready for a woman president?" she invites the question of whether we want this particular woman in the Oval Office.

The cultural forces that Hillary's candidacy will unleash — from the media, from Hollywood and from the cultural icons who decree our lifestyles — will be far beyond those that normally line up behind a presidential candidate. A small foretaste emerged in ABC TV's show "Commander in Chief," in which Geena Davis plays a female president who masters the men and the crises that litter her path. What other presidential candidacy was foreshadowed by a prime-time, hour-long weekly television show?

Hillary's candidacy will not be Democratic so much as demographic and not nearly as political as it will be cultural. The pent-up emotions of half of America will rise to the surface just as Catholics rallied to JFK's candidacy in 1960.

And white women are the swing vote in our



dick morris

• commentary

politics. George W. Bush carried them by only 1 percent in 2000 and lost the popular vote. He walked away with white women in 2004 by a 14-point margin and carried the electorate by 3.5 points.

White men will vote against Hillary, of course, but are they likely to exceed the 2-1 margin by which they backed Bush in 2004? Or is the GOP organization really going to be able to turn out more than 62 million voters, an increase of 12 million over its 2000 total with very little increase in national population?

Blacks will vote for Hillary with genuine affection rather than the mere duty that animated their support of John Kerry, and Hispanics, who strongly backed Hillary in New York state, are likely to return to the overwhelmingly Democratic vote they cast in 2000, rather than the more balanced ballots they cast in 2004.

In the face of these demographic arguments, can Hillary's admittedly brittle public performance assure her defeat? Will voters see through her posture of moderation and hawkishness on terrorism? White men will.

But white women won't. And Hillary will be elected.

Last year, my wife and I wrote about the urgency of a Condoleezza Rice candidacy to nullify Hillary's advantages. Since then, Rice, despite her best efforts to deny a candidacy, has caught fire among the American electorate. In the most recent Gallup poll, 12 percent named her, unaided, as the Republican they would like to see run, and the most up to date head-to-head poll, by the Marist Institute, shows her locked in a three-way tie with Rudy Giuliani and John McCain, with each candidate winning 22 percent of the Republican primary vote.

Those who listen to the melodious tones of Bush and Rove do a disservice to our country. The threat of a Hillary Clinton victory is real and present, and the usual suspects — the likes of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, Virginia Sen. George Allen, Nebraska Sen. Chuck Hagel, New York Gov. George Pataki et al. — are not likely to defeat her. Rudy could, but he won't be nominated because of his social liberalism. McCain could, but he lacks popularity with the GOP rank and file.

Do not underestimate Hillary Clinton's chances to win.

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