

Stimulus bill billions a high price for recovery

By the time you read this, the Senate and House will be duking it out over the details of the economic stimulus bill, trying to nail down how the government will spend somewhere between \$800 billion and \$900 billion it doesn't have.

There seems little doubt a bill will pass. President Obama has been out stumping for the stimulus package, which he considers a key part of the government response to the current recession. He's planned two campaign-style swings around the country and a prime-time press conference Monday.

And, after some compromise in the Senate, he has the votes in both houses.

The total probably will fall closer to the Senate's \$818 billion, but the actual amount matters little. It will be a terrible price to pay for a slightly faster recovery.

Since the government doesn't have the money, it'll have to print some. The resulting inflationary pressure could rip the economy apart a year or two down the road.

A coalition of conservative Democrats and "moderate" Republicans succeeded in stripping billions out of the Senate version this week, but when the two houses appoint a conference committee to settle differences in the bill, some of that is likely to come back.

Support is strong enough to pass some version, and the \$800 billion mark is not small. As Everett Dirksen, the late and much lamented senator from Illinois, is thought to have said, "A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money."

Or at least, printing real money.

Not everyone was ready to jump on the bandwagon. Sen. John McCain, the Arizona Republican who ran against Mr. Obama, denounced the plan as "generational theft," buying a bit of prosperity today at the price of even larger debts for our grandchildren to pay.

"We're laying multitrillion dollars of debt

on future generations of Americans," McCain said on CBS. "I can't support such a thing."

Sen. Richard Shelby, an Alabama Republican, also refused to support the measure.

"We are going down a road to financial disaster," he said Sunday on CNN. "Everybody on the street in America understands that."

"This is not the right road to go. We'll pay dearly."

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office reported last week that the stimulus measure, in its current form, should create between 1.3 million and 3.9 million jobs by the end of 2010, lowering a projected unemployment rate of 8.7 percent by up to 2.1 percentage points.

But the office warned that the long-term effect of that much government spending over the next decade could "crowd out" private investment, lowering long-term economic growth forecasts by 0.1 to 0.3 of 1 percent by 2019.

While the center coalition in the Senate succeeded in stripping out some of the worst "pork barrel" provisions, there's plenty left, from roads to schools to "green" projects. The bill passed the Senate 61-36. Until the compromise, the Democrats did not have the votes to shut off debate on the Senate floor.

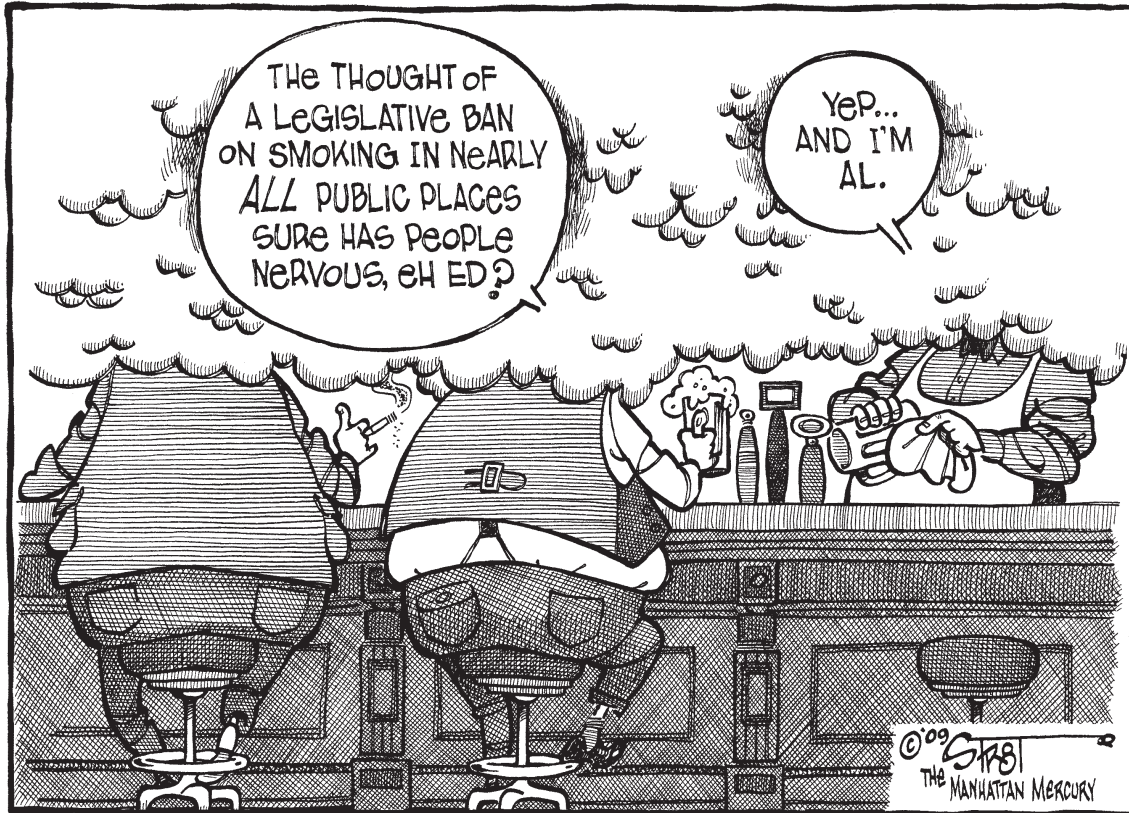
The few billion that bought an agreement won't even pay the interest on the debt the bill will generate.

In the end, it wasn't government that got us into a recession, and government won't be the deciding factor in ending this one. Recessions come and recessions go. Even the "experts" admit that the "stimulus" won't do more than shave the peaks off this swing.

Americans as a whole give politicians way too much credit for their ability to "save" the economy. They encourage this belief to garner votes.

It is an expensive faith.

— Steve Haynes



Editorial gets quick response

Editors sometimes wonder if anyone pays attention when we write, but I can tell you Rep. Jerry Moran does.

In an editorial last month (Jan. 14 *Oberlin Herald*, Page 4A), this paper challenged Mr. Moran to speak out on a little-noticed provision slipped into the "Farm Bill" last year which closed off access to information about farmers' participation in federal programs.

We objected not just to closing the records, which seemed unnecessary and overly broad, but to the way the provision had been slipped into the conference report without debate in either house.

A few days later, the phone rang. It was Brecke Latham, Mr. Moran's press secretary, saying that the congressman wanted to talk with me about the editorial.

After a couple of days of schedule-juggling and phone tag, we had a nice chat. That brought the realization that things in Washington are worse than we thought.

Rep. Moran said as far as he could tell, the secrecy provision had never come to the attention of the committee, which included an unwieldy 54 House members.

It seems that Speaker Nancy Pelosi had appointed a representative of nearly every group with an interest in the bill to the committee. Mr. Moran said most of the decisions were made by the chairmen and the senior Republicans with little input from anyone except the



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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speaker and the Senate majority leader, Sen. Harry Reid.

"Many of the items that went into the Farm Bill were put in there because Pelosi wanted them there," he added.

The panel grew to 54 members, he said, because the speaker sought out representatives of every interest group covered by the bill.

"We had advocates for everything from food stamps to nutrition," he said. "It's not all agriculture at all."

"This is a very urban and suburban Congress. The word farm is not even in the title of the Farm Bill anymore."

"It's not what we in Congress traditionally think of as a farm bill."

Rep. Moran said he doesn't necessarily buy into the secrecy provisions, which limited access to information so much that county assessors claim they can't even find out what land is enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

"I always have concerns when we're reducing access to information," he said. "Many decisions were made by the chairman and the ranking (Republican) members and

their staffs. This is one I recall no discussion on."

When he was in the Kansas Senate, he said, they had a rule against putting things in a conference report — which settles differences between versions passed by the two houses — without prior debate.

"That rule does not exist in Congress," he said, "and in my opinion, it should."

"Here, the issues are often decided by a smaller group. In some cases, the committees never meet...."

"There is a need for reform. This place is not as open as it should be."

But will the leadership allow changes that curb its power?

"It's part of the earmark debate," Mr. Moran said. "Who has the authority to stick something in a bill? The rest of us may not know what's in a bill when we vote on it."

They say you don't want to watch sausage or legislation being made. I'm not sure you want to find out how things happened months later, either.

But Washington and Topeka seem to be full of these little surprises.

Be aware of bullying at school

To the Editor:

Do you have any idea of what is going on in your schools during the day and at any other time when students come together for activities? This extends to the communications systems in a student's life, such as cell phones, text message, computer sites such as My Space, and the like.

My grandchild has been being subjected to bullying for years, resulting even in threats to my grandchild's life. It is a sad day that I feel compelled to appeal to the people of area communities to please become aware of what might also be happening right under your noses in your town.

What if this was your daughter, son, granddaughter, grandson, niece, nephew or, for that matter, someone not related to you at all? Doesn't every child deserve to be able to feel safe and secure when he or she attends class and be able to concentrate on getting good grades instead of worrying about what someone else just said to you that stresses you out and breaks your concentration in the classroom?

This area of northwest Kansas is a heavily Christian society, and

yet, many of us don't seem to put into practice during the week what we hear when God speaks during church services.

We are all God's children, so why don't we act like it and step up to the plate and support one another when we see the evils of bullying and other types of abuse? Teachers, administrators, parents, friends, neighbors and anyone else who is aware of this type of activity should let their voices be heard. Bullies need to know that this won't be tolerated in our schools and communities.

Our thought processes in this community seem to be that, "Oh, we don't have anything going on here like what happens in the bigger schools." Well, let me tell you, it is going on right under your noses. Parents, wake up and teach your children to treat everyone with courtesy. You don't have to like everyone, but we are all God's children and should be treated with respect. Belittling someone else to

the point of severe bullying just tells me, and the world, that the people responsible have so little self-esteem that they have to derive an ego from stripping someone else of his or her dignity.

Please wake up. Let's become a loving and caring community and help each other out to become the best that we can be.

Frieda Goetze
Oberlin

From the Bible

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

Psalm 15:1-2

Not empty handed this time

I was convinced there would not be a Fellowship Dinner after church on Sunday. I knew it was the second Sunday, which is the traditional potluck dinner day. But we had just had a Fellowship Dinner the week before, prior to the annual meeting. Surely, I thought, we wouldn't have dinners two weeks in a row.

Jim kept trying to tell me there would be a dinner, but I blew him off. Imagine my consternation when I opened the church bulletin, and right there in front of my nose were the words "Fellowship Dinner - today".

I hate it when he's right. I need to backtrack here. I had forgotten the last two dinners and was feeling a horrible guilt. There was no way I could go to a third dinner empty-handed. I whispered to Jim that I was going to exit and prepare something. He whispered back, "I really like tuna-noodle casserole."

I hate to admit to my deceit but, I waited until the 2- and 3-year-olds were dismissed for their class. I rose from my seat and merged in with the teachers. Outside, I raced for the store, where I quickly picked up noodles, peas, tuna, mushroom soup, cheese and sour cream. Luckily, I knew I could prepare the dish in the kitchen at the Haven, the house we help operate for inmates' families when they come to visit someone at the state prison.

Time was short but, I divided to conquer. This was going to be



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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"Extreme Cooking." I flipped all four burners on the stove to "High" and set small pans of water on each one. In two minutes I had a large pan of boiling water. In went the noodles while I mixed the remaining ingredients. I even pre-heated two casserole pans in the oven. Ten minutes later the noodles were done. Once everything was mixed, I split it between the two pans.

With one eye on the clock and one on the oven, I knew that services would be dismissed in a matter of minutes. I estimated the amount of time it would take to assemble everyone, decide the eating order and actually begin serving. It was going to be close, so I cranked up the heat in the oven.

Soon, bubbles appeared. Good enough for me. I sprinkled some shredded cheese on top and it was ready. Grab the hot pads, load up, get to the church, park, and slide the casserole onto the serving table. It was about midway through the serving. If anyone noticed, they were kind enough not to say anything.

And, after all that, Jim didn't eat

any of it. His excuse: "My plate was already full."

That's OK. There was some left to bring home, and he's going to have leftovers until it's all gone.

A young couple we know made a commitment to keep the romance alive in their relationship. They planned a special "date night" and made all the preparations. Their big day came and the husband was checking the oil in the vehicle when his young daughter asked, "Daddy, are we going somewhere?"

He answered, "Mommy and Daddy are going on a date. You and your brother are staying with the babysitter."

"What's a date?" she asked.

"Go ask your mother," he suggested.

Instead she found her little brother. She said, "Mom and Dad are going on a date. What's a date?"

With an all-knowing attitude he answered, "Oh, I tried one. It's a dried fruit and I didn't like it."

At 16, I bet his answer will be different.

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

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Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$33 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$38 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$42 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in US dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

Nor'West Newspapers

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Urge state to vote no on these cuts

To the Editor:

We just received word today that the Kansas Legislature is cutting back. We are urging our representatives to vote no and ask that others join them in voting no on the \$680 million in nutrition-center and home health budgets.

As one of my consumers said today, "I have been here since this center opened the very first day and I will be here until the last because I depend on it."

I also have 15 to 16 home deliveries that depend on these meals. These are shut-ins who can't get out and go to restaurants. The home

health program is important to rural areas also because of the home-bound people they serve each and every day.

Make your cuts in the lobbyists, the big spending of government, but not on the areas that need to be left alone.

I am not writing for myself but for all the seniors at the senior centers across western Kansas and all of Kansas if need be.

Help us out to get the Senate to

change its vote. This needs to go to ralph.ostemeyer@senate.ks.gov.

Please vote no and urge others to also.

Helen Gee, manager
Oberlin senior meal site

