

Meeting in middle hard on health care debate

Experts say the voters want pragmatism and cooperation. And while there is little chance for either in Washington today, President Obama appears ready at least to give the appearance of bipartisanship.

The health-care issue deeply divides the nation. While the need for national health care has long been an article of faith among liberal Democrats, millions of grassroots conservatives, and their representatives in Congress, fear that a massive federal insurance program will break them — and the Treasury.

The same people see the threat of increased deficit spending, possible tax increases and loss of free choice as government takes over more and more aspects of the health industry. They are not happy.

With the president committed to a health care initiative and few Republicans offering to sign on, any pretext of bipartisan solutions will be just that. The two sides are not willing to work together.

They are not close enough to agree on the problem, let alone a solution.

There was a day, perhaps, when bipartisan action was a reality. Wendell Willkie ran against Franklin Roosevelt in 1940, then traveled abroad to represent him during the war. Bob Dole and Bill Clinton managed to work together on several causes, but mostly after their presidential contest. The two wound up friends.

But that day is past. Through the Clinton and Bush II administrations, hatred replaced cooperation and enmity replaced good feeling.

No one party was to blame. The rhetoric on the fringes of both verged on madness. Among the side on the outs, a substantial minority spend the entire eight years trying to unseat or embarrass the incumbent.

In Congress, partisan feeling has become paramount. Presidential appointments are held up, leaders needed by the government cannot be seated, judicial nominees face merciless grilling and months, if not years, of delay.

Under the circumstances, given the price of government service, who needs it?

Is there, then, a bipartisan solution for health care?

There should be.

First, though, the sides would have to agree on the scope of the problem. They will have to find money to pay the bill and agree on how much the nation can afford to spend. Then it would be possible to work together to write a plan that might do some good.

Until that happens, we are liable to see more of the same while hospital and insurance costs continue to soar. It is not a pretty picture, but it is what American politics have become in the last couple of decades.

The alternative is pragmatic cooperation. And if this is what the American people want, it is what they should have. Politicians, from the president on down, ought to take heed.

People get tired of asking. They will want a change if the present situation continues.

And, eventually, they will get it.

— Steve Haynes



Trying drying those tomatoes



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Eldest daughter called the other day to say that she was making sun-dried tomatoes. Of course, she said, she was doing it indoors in her food dryer.

I told her that sounded like cheating.

She told me that it was OK. She'd snatched the tomatoes from her sister's garden anyway. But she wasn't about to call her mother and tell her that she was making stolen, electricity-dried tomatoes.

Good point.

The only problem is, her sister reads the paper, too. She is so busted.

However, looking at tomatoes on the counter and out at the garden, I decided that she had a good idea — drying, not nabbing her sister's produce.

Though that might work for me, too, come to think about it.

And since I had just catalogued all the junk in my basement and found my old electric food dryer among the odds and ends, I figured I could try that too.

First, I called Eldest back for better directions.

Well, she said, wash them, cut them in half if they're small to medium and into 1/4-inch slices if they're big. Put them in the dryer and let them go until they are leathery. Then freeze them for at least a

day to get rid of any lingering mold or whatever spores.

How long and at what temperature? I asked.

A long time and 130 degrees.

Well, that was helpful, especially when I discovered that my dryer didn't have temperature settings. It has vents.

Tomatoes, the chart said, should be dried with a D4 setting.

I didn't have as many ripe tomatoes as I had thought I had, but I washed and cut up several and stuck them in dryer on D4.

Twelve hours later I checked. Nope.

Twenty-four hours later. Well, some were ready, but most were still soggy. I put the done ones in a freezer container marked dried tomatoes and left the rest.

After 48 hours, all my tomatoes were leathery and in the container. From the six or seven tomatoes, I had a handful of shrunken coin-like leathery red disks.

Now all I have to do is figure out what to do with them.

Anybody got a recipe for (non) sun-dried tomatoes?

Garden Update

I don't believe it, but the nasturtiums are working.

In the spring, I planted two packs of nasturtium seeds because this book I read said they would protect my green beans from bugs.

Most of the seeds didn't produce a thing. I did get a few plants, and by the end of May the bugs had eaten two of them.

However, here it is September and I have a half dozen little nasturtium plants with pretty yellow and red flowers around the green beans. And my green beans are without a single bug bite.

Last year at this time, the leaves looked like lace, and every bean had half a dozen nibbles taken out of it.

Now, where is that book? I need to know how to get rid of those pesky worms in the broccoli.

Rain makes everything good

It's a remarkable year, not because it rained so much — out here, at least, rainfall totals are just about normal — but because it rained pretty much all season.

There were times when it got dry, but not for long. Just when it looked like the wheat might suffer, it'd rain. Most places, the wheat came in a bumper crop.

Then with the summer-planted fall crops, the same thing happened. Sure, some places reported occasional heavy rains. Other fields had hail.

Still, the crops grew as the prices fell. Fall harvest ought to be a bin buster. And just when it seemed like things might dry up, it rained.

It's been that way across the state. The place where you really notice it is in pasture country.

Does anyone remember a year when pastures have been green and lush clear into September?

Some years, the grass dries up in June. Some years, July or August. This year, it may take a killing frost to stop the grass from growing. Cattlemen, who could use a break, ought not to have to buy much feed this fall and winter.

One stockman told me earlier this month that he thought the grass was finally beginning to cure. Finally.

And it's not just here. The grass is green clear across the state. In fact, it's green from Grand Junction clear through to Kansas City.

Driving to and from Lawrence last week, the state was as lush as anyone could remember. A friend said it's the same all the way to



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Illinois.

Through the High Plains and into the Smoky Hill, down the wide, deep valleys of the tributaries of the great Kaw River drainage, through the Flint Hills and down to the Verdigris and the Fall, the hills are green, the grass healthy and thick.

Along the creeks and road ditches, the undergrowth is high and bushy, almost impossible to push your way through. It'll die down soon enough, but it may leave a lot of trash behind.

The trees along streams, east and west, are starting to show fall colors. They're still green, but you can pick out each tree and identify each species by the slight variations in color. It won't be long before some turn yellow or brown or red, while others just drop their leaves.

Rains over the weekend pushed a few eastern rivers to bank full and beyond.

A band of heavy rain that started up near Oakley pushed clear across the state, causing floods wherever it went.

Nothing serious; just a lot of wet fields and overflowing creeks. The rivers seemed to be going down as

quickly as they'd come up.

The air remained full of smoke from California fires, making for a few notable sunsets, but clouds dampened most of the evening displays.

My advice to anyone who loves this state and its beauties is to drink this all in. We may not live long enough to see another fall this green and lush, this bountiful and this gorgeous.

The hills abound with green grass and fall-blooming flowers, and wherever you want to travel in Kansas, there's plenty to see.

From the Bible

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Proverbs, 2:13-14



It's so good to be home again

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Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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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, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. 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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Help will be needed to keep meals

To the Editor:

The Golden Age Meal Site has received word from Michelle Morgan, project director of the Area Agency on Aging, that there has been a cut of \$63,000 from the senior nutrition budget for northwest Kansas.

"With a shortfall of \$20,000 in the next fiscal year (starting Oct. 1), the nutrition program will be working very hard to keep all our nutrition sites operating," she said, adding that the letter was intended to help all of us be aware of the challenges that the program is facing.

"It will be very important that we all work together to keep costs down, keep meal donations up and keep people coming to the nutrition sites," she wrote. "This is something the manager of the meal site cannot do herself. We must all work together for the nutrition program to continue to serve seniors in our community."

Letter to the Editor

Michelle goes on to say, "As you are aware, the state program was reduced by \$1 million for fiscal year 2010. This is a reduction of over \$63,000 for northwest Kansas sites. We have received federal stimulus dollars to offset this hardship, but this is one-time money. If \$1 million is not reinstated to the nutrition program, we may as well say the program has been gutted."

As the manager of the meal site here in Oberlin, I have discussed with Michelle how we stand in this downturn. She assured me that as long as we continue to build the numbers, and keep the donations coming in, we will remain open. In our agreement, we have agreed to have 10 or more daily meal par-

ticipants.

We are excited and want to thank all those who have worked so hard to build the new senior center, especially as we move closer to the opening day. Thank you to everyone who has built, painted, overseen the project, and most of all those who have given over and beyond their means of time and money. You are very much appreciated.

Helen Gee, meal site manager
Oberlin

