

What's going to happen in the national elections next year?

Here's a preview from Charlie Cook, the Washington political analyst and insider who produces the Cook Report and other regular insights into national politics.

For the record, Cook is a Democrat who got his start as a Senate aide and pollster on the left side of the aisle. He spoke at the annual Government Affairs Conference of the National Newspaper Association in mid-July.

The first thing to remember, Mr. Cook says, is that the country is neither left wing nor right wing, but more or less evenly divided. Both major political parties claim about a third of the voters, with independents making up a quarter or more of the electorate.

Since party members tend to vote for their candidate, independents control most decisions. Even a small shift in the independent vote can mean a big change in Washington. And what do these voters base their decisions on? The economy, of course.

And that, Mr. Cook notes, does not bode well for the Democrats next fall. They should pick up seats in the House, but likely will lose control of the Senate and the White House.

Why? In a nutshell, the Republi-



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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cans have more seats to lose in the House, the Democrats have more at risk in the Senate and – the biggie – no president in recent years has been re-elected with unemployment much over 8 percent.

With the economy stagnant and unemployment expected to remain above 9 percent well into next year, Mr. Cook said, the chances of a second term for President Obama do not look good – so long as the Republicans can come up with a decent candidate.

As he put it, a “placebo” candidate should be able to defeat the president if unemployment remains high and the economy is still in turmoil. It's up to the Republicans to nominate someone better than a placebo, he said, a candidate who does not drive away more votes than a bad economy should deliver.

This is not the time, he said, for a candidate out on the fringe, but for someone who will appeal to voters

in the middle. Candidates like the president or like the conservative George W. Bush have a hard time holding onto the middle, he noted, leaving the editors to ponder the effect of putting, say, Gov. Sarah Palin or Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota at the head of the ticket.

“It's not about defections from the party,” he said. “What it's about is independents who swing one way or another. It's these independent voters that make the difference.

“(Committed voters) have passion,” he said, “but independent voters have lives. They don't care about Washington. All they care about is making the place work.”

Only once in the post-World War II era, he noted, has the party in power picked up more than 24 seats in a midterm election. Last fall, the Republicans picked up 63 seats as the president slogged through the worst recession since the war.

That means, he said, the Repub-

licans likely will lose a few seats next fall, but not enough to lose control.

“Unless the Republicans self-destruct,” he said, “they're gonna have a majority in the House.”

The Senate, with its six-year terms, is different. In the Senate, the cards really were dealt five years ago, when the Democrats were on a roll. That means there are 23 Democratic seats up for election next year, but only 10 Republicans. He estimated that the D's have 10 seats “at risk,” the R's only two.

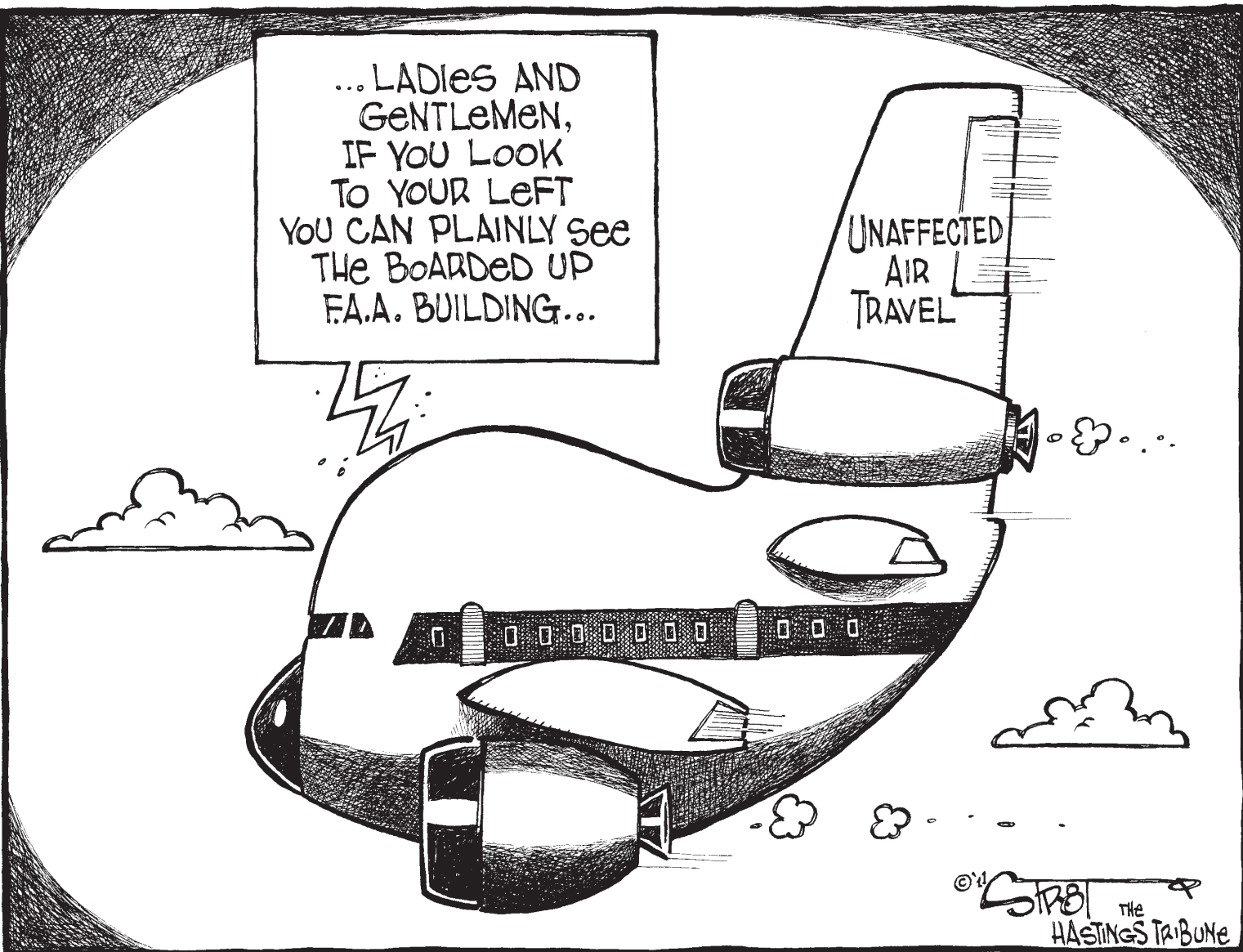
That should give the Republicans the majority required to take over the Senate leadership.

“The words ‘control’ and ‘U.S. Senate’ should not be allowed in the same sentence,” he added.

The GOP should wind up with 51 or 52 seats, he said, changing the equation to some extent. Compromise, difficult as that is, will still be required to get anything done.

The main question will be whether the Republicans can nominate someone who can appeal to a nation divided as ever and suffering through a slow and painful recovery that's beginning to remind people of the 1930s.

Or as he put it, the party avoids nominating a “sub-placebo” candidate, someone so divisive he or she simply cannot be elected.



Nation needs to curb enviro agency

Throughout the debate over raising the country's debt limit, people on both sides of the issue talked about the economic impact of raising the “credit-card” limit, and how job creation would be affected based on the size of cuts and caps.

After all, whatever Washington spends and borrows is money taken out of the hands of consumers and businesses that otherwise keep the economy humming and prosperity growing. But there is a third component that cannot be neglected in efforts to spur job creation: the need to reduce regulation.

Besides getting spending and borrowing under control, the future of our economy depends on getting our regulatory system in check. America cannot afford an expanded and excessive regulatory scheme concocted by bureaucrats who have never met a payroll in their entire lives.

Rules on employers are sold to the American people as well-intentioned, but they often end up being



On the Potomac

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expensive and time-consuming for employers simply trying to pursue the American Dream. This administration has bound employers so tightly with that red tape that they are choking their abilities to create jobs. Most of the bureaucrats writing and enforcing these regulations have no idea of the consequences, and if they do, they apparently do not care.

In western Kansas, we are all too familiar with the devastating effects of the Environmental Protection Agency. Last week, the House considered the annual appropriations for the Department of Interior,

which includes Environmental Protection. The underlying bill contained a 17 percent reduction in for the agency, but I believed it did not go far enough and offered an amendment to reduce it even more.

Unfortunately, not everyone agreed with me, but not everyone has witnessed the same type of assault on their districts as I have seen. Washington bureaucrats at this agency have declared open season on agriculture and energy – two of Kansas' major industries.

In addition to reducing the agency's budget overall, this appropriations bill seeks to prohibit

the agency from imposing unwarranted, unnecessary, and duplicative regulations on farmers.

Given that many bureaucrats have never stepped on a farm – let alone been to Kansas – it is easy to explain why they have no idea that their regulations would drive farmers out of business. Regulating dust? Are they serious? Wind is as common as oxygen on Kansas farms; the agency probably would prefer we just halt operations on days the wind blows.

But perhaps one of the greatest offenses by this agency is its war against Sunflower Electric's proposed expansion in Holcomb. There, the agency is unnecessarily delaying and complicating the permitting process for the coal-fired plant. While the president pontificates about needing jobs in America, nearly 1,900 construction and 300 permanent jobs remain uncreated and Kansas' economy is deprived of millions of dollars in economic activity.

Hospice care goes way beyond relieving pain

By DARLA SCHUETH

It's likely that many readers saw the article in the June 1 AARP Bulletin, “Palliative Care is Not What You Think.” And it's a good bet that those who did were left with an inaccurate perception about hospice care.

While I applaud the article's informative look at the vast difference palliative care can make for those who are terminally ill, the assertion therein that hospice care (which is always palliative care) “is for people who no longer need or want to treat their condition but want help managing their pain” fails to convey the reality so many grateful people have experienced with the help of hospice at the end of life.

Truth be told, pain and symptom management – though critical – are merely one aspect of the care hospice provides to terminally ill people and their families. Those who choose hospice care also receive the emotional and spiritual support

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they need to fully live every day that remains at home, in comfort and with dignity, surrounded by their loved ones.

Through the expert and compassionate care of an interdisciplinary team (including a physician, registered nurse, certified nursing assistant, social worker, chaplain, and grief counselor) and a customized care plan based on respect for each individual's choices and goals, hospice helps patients and families find peace and meaning, strengthen personal relationships and complete and celebrate life, all of which eases the burden for patients and family at what is understandably a difficult time.

Given this, it's not surprising that hospice care is shown to improve quality of life for patients

and their families. (*Journal of Clinical Oncology*, March 2010). However, a little known truth is that hospice can also actually prolong life for patients with certain diseases by a mean survival rate of 29 days longer than nonhospice patients. (*Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, March 2007).

Moreover, after the death, hospice continues to make a significant difference, with grief support designed to provide comfort and guidance to those left behind. “Help with managing their pain” may be the initial impetus for terminally-ill patients and their families to seek hospice care.

And with good reason; we are experts at this. But as those we serve soon learn, we can – and do – offer so much more.

Darla Schueth is president and chief executive officer of HospiceCare of Boulder and Broomfield Counties in Colorado. Submitted by Hospice Services of northwest Kansas.

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