

Cutting into programs tough on lots of people

The country will be stepping down an uncharted path this month as federal officials try to figure out how to cut 8.5 to 13 percent from their programs.

So far, despite dire predictions, no one has much noticed. The stock market hasn't bottomed out, the government keeps chugging along. Later, reports say, government employees may have to take one unpaid day off each week, state programs could be cut, the flow of federal money may slow, and the Department of Defense says it will lay off many civilian workers and contractors.

This was never supposed to happen, of course. When both parties agreed to the plan last year, everyone said it was too unpalatable ever to be allowed to go into effect. Then when the deadline came up two months ago, the two sides could only agree to put it off again.

The deal to keep things rolling at the end of the year covered tax breaks for nearly everyone and some of President Obama's tax hikes for the rich, though the 2-point reduction in the Social Security tax rate nearly everyone enjoyed was allowed to expire.

At the time, the Republicans said they wouldn't discuss any more tax increases. Apparently, they meant it.

Last week, Washington writer Bob Woodward reported that it was the White House that first suggested the plan and agreed to it. Now, the president wants to blame it all on the Republicans, who he says defend tax breaks for the rich.

Yet they tell us now, taxes on the rich are the

highest they have been in half a century.

Who's right?
Who's wrong?
Who knows?

Blame it on a system where posture and position are more important than results. A system where inaction often produces the desired results, where no one wants to give an inch for compromise, not when they think they have the upper hand.

Today, it's Mr. Obama and the Democrats who think they have the better hand. The Republicans, in control of the House of Representatives, have to posture and delay.

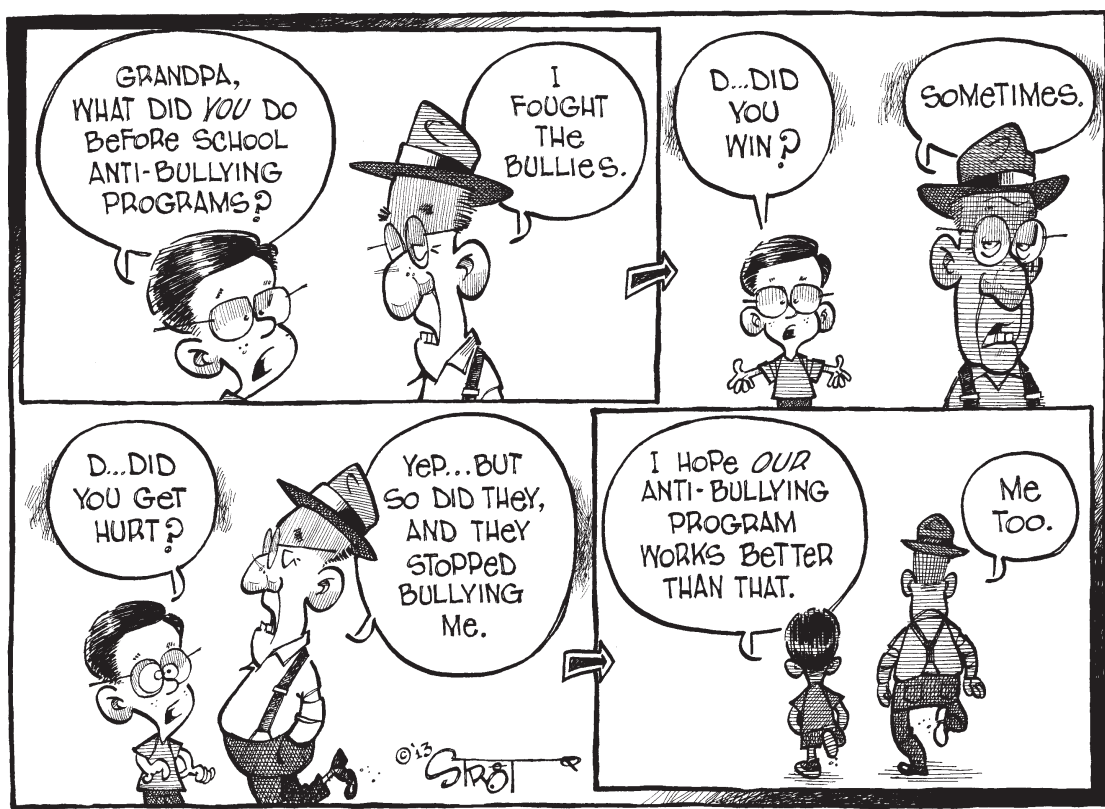
Where once the Democrats had promised to negotiate program cuts, since the election they say they need more tax increases to keep spending up. The Republicans say they aren't willing to talk about that.

Meanwhile, federal workers, states and people who depend on federal programs all are waiting to see what happens. No doubt, many will be hurt as this progresses.

Across-the-board cuts, by their nature, are rough, unpredictable, messy. But there's been no drama. The government has not shut down.

The spending problem remains. The government has been borrowing 40 cents of every dollar it spends. Something has to change there, and if it takes sequestration, as they're calling the mandatory cuts, to bring an agreement, then maybe that's what has to happen. It's way past time to talk about the issue.

— Steve Haynes



Boys are hard on the dishes

We don't break much crockery at our house and we don't tend to be hard on other peoples', but for some reason, we wreaked havoc on the dishes while on vacation in late January.

Let me assure you, I didn't break anything. Steve only broke a couple of dishes. Our friend Merle was tough on the cookware, however.

It all started innocently enough. Merle put on a couple of eggs to boil for lunch, then Steve said we were supposed to go over to the restaurant to eat. The resort was buying lunch, and in exchange, they gave us a short sales promotion. We do this every year, and so far they haven't figured out that we're about 80 lunches ahead by the time we and our friends all belly up to the buffet.

Anyway, Merle thought he was turning the stove off. Instead, he just turned it down. As we returned to our condo, we noticed smoke in the air and wondered what was burning.

We found out soon enough as we opened the door — eggs and a saucepan.

No harm was done except to the eggs — they were way overcooked — and the blacked pan.

Steve comforted Merle with the story of the green beans he had toasted in his grandmother's antique



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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wood-handled pan when the kids were still home. He turned them on, we went to church and the pan has never been the same.

A couple of days after the egg incident, Steve, Merle and I all ended up juggling dishes as Steve tried to get a plate off the shelf where they were stored.

All the serving pieces — plates, cups, saucers, bowls and glasses — were stored on a cement ledge about five feet above the tiled floor and two feet above the tiled countertop. While it's attractive, I've always thought this was a recipe for disaster. However, in almost 20 years of staying in this condo, we've only broken one mixing bowl, which the children dropped 10 years or so ago.

But this year, Steve reached for a plate, which were placed behind the stacked cups and saucers. He lifted it but not quite high enough to clear the other dishes. That created an av-

alanche of dishes, saucers and cups. We all jumped and grabbed, losing only one cup and one saucer.

Looking back, I'm amazed that was all that we broke. I'd love to have a video of us all doing the dishes-and-disaster dance.

The third thing — there's always a third thing — was a glass plate that was under a drinking glass in the bathroom. Merle got up in the middle of the night to get a drink and the plate stuck to the wet glass until it was way up in the air.

That brought us all out of bed. I admitted our losses to the front desk, but we were only charged \$8 for a new saucepan. I figured we lucked out all the way around.

Since we'd only broken one piece of crockery in the first 20 years, I figure it'll be awhile before we're due to destroy any more. And that should be good for a few more free lunches.

Postal changes delay papers

Staff members at several newspapers have been working to be sure most subscribers get their Oberlin Herald on time this week. By the time you read this, of course, you'll know if their effort paid off.

We began working with postal officials three weeks ago to plan for the final closing of the Colby mail-sorting operation. They have given us every consideration.

Until last week, postal workers in Colby had sorted newspapers for northwest Kansas and routed them to readers.

This system worked amazingly well. Complaints on newspaper delivery have been rare, a stark contrast to the situation with people living in Arizona or Texas. Papers there come a week or three late, sometimes two or three on the same day, sometimes not at all.

But out here, away from big-city post offices and long truck rides, mail has been dependable. For example, Oberlin papers going to Dresden, Norcatur, Norton and Jennings had to go away because of the way Zip codes and postal delivery routes were set up decades ago.

Oberlin is in the 677 Zip area, formerly served by the Colby post office. Norton and the three Decatur County towns are in the 676 area out of Hays. That means those papers had to go from Oberlin to Colby, to Hays, to Norton, then out for delivery. Those papers changed trucks at least three times, but in the last 20 years, they missed a connection just once that we can recall.

That's an amazing record of ac-



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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curacy and dependability, one postal workers here should be proud of.

Now, though, the Postal Service is fighting for survival, losing \$10 billion to \$15 billion a year. To cut costs, it is closing around 100 mail-sorting "plants" this year, with more set for next year. The service also wants to end Saturday mail delivery, except for some packages, and already has slashed its workforce.

Mail once sorted overnight in Colby now goes to North Platte, Neb., 146 miles to the north. Letters for this area are still supposed to come back the next morning. Most subscribers' newspapers don't have to make that trip, though. Those sorted for a single town, are supposed to be held on the post-office dock in Colby to move directly to outlying towns the next morning.

So far, these papers seem to be making it to readers on time. However, the papers for the Hays area have not been so lucky. From North Platte, they have to make a connection to Wichita, where mail for Hays will be sorted, then make their way back to the 676 area before they can be delivered.

Readers in some towns reported

that they got their copies, mailed on Tuesday, on Saturday or Monday. At least two said they had not arrived as of Monday.

This week, we hope to short-circuit the long trip for those papers by delivering them to the post offices Tuesday with a company van. (Dresden papers will go to the Jennings office.)

We'd hoped to do that last week, but it became apparent we'd not left enough time to get the required permissions from the Postal Service. From here, it's easy to see we should have started earlier.

We hope this will resolve the bulk of the delivery problems. Other customers in the Hays area, and those in towns where only a couple of people get the paper, may still see delays. We'd like to find a way to get Hays papers over there by mailing them in Norton, but that could take some time to set up.

Meantime, we can only ask for readers' forbearance and forgiveness while we try to adjust our mailings to match the new system. And ask that people continue to let us know if their paper is late — and how late — so we can look for a fix.

Road trip offers excitement

What do you get when you take six women and four children on a road trip?

More fun than should be legally allowed.

Five of my friends, ranging in age from 22 to let's just say "old enough," and I had been planning this little trip for several weeks. Time in the van was even fun. Each row of seats was carrying on their own conversation, with some cross-over with those in front or behind.

I pulled out all the stops and entertained (at least I thought it was entertaining) the kids with my repertoire of songs. I sang, "I Had a Little Chicken, and She Wouldn't Lay an Egg." Next was, "We Are the Gopher Girls," followed by "I Just Called Up to Tell You That We're Rugged but Right."

To add to the entertainment, the 8-year old told a funny joke: "Did you know worms are musical? Yeah, they're decomposers. They really break it down."

We took plenty of rest breaks and seemed to find food at every stop. Judging from the level of crumbs on the floor, we missed our mouths more than we hit them. Everyone complained, "There goes the diet." Oh, well. Monday, we'll start again.

To keep expenses down, we booked two adjoining rooms. That meant four women and two kids in one room; two women and two kids in another. My fellow senior citizen



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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and I both unpacked, hung up our clothes in the closet, emptied our suitcases into the bureau drawers; and staked out our portion of the bathroom counter. When our junior counterparts joined us in the room with children in tow, one asked, "Does clutter bother you?"

My friend said, "Well, as a matter of fact, it does. But you just keep it on your side of the room and we'll be fine." Occasionally, the clutter crept to our side, but constant monitoring kept it controlled. However, our roommates could never find anything they had used, because we put it away. I guess no one would ever think to look for clothes in a closet or toothbrushes in the bathroom.

Our room arrangements also meant doubling up in beds. Now, men won't do that, but women don't seem to mind. A quick survey to find out who liked what side and bed assignments were made. The 22-year-old asked if anyone in her room snored, to which we all answered, "No."

The next morning she informed

us that we had all lied. She had even tried making a pallet on the floor to get as far away from us as possible, but that proved too uncomfortable. She solved the problem by buying earplugs and going to bed early.

Somehow, it all worked and I think the kids even had fun. We all agreed we would like to go again, but not anytime too soon.

One thing I learned: it's great to have girlfriends of all ages, and better yet if they have great clothes to borrow.

From the Bible

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

— Romans 4:23-25

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Reader says division no excuse

To the Editor:

Until a few years ago, when a person came to Oberlin and declared it a divided community, we didn't realize we were. Evidently, only if 100 percent are for or against a project, are we united. Otherwise we are a divided community.

Heretofore, a majority vote, negative or positive, was not considered divisive. As a citizen here for 50 plus years, I note the downtown awnings were not 100 percent supported, the museum was not 100 percent, the library was not 100 percent, the carnival was not 100 percent, the Alka-Seltzer sign was not 100 percent, Sappa Park was not 100 percent, The Gateway was not 100 percent, the race track was not 100 percent and (according to my father, who graduated from Decatur Community High in 1923) the location

Letter to the Editor

of the courthouse on a corner not in the center of a square, was not 100 percent.

Also according to my father, once upon a time, everyone in town had a horse, a stable, an outside privy and a water well and even with that, people here were not 100 percent for the new sewer and water system. And (again according to my father), in 1935, in the midst of the depression and the horrific dust storms, the only bond issue passed in the state of Kansas was for a new high school here, and support was not 100 percent. But in the worst of times, it was not considered divisive.

A few years ago, a bond issue for the schools failed. The community

did not feel divided. The bowling alley, the theater and the Golden Age Center did not need a bond issue, and still some were against the project.

Maybe the time has come when the phrase "divided community" can no longer be used as an excuse for failure to act.

Dr. Jay Anderson,
Oberlin

