

## Congress must act to save our post offices

The U.S. Postal Service hopes to eliminate 11 Kansas post offices among about 2,000 facing the ax across the nation.

Most are small towns where the postmaster has died, left or retired, leaving the job vacant. None is in the immediate area of northwest Kansas, though that doesn't mean we might not continue to lose post offices. Several have closed in recent years, and we have others that do not make money.

The Postal Service is desperate, facing an \$8 billion deficit this year. Mail volume is dropping, competition growing and the service is running out of cash. The mail service still makes a profit, oddly enough, but somewhere along the line actuaries misfigured its payment to the federal pension fund.

The fund is said to owe the Postal Service something like \$70 billion, and the overpayment continues at the rate of \$10 billion a year. This has been going on for years.

Faced with running out of cash, though, the service cannot wait for a sluggish Congress to do the right thing. It's throwing whatever it can find overboard.

So far, the service has proposed moving mail sorting from smaller centers across the country into bigger cities where the post offices supposedly are more efficient. (No one believes that, to start with!) Northwest Kansas is one victim of this scheme, with mail sorting to be moved from Colby and Hays to Salina.

Closing post offices where the job is vacant is another initiative. Closing offices where two facilities are close and one could serve the entire area is another. And the service has asked to end Saturday delivery of mail.

None of the cuts, not even the total, is enough to "save" the Postal Service. One estimate for the cuts is almost \$1 billion of the \$8 billion savings needed.

Congress will have to step in to save mail service, and that is being cast as "yet another federal bailout." In truth, the government has been dipping into the service's budget to reduce the deficit, and Congress is reluctant to act because it can spend this money elsewhere.

The Postal Service does not need a bailout. It needs fair treatment and common sense, but those are in short supply in Washington.

By fall, we should know if the mail is something American needs, or if we can do without it. That is not a pleasant prospect, however.

Congress should act now to end the overpayments and to either refund past overages to the postal budget or allow the service a credit on pension payments. Before the service goes broke, not after. — Steve Haynes

On the  
Prairie Dog  
Steve Haynes



## How far will we let the debt ceiling raise

Grandstanding is a hallmark of politicians and the current battle over the debt ceiling is just one more example. The debt ceiling has been raised ten times since 2001, so it isn't like this is new territory, but obviously one not successfully maneuvered either. As we near the final debt ceiling we are faced with a grave decision, do we default not only on money, but on our word as well? In the last decade we spent \$1.3 trillion on two wars, but now when we have both veteran's benefits and active duty pay at stake to say nothing of Medicare payments, the Grand Old Party and a handful of democrats decide they want to control spending.

Control is the key word. On one hand the Grand Old Party proclaims a mantra of less government with reduced taxes for the wealthy and limited aid to the less fortunate. Yet the desire to dictate

Phase II  
Mary Kay  
Woodyard



behaviors, attitudes, and actions, doesn't come cheap. For instance, if you want to control the curriculum in the schools as in sex education minus the word sex; science with creation, but no evolution; and school prayer based on our founding fathers Christian principles...not Spendy? Indeed.

Some states have implemented waiting periods and access to abortions even though it still remains a woman's right. Some states have passed legislation im-

plementing detailed voting regulations in an effort to control not only those who have entered the country illegally, but to limit the rights of the poorer members of our society. Thus making a right, a difficulty. In 2010, only 3.7 percent of the nation's population was considered illegal and yet much of our time has been devoted to this problem and a great deal of money has been spent on voter legislation.

The debt ceiling involves much more than money. At some point we must acknowledge the need to find solutions, but it mustn't be with threats, it must not be last minute and it must be fair to all. I think that might equal compromise. Giving from our abundance to help those less fortunate reflects our Christian values. Striving for fairness reflects our national history. Happy 4th of July and reach out to celebrate our country and its residents,

### Your political connection

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- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. roberts.senate.gov/public/ (202) 224-4774
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, Russell Senate Office Building Room C-4, Washington, D.C. 20002. moran.senate.gov/public/ (202) 224-6521
- ★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 300 SW 10th St., Room 225-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612. ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us (785) 296-7399
- ★ **Congressman Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. huelskamp.house.gov (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124
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## Wheat harvest, can't wait for it to start so it can end

A problem with taking a vacation early in the summer is: what does one look forward to?

The answer for us would be: wheat harvest!

And personally it would be: cooking for wheat harvest!

I didn't say "what are we looking forward to with excitement and breathless anticipation."

In the case of cooking, it would be "what am I looking forward to with dread!"

There's an interesting angle to the whole cooking thing. After 10 days of vacation what did we yearn for more than anything? Home cooking!

We got home from our trip around supper time. I wanted to stop at Jiffy Burger, Kate was sick of burgers. Junior wanted to stop at Pizza Hut, that didn't appeal to me. So we ran into the grocery store for some things.

We got fresh fruit, veggies, a package of dinner rolls and pork cutlets. I had potatoes at home but decided I didn't want to bother with peeling and mashing them, so I stopped by the Deli and asked for 5 or 6 scoops of mashed potatoes.

I don't usually buy mashed potatoes at the Deli, but I had an idea they sold

This Too  
Shall Pass  
Nancy  
Hagman



them by the pound. However the server was very worried over the exact amount of scoops.

"SIX!" I declared. I could already taste that good pork gravy over them!

When I got to the checkout I looked at the potato container. It looked like it said NINE DOLLARS!

Whoa, \$9, for mashed potatoes?

I hadn't felt so ripped off since Tony Roma's in Niagara Falls! Buy one entrée get one half off the coupon said. After arranging seating for all 14 of us together it was one coupon per table! Hey, these are 10 different tickets we said. Tough, they said! We pulled the tables back apart; they were not impressed or particularly amused! (Well, I thought it was funny!)

At the grocery store they obliging checked on the mashed potato price. Yes, side dishes at the deli are \$1.50.

We got home. I told the family I would

make supper while they unloaded the car. (That part worked out nicely!)

It ain't bragging if it's true: It was the best meal we'd had in 10 days! The potatoes were worth every penny!

A short two weeks later I'm sick of cooking already and the combines are just coming out of the shed!

So did the big pre-harvest grocery shopping! Groceries are getting really high. I guess that's because wheat is so high! Good thing it is, farmers have to eat too!

I like all the area grocery stores, the one with the \$9 mashed potatoes, the little store in our little town and the one in the next county seat. Everyone is always so friendly. But, I am a little concerned about how I must appear to people.

When I was doing the pre-harvest grocery shopping, I was stopped eight times by cheery workers inquiring if I needed help. I must look lost or something.

Or maybe they could see it in my eyes: A farm wife embarking on the most stressful, joyous, worrisome, exciting, costly, rewarding, disappointing, happy time of year!

WHEAT HARVEST!  
What will we look forward to when it is over?

# Celebrate a SAFE & HAPPY JULY 4TH!



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## A fond farewell to a local business owner

Dear Editor:  
Everybody probably knows by now that Jim Rowh owner of Pure Prairie Foods is retiring and has sold the business to Chad Manning.

I would like to say thanks, to Jim for having a health food store here in Norton. He brought us health foods, food supplements, books, fresh baked bread, healthy lunches (my favorite: avocado sandwiches on that fresh bread. Yummy!) and other health products.

Chad Manning is going to continue bringing us these things as well as a variety of home grown produce and other goodies. He is very interested in healthy life styles and wants to see other people get more out of life through healthy foods. I am having a hard time waiting for him to open business.

Norton is very fortunate to have folks like this in our business community. Jim, have a long, healthy and enjoyable retirement. Chad, may your enthusiasm for good health spread through the community and I wish you much success in your new business.

Very Sincerely,  
June Prout  
Norton



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