

What do we want? Here is a wish list

As Congress and the president come down to the wire next month, we're sure they will come up with a deal to raise the budget ceiling and avert a financial disaster.

When they do, they need to keep in mind what the American people want. That, we believe, is nothing less than a new approach to federal spending and the economy.

**On the
Prairie Dog**
Steve Haynes



So what do we want? Here's a wish list:

- An end to endless deficits. As the states have been doing, the federal government needs to wake up and realize that resources are finite. We only have so much money, and we can't continue to overspend our income.

With Europe finally coming to its senses, Washington is about the last place on earth where financial reality has not settled.

- A simplified, fair tax structure, where everyone pays his share, rich and middle class alike. The tax code should not be about winners and losers, just about raising revenue and doing it fairly.

This may take time, but a general agreement is required now.

- No tax increase. The government has plenty of money. Instead of increasing the tax bite, except where fairness demands changes, the government just needs to learn to live with its income.

That's what the rest of us, taxpayers, states and local governments now have to do. The federal government needs to do the same.

- Transparency. The public needs to know what happens, what deals are struck, what the consequences will be. That will be especially tough for Congress and the White House. They are used to putting whatever "spin" they feel like on the news.

This time, they need to come clean. The American people are tired of getting the runaround. We're tired of those in Washington putting off hard decisions and letting the government drift from crisis to crisis, all the time telling us they are taking care of things.

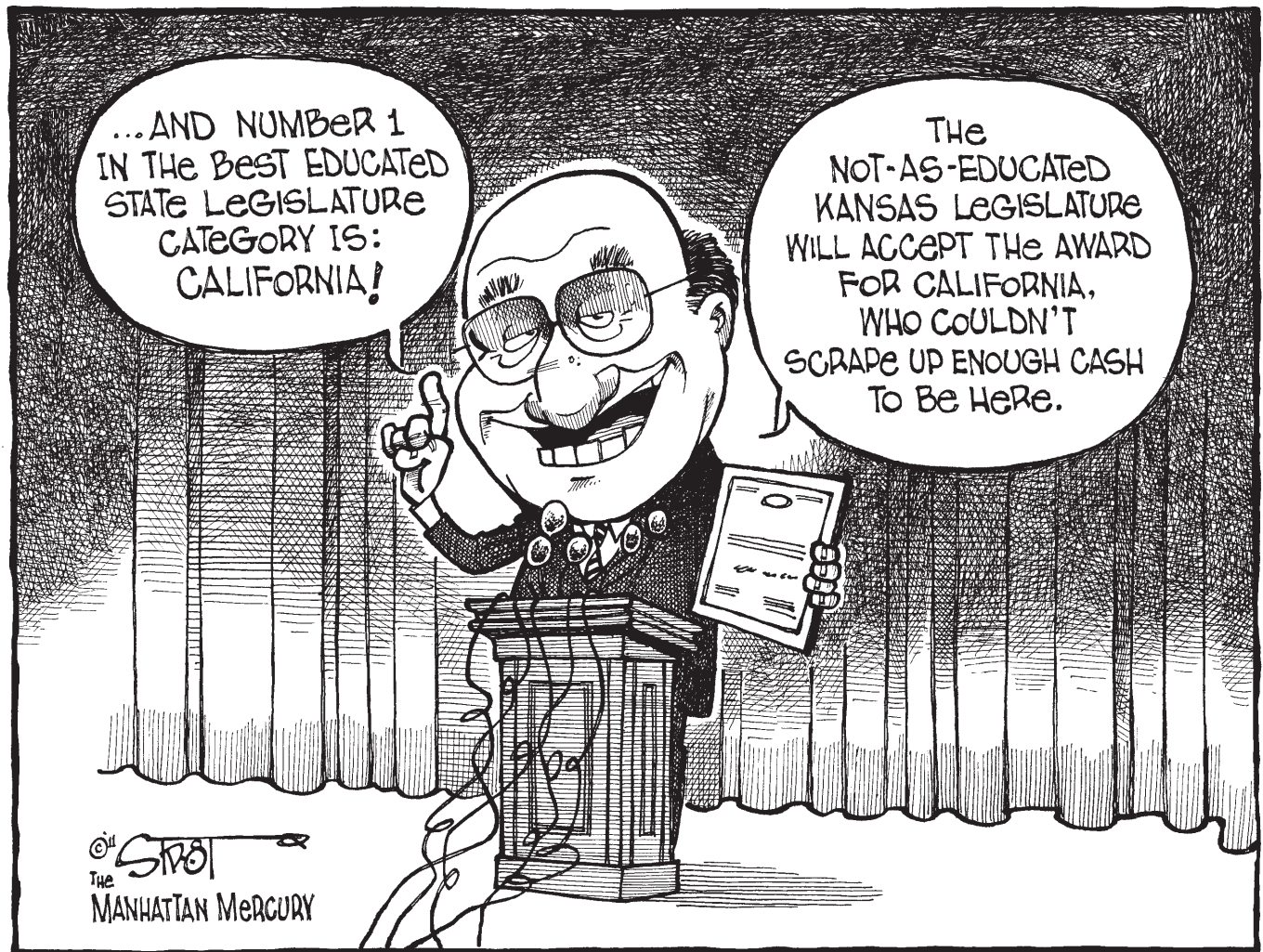
If things had been taken care of, we wouldn't be in this mess, would we?

- A pledge that this is the very last time we'll have to put up with an increase in the debt limit. Everyone has been nodding and agreeing when the Treasury asks for more borrowing power. The "tea party" members are right when they decry this kind of business-as-usual approach to the deficit.

The national debt has piled higher and higher. This is the time for everyone to agree that enough is enough.

- As the smoke fades, a return to true bipartisan government, where the opposing forces put aside the next election and just do what's right for the country.

And if all that happens, maybe we'll re-elect some of them next year. Just maybe.



Maybe having a hobby isn't the right hobby

Since it is too hot to do anything else, I started a new quilting project. It is fraught with problems!

I bored Hester, a non-quilter, with a tale of woe about everything that went wrong. Though she listened patiently, her eyes began to glaze over.

When my saga ended she asked, ever so innocently, "Do you do this to relax?"

The question shook me to the core. I was speechless (perhaps her goal).

Tell me, what do you do to relax???

It's pretty amazing the work having fun entails.

Our youngest vacationed in Florida. Her advice: Never go to Florida in the summer. They did have a fabulous time, however. She swam with the dolphins and went to most of the theme parks. Perhaps the coolest thing was their condo had a view of the launch pad for the space shuttle. They saw Atlantis launch for the final time.

But what did she say when she returned? "I need a vacation to recover from my vacation!"

Reading can be relaxing. In fact it sometimes puts me to sleep. Or else I get so involved I don't do anything else.

Past times often become addictive. Baseball is a case in point. I used to think

This Too Shall Pass

Nancy Hagman



it was boring but my son-in-law got me hooked.

"The Royals are going to be good this year!" he proclaimed. Right about this time we got FSNKC so I could watch virtually every game. And I do!

The son-in-law was wrong about the Royals. Three years later, they still aren't good. But I'm a life long K-State fan. Being good is not a criterion for the teams I support!

Watching baseball is a great way to spend time. I do Sudoku, knit, hand sewing, cook or talk on the phone. If you miss something they replay it a hundred times. Okay, it's boring, in a most interesting way!

Our oldest daughter is training for some sort of race. She is biking and running miles every day. I guess this is her hobby at present. I don't know if it relaxes her, but I imagine she sleeps well.

Some people garden for relaxation. You know how I feel about that.

The hubby works! And works some more!

No matter what the challenges, I've always liked to sew. But Hester's question got me motivated to do some prioritizing in my sewing room. I've been measuring yardage of orphan fabrics, making lists, and grouping projects. I'm trying to realistically make decisions about what I will and will not accomplish----ever.

I sometimes try to fool myself by thinking this hobby has income potential or I can give things away as a gifts. But quilting is personal. It is always a fear that the gift you so painstakingly crafted will end up in the dog's bed.

As to income potential, I can't figure out how to ever charge enough if I objectively evaluates the time it takes.

My time is so valuable---I could be watching baseball rather than be chained to the sewing machine!

In the end, I think I've learned a lesson! I need to work more and talk less. If I'd just kept my trials with the latest project to myself I would not have had to spend all this time considering if quilting was the right hobby for me.

What I really need to do is take a deep breath and relax!

That's it: I'm taking up Yoga!
Ha

Our national values should reflect our family values

Anyone who knows me will tell you I am no financial wizard. I don't understand money, but for better or worse, Jack and I are in the same boat. We give away things we should sell, we pass up ideas in favor of stability and once we even took out a loan to meet our title.

Recently, I was accused of feeling guilty, the Christian curse, if I had money. I thought long and hard about that and decided the person was wrong. I don't feel guilty, but I do see so many ways money can help others.

Perhaps the biggest problem with the current debt crunch is too much drama and creating complex issues from simple dilemmas. Perhaps what we need is simply...simplification. Money is an emotional issue, but it is also a powerful one. Nowhere is that more true than in politics. What if we viewed our country as our national family and budgeted ac-

Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



cordingly.

In 2010, the federal spending looked somewhat like this:

- 20% of the budget was spent on defense and security;
- 20% on Social Security;
- 21% on Medicare, Medicaid and CHIPS (the children's health care);
- 6% interest on the national debt;
- 14% on programs designed to aid low income families with tax credits, school meals, child care assistance, low income

housing.

The remaining amount goes to federal and veteran's benefits, education, research and transportation.

Notice anything? This money employs defense contractors, nurses, grocers, insurance companies, your local businesses and except for companies who outsource, stays within the U.S. of A.

When state jobs are closed, cities lose their tax base or we promote fear and companies are afraid to grow, we all suffer. When fewer people are working, fewer taxes are collected. The bottom line is this: we are a nation of families, some with greater needs than others, some with greater assets. Let's work together to create a caring environment within our family. The give and take of a relationship is no different, or shouldn't be, on the national level than the family level. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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