

Asking for federal money

While the jury is out on performance after “superstorm” Sandy, one thing for sure is that the much-maligned Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, needs to realign its priorities and pull back from trying to help every time the wind comes up a little.

If you don’t think the agency has grown bloated and lost its sense of purpose, consider the fact that last year, right here in northwest Kansas, one of our counties suffered a disaster. Yes. Six inches of water running over a gravel road.

The commissioners, with straight faces, reminded the road boss to get someone out there to take pictures and assess the damage “so we can get some FEMA money.”

Every time it snows, every time there’s ice, every little local flood now, public officials try to record everything because there might be some federal money.

What ever happened to doing things for ourselves? Well, if there’s federal money out there, officials are going to try to get it. It’s only human nature. Still, you’d think we had some pride.

The genesis of the problem, we suspect, goes back to the Bush year. Congress and a president who’d been burned badly when Hurricane Katrina all but washed New Orleans away, just threw money at Emergency Management. Standards were lowered; they had to spend it.

So counties and cities began to add up the cost of little storms. Katrina and Sandy are the kinds of events that this agency was designed to battle, yet oddly enough, these are the hardest to prepare for. In a real emergency, it’s usual that no one is in charge, no one gets much done at first and confusion reigns.

Go back through history, you’ll find that’s always been the case. It was as true a century ago in San Francisco as it was in New Orleans.

In both cases, order wasn’t restored until the Army arrived. It’s not that the civilian authorities weren’t properly prepared. Events like those are impossible to be prepared for. The Army, for all its bureaucratic faults, is trained to deal with chaos. They call it combat.

We need an agency to deal with disasters, true emergencies. But if the one we have is ill prepared or spends its time and money replacing gravel washed away by a thunderstorm, we’re in trouble.

Emergency Management needs to refocus and remember what the real priorities are: being ready to respond when nature turns right ugly.

Let the cities, states and counties take care of the little problems, even the big ones. Federal aid should be reserved for when it’s really needed, not frittered away on minor problems.

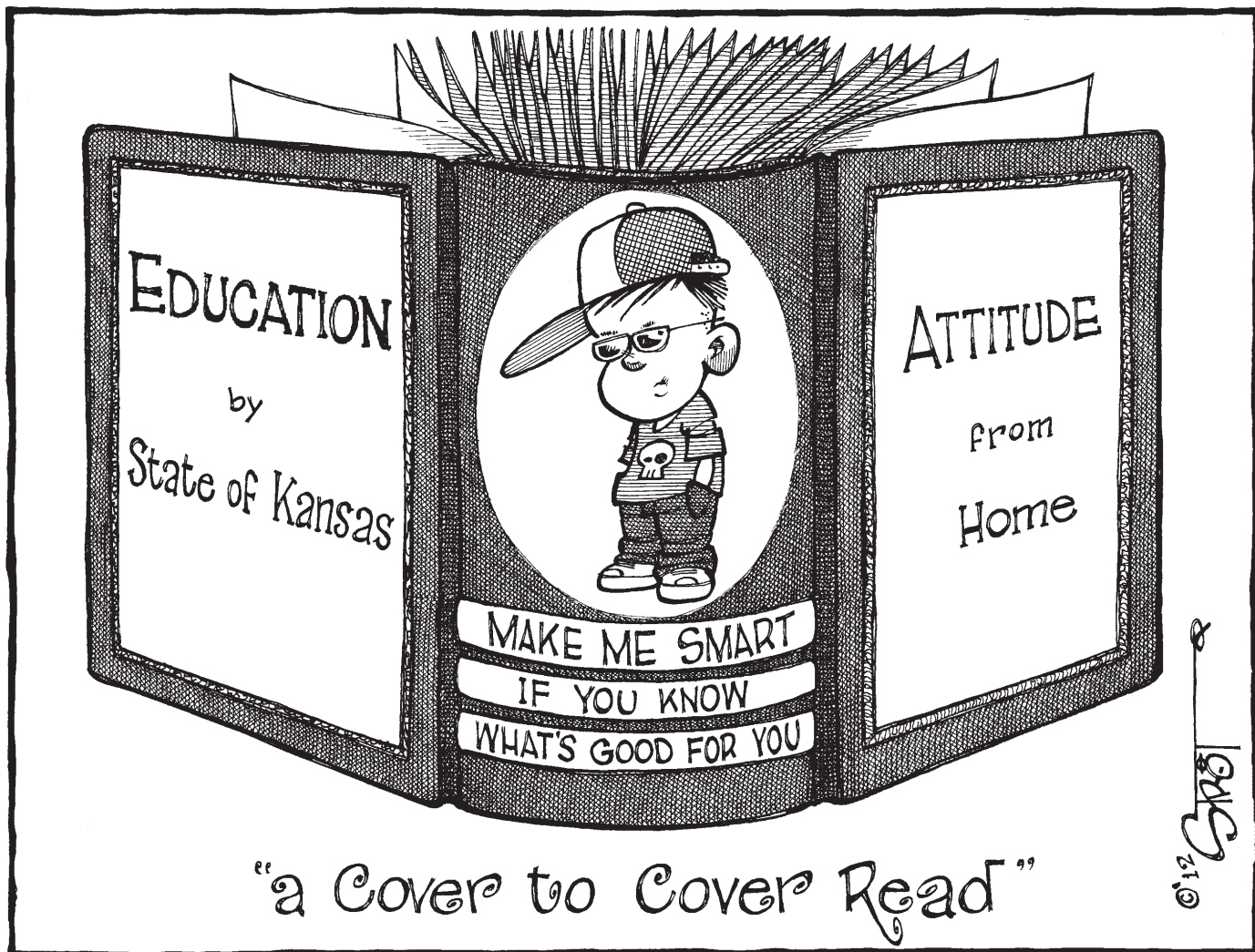
And with the need to cut federal spending, the bloat in this agency ought to be a prime target. We’re not talking about Sandy or money held for the next superstorm. Those rightly are federal issues.

But plowing snow, grading and graveling roads, fixing things up after a big wind, those are things a federal agency should never hear about – let alone pay for with money the government has to borrow.

Let’s rein this agency in and point it at its real mission.

— Steve Haynes

On the Prairie Dog Steve Haynes



You just can’t fix stupid

I sometimes wonder why we bother with elections. Think about it, here we are a mere week from the polls and it is business as usual. No one would say Obama can claim an overwhelming majority, but and I do mean BUT, he did win both by the number of votes cast and by the electoral college, so let’s get moving. I say to those who are so fearful of another four years of Obama and for those who are hiding under the covers, take a deep breath, take your head out of the sand, turn off Fox, and go forward.

Does everyone like his plans for our country? Of course not. Some in his own party do not embrace his solutions, but step out of the way. Don’t stand there blocking change. If you think your idea is better try to negotiate a compromise, but remember one party is going to have to give up more and that generally is the loser, the one with fewer votes.

Too many times we only acknowledge

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



democracy if our candidate gets elected. Remember Gore in 2000? He won the popular vote, as in more votes than his opponent, George W., and yet, he lost the electoral college and thus, through the Supreme Court ruling, the presidency. He should have lost, because by law the one with the most electoral votes wins. Stupid for our current way of life, but if we don’t like it, change the law! What kind of society are we building if we encourage children to only adhere to the laws they like.

So does it sound like there is any compromising attitude hanging around in Washington? Hardly. Why is that?

Well, self appointed idiocy or as a friend of mine says, you can’t fix stupid. Many seem to forget, current technology allows your words to remain out there for all to hear. If you once embraced an idea only to change your mind when it is proposed by the opposing party, well, you can’t fix stupid.

Texas has garnered 75,000 more signatures than the necessary 25,000 to file their papers to be allowed to secede from the U.S.. Can you believe that? And Texas isn’t the only state. Of course, it is important to realize over 120 million people voted for Obama and Romney and only slightly more than a half a million have signed petitions to secede. Just think, if each state took their portion of the federal debt and then paid the federal government what their state owes, this might be a good deal for everyone. We might be better off without them. After all, you can’t fix stupid. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

The grey zones that surround ethical choices

Larry Kudlow of CNBC’s “The Kudlow Report” is Jewish born. He was a member of the SDS, during his college years. He began a career in mainstream politics along side Bill Clinton. Over the years he became more conservative, serving in the Reagan Administration. In the 1990’s he entered a 12 step program for cocaine and alcohol addiction and converted to Catholicism.

I shared his story with a friend. Her comment, “It sounds like he is easily swayed by whatever sounds good at the moment.”

And here I was admiring him for overcoming addiction (not to mention the SDS and the Reagan Administration)! A metamorphosis! I happen to believe examining core values and making changes is a positive thing.

It seems vastly preferable to being entrenched in one’s views.

Of course, there are pitfalls to being open-minded. Sometimes your brain falls out!

Just this week I found a story online about a new “Meatless Monday” guideline adopted by the City Council of Los Angeles. Twelve people on that governing body and not one voted against it.

It’s not a law; only a suggestion. A glutton for punishment I not only read the story, I read the comments. An experience that left me surprised anyone consumes meat; most are already convinced meat is as bad as

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



cigarettes or heroin.

The class warfare folks called meat a luxury. The vegans call meat eaters murderers. The environmentalists claim one meatless day would be the equivalent of taking 900,000 cars off the road or something!

Others seem confused about as to what meat is. They suggest eating chicken, fish, even pork in place of “meat”.

I was flummoxed. We produce and eat meat. But the zealots make a compelling case. Especially if that is all you read.

Then I found a link to a 2011 movie, “Forks Over Knives”. The movie’s premise: “most if not all degenerative diseases” can be prevented with a plant based diet.

There was also an extensive review/critique of the movie by Denise Minger. Minger, in a most entertaining fashion, debunked the quasi-scientific studies in the movie.

Aha, I thought I understood. Until I checked out Minger’s credentials! Ummmm---she’s a 23 year old food blogger! She’s also a former vegan.

In an interview she listed some

problems with vegan diets; one is confused, foggy thinking. (It’s also a problem for people who try to listen to all sides of a story.)

“In general, any diet or lifestyle choice that promotes an us-versus-them mentality can start warping your view of reality and how the world operates. Veganism tends to be incredibly black and white: you’re either vegan or you’re an animal murderer; you’re either living ethically or you’re cruel and immoral; you’re either saving the world or you’re destroying it; on and on. There’s very little sensitivity for the enormous grey zones surrounding ethical choices, and virtually no appreciation of the fact that animal cruelty is only one of many sources of suffering in the world,” Minger says.

As she suggests, let’s substitute some other positions into her statement.

(Pro-choicers, the NRA, Liberals, Republicans, Environmentalists----fill in the blank) “tend to be in incredibly black and white: you’re either living ethically or you’re cruel and immoral; you’re either saving the world or you’re destroying it; on and on. There’s very little sensitivity for the enormous grey zones surrounding ethical choices, and virtually no appreciation of the fact that (abortion, guns, the rich, the poor, etc) is only one of many sources of suffering in the world.”

What a wise 23 year old! I feel my brain coming back!

Now can someone clarify: exactly what is a food blogger?

THUMBS UP!

Thumbs up to the members of the Norton Swimming Pool Promotion Committee who recognized the need to replace our 58 year old pool, and worked tirelessly to inform the people of Norton of this need. Thanks to these forward looking citizens, Norton voted “YES” for a new pool. Brought in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

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ISSN 1063-701X
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654
Published each Tuesday and Friday by
Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave.,
Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage
paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton
Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton
County. Member of the Kansas Press Association,
National Newspaper Association, and the
Nebraska Press Association

Nor’West Newspapers
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

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