



Bipartisanship, what voters want

Experts say the voters want pragmatism and cooperation. And while there is little chance for either in Washington today, President Obama appears ready at least to give the appearance of bipartisanship.

The health-care issue deeply divides the nation. While the need for national health care has long been an article of faith among liberal Democrats, millions of grassroots conservatives, and their representatives in Congress, fear that a massive federal insurance program will break them – and the Treasury.

The same people see the threat of increased deficit spending, possible tax increases and loss of free choice as government takes over more and more aspects of the health industry. They are not happy.

With the president committed to a health care initiative and few Republicans offering to sign on, any pretext of bipartisan solutions will be just that. The two sides are not willing to work together. They are not close enough to agree on the problem, let alone a solution.

There was a day, perhaps, when bipartisan action was a reality. Wendell Willkie ran against Franklin Roosevelt in 1940, then traveled abroad to represent him during the war. Bob Dole and Bill Clinton managed to work together on several causes, but mostly after their presidential contest. The two wound up friends.

But that day is past. Through the Clinton and Bush II administrations, hatred replaced cooperation and enmity replaced good feeling. No one party was to blame. The rhetoric on the fringes of both verged on madness. Among the side on the outs, a substantial minority spend the entire eight years trying to unseat or embarrass the incumbent.

In Congress, partisan feeling has become paramount. Presidential appointments are held up, leaders needed by the government cannot be seated, judicial nominees face merciless grilling and months, if not years, of delay.

Under the circumstances, given the price of government service, who needs it?

Is there, then, a bipartisan solution for health care?

There should be.

First, though, the sides would have to agree on the scope of the problem. They will have to find money to pay the bill and agree on how much the nation can afford to spend. Then it would be possible to work together to write a plan that might do some good.

Until that happens, we are liable to see more of the same while hospital and insurance costs continue to soar. It is not a pretty picture, but it is what American politics have become in the last couple of decades.

The alternative is pragmatic cooperation. And if this is what the American people want, it is what they should have. Politicians, from the president on down, ought to take heed.

People get tired of asking. They will want a change if the present situation continues.

And, eventually, they will get it. — *Steve Haynes*

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansas.com or colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

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Sun-drying works best with help

Eldest daughter called the other day to say that she was making sun-dried tomatoes. Of course, she said, she was doing it indoors in her food dryer.

I told her that sounded like cheating.

She told me that it was OK. She'd snitched the tomatoes from her sister's garden anyway. But she wasn't about to call her mother and tell her that she was making stolen, electricity-dried tomatoes.

Good point.

The only problem is, her sister reads the paper, too. She is so busted.

However, looking at tomatoes on the counter and out at the garden, I decided that she had a good idea — drying, not nabbing her sister's produce. Though that might work for me, too, come to think about it.

And since I had just catalogued all the junk in my basement and found my old electric food dryer among the odds and ends, I figured I could try that too.

First, I called Eldest back for better directions.

Well, she said, wash them, cut them in half if they're small to medium and into 1/4-inch slices if they're big. Put them in the dryer and let them go until they are leathery. Then freeze them for at least a day to get rid of any lingering mold or whatever spores.

How long and at what temperature? I asked.

A long time and 130 degrees.

Well, that was helpful, especially when I discovered that my dryer didn't have temperature settings. It has vents. Tomatoes, the chart said, should be dried with a D4 setting.

I didn't have as many ripe tomatoes as I had thought I had, but I washed and cut up several and stuck them in dryer on D4.

Twelve hours later I checked. Nope.

Twenty-four hours later. Well, some were ready, but most were still soggy. I put the done ones in a freezer container marked dried tomatoes and left the rest.

After 48 hours, all my tomatoes were leathery and in the container. From the six or seven tomatoes, I had a handful of shrunken coin-like leathery red disks.



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

Now all I have to do is figure out what to do with them.

Anybody got a recipe for (non) sun-dried tomatoes?

Garden Update

I don't believe it, but the nasturtiums are working.

In the spring, I planted two packs of nasturtium seeds because this book I read said they would protect my green beans from bugs.

Most of the seeds didn't produce a thing. I did get a few plants, and by the end of May the bugs had eaten two of them.

However, here it is September and I have a half dozen little nasturtium plants with pretty yellow and red flowers around the green beans. And my green beans are without a single bug bite.

Last year at this time, the leaves looked like lace, and every bean had half a dozen nibbles taken out of it.

Now, where is that book. I need to get rid of those pesky worms in the broccoli.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Sales tax would hurt city and county

I read in the Aug. 17 *Colby Free Press* that the city's governing body is proposing an additional sales tax levy to pay for the new fire station and a new swimming pool.

Government operations and services are paid for from fees and taxes. There is always question as to who should be paying those. It is also an issue as to who should benefit from the services provided.

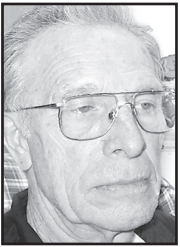
As a general rule, the fundamental conservative says, "If you don't pay, you shouldn't get the services, and if you don't get the services, you shouldn't have to pay." That cuts the lower-income folks out of services, including welfare, emergency health care, food stamps, and all the other social services provided by government. It also relieves everyone from paying taxes for services they don't need. That means, if you don't have kids in school, you shouldn't have to pay taxes to support the school, whether you are rich or poor.

I have no problem with helping pay for improving the swimming pool; it is the only public pool in the county. However, we have other fire departments in the county, and other cities in the county that provide their own services. Gem and Rexford have their own city fire departments. I'm not familiar with Brewster, Menlo, or the part of Oakley that extends into Thomas County, but I'm sure they pay property tax to get coverage, whether it is from the city or a rural fire district.

My farming operation is covered by two of our rural fire districts. We pay property tax to provide services. Colby residents are not required to pay property tax on their city property to support the rural fire districts, townships or other city departments in the county. We need property tax relief just as much as the city.

A few years back, when the City of Colby was proposing to levy a sales tax, I had an interesting conversation with the mayor. His argument was that the city was maxed out on property tax and needed the sales tax to pay for services. We discussed some of those services: street maintenance, street lighting, police protection and fire fighting equipment.

When I asked him who was providing those services for the rural areas, he had no answer. In my case, I didn't need any of those. If I needed security lighting, I bought the fixture and paid for the electricity. It was necessary for me to own a four-wheel-drive vehicle and



Ken Poland

- Ken's World

four-wheel-drive tractor and dozer just to operate my farm and to get to town when I needed to.

We didn't have paved streets and gutters or street lights. If it was muddy or snow drifts hadn't been cleared yet, I had to help the fire department get to my place; thus, I needed tractors and off-road vehicles. If I needed police, I called the sheriff. Property taxes were the major source of money for government services, and my own pocket paid for the rest.

My recommendation to the mayor was to promote a countywide sales tax and to distribute that money across the county. In the end, that is what happened. Colby residents and merchants provide the major share of those sales taxes and they receive the biggest proportion of them. That is fair.

The sales tax is the most regressive tax there is, but if it is necessary to levy a sales tax anywhere in our county, then let it be countywide and be distributed countywide. If the sales tax is countywide, and everyone benefits, fewer people will seek retail outlets outside of the City of Colby or Thomas County.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

