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Free Press Viewpoint

Cost of politics, not cost of living

Pure politics.

That's the administration's move to ask for a \$250-per-person payment to everyone on Social Security, Railroad Retirement, veterans benefits and retired public employees.

The rationale is that Social Security clients won't get a costof-living increase this year because – gasp – there was no increase in the cost of living.

Instead of celebrating this budget-saving event, though, the powers that be stepped quickly into the breach. Never mind that Social Security recipients already got a \$250 payment this year as part of the stimulus bill.

The cost of this generosity with your money: \$13 billion, which can't come from the Social Security trust fund, since it's going broke. Of course, the government doesn't have the money and will have to borrow it, but as a deficit buster, it pales by comparison to the trillions spent on bailouts, corporate welfare and stimulus fraud.

Why pay everyone a cost-of-living increase when the cost of living didn't increase?

Well, it seems like an annual increase is now an "entitlement" for Social Security recipients, even when it's not needed.

Sure, people could use some more money. Who couldn't?

But there will be no increases, cost of living or otherwise, for most of the wage earners who support people on Social Security. They're out there trying to hang onto their jobs in the worst economy in a quarter century, but apparently they can afford to pay this little bill for the retired.

It's client-driven politics, where the government caters to voters who get a government check. Not the taxpaying workers.

And it sets a bad precedent, where government clients get raises no matter what. Just because.

This may be the future of the country, however, as more and more people, from corporate executives to the retired to welfare clients, ease up to the federal trough.

The more voters benefit from government spending, the more the government spends.

Someday, there will be only a few workers left to support this system, and it'll collapse. Until then, be ready to pay. *— Steve Haynes*

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The 'grid' sure makes life easier

I have some friends who are thinking of moving "off the grid."

That is, they are looking for a place to live that isn't on the national system of electrical lines

This doesn't mean their home wouldn't have electricity. It just means that they would have to provide their own using a generator, windmill, solar panels or water power. It's not really a cheaper way to live, but it is a more self-sufficient lifestyle.

When we were traveling a lot a couple of years ago, we saw quite a few ranches and farms in the Dakotas and Wyoming with no electric lines coming over the hills. These were single farmsteads miles and miles from any neighbor, and the cost of bringing in electric lines would have been astronomical.

Back in the early 90s, we had some friends who were the managers of a guest ranch high in the mountains. They lived off the grid.

The source of power was a water wheel. When everyone went to bed, the ranch man-



ager would go out and turn off the wheel, shutting off all electricity to the place.

When television dishes became popular, the couple got one so they could watch television, something that hadn't been available in their remote location. It worked really well, the wife said, except when a fish went over the wheel. That made a power bump, which caused the television dish to not only lose power but also its programing.

Eventually, the very wealthy owners decided to pay to have the place connected to the lines, which were about 17 miles down the winding dirt road. After underground lines were put in so as not to disturb the scenery, it was discovered that most of the buildings had no light switches. They had never needed them, since the electricity was all turned off at the same time every night.

I'm sure my friends won't have that problem, but they might find heating with propane or wood to be a lot of work.

I never had to live off the grid, but, I did live in a home heated by wood. Getting up at 2 a.m. to refill the stove was a winter ritual when the temperatures fell to between -20 and -40 degrees.

And my friends in Colorado wonder why I moved to Kansas! We have natural gas.

"Hey Steve, turn that thermostat up, will you?"

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

Day offers remembrance, not holiday

To the Editor:

In the Army, I was Lloyd Wight Sims. Locally I am Wight Sims. I was drafted in 1944 with one of the largest groups from Thomas County. James Carney, Wendall Flipse, Kenneth Ramsey and Clarence Wilson were among those in that group. We were sent to Camp Fannin, Texas, close to Tyler, for basic infantry training. At the end of 17 weeks, we were to be sent to the Pacific or European theaters as combat troops.



Worries are nearby

To the Editor:

What bothers me is not so much the war in fghanistan — but natural disasters.

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I and another man of that battalion were sent to Fort Benning, Ga., for further training. By the time that training was over, the bomb had been dropped and the war was over.

Before that happened, however, Kenneth Ramsey was killed in the Philippines. That is one of the reasons Memorial Day is a special day for me. Memorial Day was started in 1868 by Maj. Gen. John A. Logan, who was head of an organization of men who had fought in the Civil War called the Grand Army of the Republic to give special recognition to those who gave their lives for our country. Not the beginning of summer, a weekend for golf, fishing, car racing or quick trips. The day was to be May 30 every year.

Now we have Veterans Day, which used to be Armistice Day. People are given a special day to honor those who have or are serving in the Armed Forces.

I think it is a good idea, but soon someone will say, "let's have it on the third Wednesday before Thanksgiving and we can have a 'fall celebration" and forget the real meaning like we did Memorial Day.

Wight Sims, Oakley

Mud route history

To the Editor:

It's Wednesday morning, Aug. 26. A portion of northwest Kansas has been blessed with needed moisture. It's the week of starting public school and the television message below the picture explains this situation: Dist. 294 Oberlin - Storm routes only, Golden Plains 316 - Mud routes only, Colby 315 - Mud routes only, Brewster 314 – Mud routes only. That's it, kids, you're on your own if you

can't make the connection of the mud route, then it's bye-bye school for today.

It's a byproduct of unification - the bigger, the better - which disadvantages children. Let me explain:

Some time between 1966 and 1974, a general snow hit the area. Robert and Mary Anna Ullrich's children missed a week of school because the Colby School District (USD 315) was a leader in storm and mud routes only. Eventually this festering sore spot induced Robert to call the school office for them to arrange a meeting for him with the entire board.

Seeking support, he asked me to attend the meeting with him. The Colby Board chairman called the meeting to order and then went into executive session. Coming out of that, the chairman asked Robert to explain his cause of being there and then asked Superintendent Nickel to explain why the storm route actions were proper.

Using numbers to prove his point, Superintendent Jim Nickel said, there were about 1,000 children living in Colby and on allweather roads, while there were about 150 living on mud roads.

In early 2008, a request was made to the superintendent's office for the minutes book of that meeting, which was held in the building on Fourth Street now occupied by Dr. Karen Thummel. The book of meeting minutes is missing from 1967 to March 1974. The exact number quoted will never be known,

This is a democracy. In a democracy, the obligation is to care for the majority. We have no obligation to the minority.

Was Jimmy Nickel "just testing the water," or was it the absolute truth?

Since then, the state of Kansas for the most part has become mud routes only.

Lloyd Theimer, Thomas County

More than the foreign wars we are engaged in, I fear the Timothy McVeighs who pop up or incidents in which some foreigner plans to fly an airplane but doesn't want to land it.

And it bothers me that some fellows from the United States desire to camp out in a foreign country and learn how to blow up buildings like the White House (and the place where they make out my Social Security checks).

Not long ago, congressmen called Social Security "the rainy-day fund." Social Security hasn't been thought important enough for a fund in its own right like the military establishment's fund. That's why the condescending "rainy-day fund" seemed apt to those who wanted Social Security privatized (exploited).

Among the Republicans and Blue Dog Democrats, there seems to be reluctance to legislate health care for all Americans. They are planning to let some people "fall through the cracks." If everyone can't be saved, there ought to be some evidence of trying.

For natural disasters: what is the name of that fund? Or will Social Security be the "rainy-day fund" when a tornado or hurricane hits?

And, by the way, have we forgotten that Social Security is an entity of its own and should not be an item in the federal budget?

It seems there should be an establishment such as health care that keeps people alive and has a budget as large as the military budget.

As for having the largest military force in the world: that would require the women of this country to produce the most children to grow up and get killed in wars more than any other nation. I'm not of child producing age but if I were I'd say, "go to hell!"

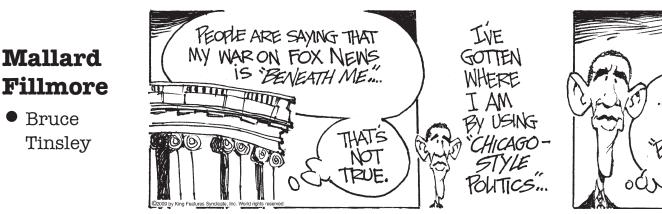
My father was in France during World War I and I still don't know what that was about except to kill "Kaiser Bill." Both of my brothers, my husband and two brothers were in World War II - supposed to have been the war to end all wars. It was barely over when they began talk of "enlistment" for another war.

Edna Hatcher, Colby

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