

## Free Press Viewpoint

### In power politics federal budget loses

So the so-called "Supercommittee" lets us down, failing to reach an agreement on how to chop the federal budget.

It joins the presidential commission and Congress as a whole in disappointing us. Both parties are playing politics coming up to next fall's elections. Some say it's not likely there'll be any compromise before then. It's a dangerous game for incumbents, however.

People want the country to move toward a solution to the debt crisis. They want progress, they want compromise, they want answers. And politics as usual won't provide them.

Voters are likely to go into the elections in a surly mood. The nation's wars will be over, but the fiscal fight not yet really begun. And that will make it yet another season for challengers.

The "tea party" Republicans elected last year will cry "We told you so," but even they may be vulnerable. Democrats and Republicans who've done nothing will be in real danger; neither party stands to gain as much as it might lose.

The stakes, in short, are high, and the country is not likely to get what people want before the election. After the election, there could be a whole lot more new faces in Washington.

Why the deadlock?

Campaign rhetoric, mostly. Republicans cry for cuts to "entitlements," welfare, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Democrats reject that and demand tax increases on "the wealthy."

Both parties put up a smoke screen that they are fighting for us, but in truth, they are fighting to hold onto – or increase – their power. To a point, there is nothing wrong with that. Voters may feel both passed that point years ago, however.

Having a government that works demands compromise, the ability to work together, a concern for the good of the nation. Those things are rare in politics, rarer still in our history. But this is one of those times that demand we pull together, not just pull for votes.

Democrats have to admit that automatic increases to "entitlements" must be curbed. Republicans are going to have to give more than \$3 billion in new revenue. Some other rifts need to be patched over.

The congressman or senator who ignores those truths risks the wrath of voters who are simply tired of games and tired of waiting.

It will take, as Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas said Monday, courage, more than anything, to work together with the other party and put the good of the whole nation first.

Ladies and gentlemen, the time is now, not two years from now, to start solving this problem, curb spending and balance the budget. Let's get with it. – *Steve Haynes*

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### For holidays, cooking still a 'Joy'

Steve was looking up a recipe the other day, and he pulled out my old copy of "Joy of Cooking".

"Was this a wedding present?" he asked, noting that it was the 1971 printing.

No, not quite. I bought it about a year after we were married.

For some reason, I wanted to make egg rolls and the only cookbook I had didn't have them in it. I stopped at a bookstore near where I worked in Kansas City and bought two books, "Joy of Cooking" and a Chinese cookbook.

I have no idea what happened to the Chinese cookbook, but "Joy of Cooking" became my kitchen Bible.

I suppose I made the egg rolls. I really don't remember. It's not a recipe I've used since.

However, I learned how to cook a turkey the next Thanksgiving by following the directions in my new companion.

Then, a few years later, when we bought a case of Jonathan apples from the area around Weston, Mo., I learned how to make an apple pie.

I remember peeling, coring and slicing apples in the evening after I got off work at 9 p.m. Then I would mix them with the spices and freeze them in one-pie bags. All I had to do then was get the "Joy of Cooking" down and check the recipe for pie crust, thaw my apples, and I had a pie.



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

"The Joy of Cooking" is 75 years old. It was written and self-published by Irma Brombauer and illustrated by her daughter, Marion Becker, in 1931. Since then, editions have been published in 1936, 1943-'46, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1997 and 2006. Somewhere in the 60s, it lost the "The" in its name. Today, the fourth generation of the family is working to update the book.

Over the years, we used "Joy" when I decided I wanted to make quiche. I still get the book out each time to check the recipe just so we don't forget anything. We've only made that quiche recipe about a hundred times.

The other thing we grab the book for about every other month or so is the recipe for Caesar salad dressing. When we wanted to make it, it was there in the book.

While I tend to make the quiches, Steve has taken over the Caesar dressing. He's gotten to be a master at that dressing and a big salad for two with fresh Caesar dressing made in a

blender – he uses the whole can of anchovies instead of three filets – is supper.

(Well, what would you do with two-thirds of a can of anchovies? And, don't say pizza!)

The book that Steve was thumbing through was my old one, complete with food stains and a broken binding. It has been well used and appreciated.

I have a newer copy. It's got some updates, but seems to have all the old favorites.

Over the years, as my children have grown up and moved away, I've gotten each of them their own "Joy of Cooking." It's always a good thing to have around, when you need to look up how to make a meringue or stuffing for the turkey.

You can learn how to fix just about anything if you have a "Joy of Cooking."

So, put that antique away, Steve, and hand me the new one. Thanksgiving is coming up and I need to look up pumpkin pie. No, don't worry, I'll make you an apple pie, too. Yes, with Jonathan apples and a lattice crust. The instructions are all in the book.

*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](mailto:c.haynes@nwkansas.com)*

### Be honest; do what's best for students

Imagine if the Kansas Department of Education issued this press release: "Students performing in the top three performance levels on the reading assessment (exemplary, exceeds standards and meets standards) increased to 87.6 percent in 2011, up from 86.3 percent in 2010. But with only one year remaining before Kansas juniors move on to the workforce, college or other forms of advanced training, only 54 percent are able to read grade-appropriate material with full comprehension."

That would likely cause quite a stir across the state. And yet that first sentence is exactly how the department characterized the results of the 2011 State Report Card, which includes these unfortunate results for the percentage of 11th grade students who, by the Department of Education's definition, read grade-appropriate material with full comprehension.

Demographic and socioeconomic differences are known to impact achievement levels so comparing districts with significantly dissimilar student body compositions is invalid. You can, however, compare achievement levels of separate demographic groupings across districts and those details are at KansasOpenGov.org. We collected district-level data from the Department of Education and posted 2006 through 2011 results for multiple grade levels, racial groupings and other demographic breakdowns.

If these achievement levels seem lower than expected, it's because the Department definition of Meets Standard is not "reads grade-appropriate material with full comprehension;" that is the state's definition of Exceeds Standard. Kansas' reading standard is less than full comprehension of grade-appropriate material.

A student also is not required to perform accurately most of the time and have effective content knowledge to meet the Kansas Math standard.

It's good that Department of Education tests

### Other Opinions

• **Dave Trabert**  
Kansas Policy Inst.

show some improvement but we do kids no favors by reducing standards and pretending to have high achievement levels. It's no wonder universities spend millions on remedial training or that so many students drop out of college for academic reasons. It also helps explain why so many young adults have a hard time holding steady employment. They can't read and fully understand high school-level material.

Most Kansas education officials maintain that spending more money is still the answer but that clearly hasn't been working. State aid to schools went from \$1.5 billion in 1994 to \$3.2 billion this year; total aid went from \$2.6 billion to \$5.6 billion. On a per-pupil basis, total aid went from \$5,987 to over \$12,000 this year. And still only 54 percent of Kansas juniors can fully comprehend grade-level material according to KSDE tests.

Kansans don't have billions more and even if the money existed, we can't keep throwing away generations of kids while hoping that achievement will continue to inch toward levels that allow graduates to be productive citizens and reach their full potential.

"Just spend more" isn't the answer and in fact there is no silver bullet solution. Other states have come to this conclusion and are aggressively transforming public education by simultaneously implementing a broad array of reforms. They are providing more school choice to parents of low-income and special

needs kids – expanding online learning, changing tenure and compensation laws to reward and attract effective teachers – implementing accountability systems so parents clearly understand how their students and schools are performing.

Why Not Kansas?

*Dave Trabert is President of Kansas Policy Institute. He graduated from West Liberty State College with a degree in business administration.*

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