



## Free Press Viewpoint

# Deadlock matters for country's future

It's fashionable to blame Congress and the president for gridlock in Washington. People say nothing is getting done, and people say everyone is just "playing politics."

And neither is true. A lot has happened over the last few months in particular, from permanent agreements on many tax issues to actual spending cuts to extension of the Violence Against Women Act. Still, the overall federal budget is growing, not shrinking. If politics was just a game, the complaining might be justified. But politics is about not just winners and losers, but about who runs the country and which direction they steer it.

And the choice does make a difference. Republicans in Washington, most of them, anyway, really do believe in smaller government, more economic freedom, lower taxes and less spending. The Democrats believe in social programs and the power of government to boost the economy. These aren't just abstract ideas; they involve real beliefs and real decisions that have to be made, and neither side wants to let the other go its own way.

But while the sides are represented by the "tea party" on the right, whatever that is exactly, and the very liberal Democrats on the left, whoever they are exactly, the country as a whole is more in the middle, more interested in making things work than in change.

None of that is bad. The ideas which move us one way or another come from near the fringes. The cooperation that "gets things done" has to come from the center.

For a long time now, the country had been more or less on the bubble. It doesn't take much to move the government one way or the other, from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush to Barack Obama and back.

That isn't so bad, either, but true believers think maybe we are near a watershed era, a time like unto the 1930s, when one side or the other gains enough advantage to move the starting gate. Partisans on either side see the possibilities — and fear as much as welcome them.

That fear drives a lot of the defensive posturing. It's left us farther from resolving a lot of issues than we might have been a year ago, even six months ago, when the president at least said he was willing to talk about government spending. Since the election, though his party controls only one house of Congress, the Republicans say his attitude has been more like, "We won. Do things our way."

The sheer size of the budget problem works against a quick solution. The government is a complex and wondrous creature; you don't dismantle and rebuild it in a day. And while "everyone" thinks the budget should be cut, hardly anyone agrees on how.

In conversations last week, Sen. Pat Roberts said there's just no way to settle everything at once. There'll be no "grand deal," no single budget "fix" that sets the country on course.

And neither side is going to give an advantage that will tip the scales to the other. Not without a fight, at least.

That may be frustrating to the rest of us, who don't see why they couldn't just sit down and hash it all out. They have made a start with each "fiscal cliff" and each last-minute compromise, but there's a long way to go before anyone will be satisfied.

And too much at stake to throw caution to the wind.

— Steve Haynes

## COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: [colby.editor@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansas.com)

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

**Sharon Friedlander - Publisher**  
[sfriedlander@nwkansas.com](mailto:sfriedlander@nwkansas.com)

### NEWS

**Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter**  
[colby.sports@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.sports@nwkansas.com)

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**  
[mballard@nwkansas.com](mailto:mballard@nwkansas.com)

**Sam Dieter - News Reporter**  
[colby.editor@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansas.com)

**Heather Alwin - Society Editor**  
[colby.society@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.society@nwkansas.com)

### ADVERTISING

**Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative**  
[kballard@nwkansas.com](mailto:kballard@nwkansas.com)

**Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design**  
[khunter@nwkansas.com](mailto:khunter@nwkansas.com)

### BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

**Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager**  
[medmondson@nwkansas.com](mailto:medmondson@nwkansas.com)

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
[support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com)

### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**  
Gary Stewart, Foreman

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Pressmen  
Kris McCool, Judy McKnight, Tracy Traxel,  
Sheri Arroyo, Mailing

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



## First, find carpet; next ...

The carpet cleaners are coming! The carpet cleaners are coming! It's an emergency!

Well, the carpets in my house certainly need cleaning, but they aren't the real emergency. Finding them under all the junk is the real problem.

There's stuff all over the place on the upstairs and main floor of the house — newspapers, books, clothes and just plain ol' stuff. But it's the basement that's going to cause us problems.

Our son left home for college in 1999. Since then, for 13 to 14 years, the basement has been the catch-all for everything we haven't had another place to put and everything that "we may use sometime, we'd better keep it."

Looking over the basement last week, I had a hard time finding the floor in spots.

The laundry room is OK. While there are plenty of things strewn around in there, the cleaners won't be going in because the floor is solid concrete.

The main room is a different story. We have my mother's old television in one corner. It's about the size of a coffin, and I'm not sure if it's even a color television. I just



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

know that there's probably a museum out there somewhere that might want it for their '50s or '60s room.

Next to that are an old desk, some short metal and wooden file cabinets with either nothing in them or nothing of value in them.

Then there's the ratty old couch that's been handed down from generation to generation, and a couple of those funny-looking television game chairs, the ones that look like loungers without legs. The couch and the chairs are piled high with books and cookbooks that I've removed from shelves upstairs to make that space look better.

I didn't actually clean up the upstairs bookcase so much as move the mess to the basement. Now, I have to figure out how to clean

up the basement without moving it back upstairs.

And then there are clothes — out-of-season clothes, too-small clothes, too-big clothes, too out-of-date-and-really-ugly clothes, clothes for the beach, clothes for the mountains, clothes for the pool, clothes for arctic treks. You name it, it's probably languishing in my basement.

And now I've got two days to remove all the books, clothes, broken light fixtures, magazines, broken furniture and whatnots so that we can get the carpet cleaned.

Actually, this is probably a good thing. We've been talking about cleaning out the basement for a couple of years, but the job has been too daunting and we could always find something else that seemed more pressing.

Now, this is the most important project for next weekend, and there is no putting it off. Just what we needed. Another deadline.

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)

## Tax bills begin conference process

### Second half activities began with a bang

The Legislature is approaching the second deadline of the session. Committees need to consider budget and tax proposals and any remaining bills before regular session ends on Friday, April 5.

The past week, both chambers passed out tax bills that will begin the conference process. Budget priorities will probably wait until the veto session, when more current revenue estimates will be available. The leadership still plans to finish in 80 days. This will be difficult with the amount of committee work left.

### Major issues addressed

**House Bill 2059 — The March to Zero.** Income tax rates over the next five years will be reduced, with the tax to be eliminated by 2018. Income taxes were lowered this year for joint and single filers, and tax on nonwage income eliminated for small business owners across the state, along with adjustments to Kansas' current tax code.

The current state sales tax rate at 6.3 would be frozen in order to lower income tax rates, which would help all Kansans. An amendment was offered to phase out all deductions and breaks except for the adoption credit and charitable contributions. These will be phased



**Ralph Ostmeyer**

• State Senator

out gradually through 2017.

Statistics show that 70 percent of Kansans use the standard deduction and will not be affected by elimination of itemized deductions at the state level. Federal itemized deductions will still be available while Kansans see tax relief at the state level beginning next year. By passing this bill, the Senate has remained committed to providing further tax relief for Kansans and creating a competitive business environment in our state.

**HB2022 — Paycheck Protection Act** passed. Bans state or other units of government from making payroll deductions for members of public-sector unions to go to union political action committees. Members may still contribute in other ways, such as by check or electronic transfer. The bill also revises the Professional Negotiations Act and

Public-Employees Relations Act by redefining and restricting partisan or political employee organizations. The details are specifically laid out in the bill.

**HB2019 — Court of Appeals appointments.** On the way for the governor's signature being passed by the House and the Senate, amends the process of how these judges are selected. The governor would appoint the judge and the Senate would approve the selection.

**Athletic achievement in northwest Kansas** It was an honor to offer Resolution S1734, recognizing the Norton High School wrestling team for its first-place finish at the Class 1-2-3A State Tournament in Hays.

Congratulations to Coach Johnson and these fine young athletes for a successful season.

### Dates and Deadlines

• Friday, the last day for non-exempt committee action.

• Next Wednesday, the last day for non-exempt bills in either chamber.

• March 28 and 29, no session.

I can be reached by writing to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 136-E, Topeka, Kan., 66612, or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is [Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov](mailto:Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov).

## Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774  
[roberts.senate.gov/public/](http://roberts.senate.gov/public/)

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 136-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 [ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

**State Rep. Ward Cassidy**, (120th District) State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 151-S, Topeka, Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7616 [ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov](mailto:ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov)

**State Rep. Don Hineman**, (118th District) State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 50-S, Topeka, Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7636 [don.hineman@house.ks.gov](mailto:don.hineman@house.ks.gov)

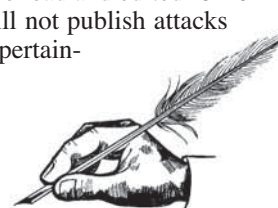
## Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.



## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

