



Other Viewpoints

Underemployed need food stamps

The fewer people relying on food stamps and other public assistance, the better for recipients and taxpayers alike. Fraud should be detected and punished. But in their zeal to reform and cut the food stamp program, the Brownback administration and the Kansas congressional delegation overlook how the historic downturn in our economy has left so many people jobless and hungry. They see greed, not the genuine need.

The talk of the “out-of-control” food stamp program ends up feeding the stereotype of poor people as lazy malingerers who lack only the will to find work, as it ignores how many of the people on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program already work but don’t earn enough to make ends meet. It’s sobering, for example, that at least 39 of Kansas recipients live at Fort Riley. And that in the past five years, 80,000 Kansans joined the ranks of those living below the federal poverty line of \$23,000 annual income for a family of four.

But in Congress, much of the debate over the new farm bill has been about how deeply to cut food stamps, with little regard for how much trouble some people are having feeding their families. Former Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas once proudly called the expansion and reform of the food stamp program “the most important welfare change since the passage of the Social Security Act.” Now, with Kansas ranking 36th in the average amount given to food stamp recipients, the Kansans in Congress are among those pushing to cut the program by at least \$31 billion over 10 years.

Last week, Gov. Sam Brownback’s administration tightened eligibility as of Oct. 1, letting a federal waiver expire and reviving a pre-2009 requirement that able-bodied adults without dependents work no fewer than 20 hours a week to qualify for food benefits. About 20,000 of the 316,000 Kansans on food stamps would be affected – by a change in a federally funded program that won’t save the state a dollar.

In recent years, the state has otherwise tightened access to welfare and child-care assistance and eliminated tax credits that had helped low-income families.

“Instead of giving people a pittance of money from the government, let’s push people into work,” Brownback told *The Topeka Capital-Journal*, in an interview about his anti-poverty goals conducted before his administration’s food stamp change had been announced.

But the state’s unemployment rate actually has increased slightly over the past three months. When there are no jobs available, requiring assistance recipients to work is just another way of denying benefits.

“This administration seems to want to decrease poverty by making it harder to live in poverty – not by assisting people,” said Tawny Stottlemire, executive director of the Kansas Association of Community Action Programs.

Four years into the slow recovery, the shame is not that more people are turning to food stamps to supplement low or no wages and feed their families, but that politicians are so eager to cut off access to such help.

– *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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Work on park suspended during war

Information for the stories about Fike Park are from the research done by Opal Linville at the Prairie Museum of Art and History.

Now we are up to 1944 and many men in the community were either drafted or volunteered to go into military service for our country. Because of this, a large commemorative honor roll plaque was constructed and placed at the southwest corner of Fike Park just north and a little to the west of the City Hall. It held plates with the names of all the local men who were serving in the Armed Forces during World War II.

The plaque was dedicated during a downtown bond rally. War Bonds were being sold in every town in order to finance the war – about \$317 million in series E bonds were sold in the U.S. during the war.

No improvements were made in the park during the war. I imagine people had too many other things on their minds and, too many worries, especially when President Franklin D. Roosevelt suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died of a massive stroke on April 12, 1945. Vice President Harry S. Truman was quickly sworn in as president.

On May 8, 1945, Nazi Germany and Italy surrendered. That day would become known as V.E. Day, or “Victory in Europe Day.”

Japan was being bombarded by the U.S. and the United Kingdom. However, Japan pledged



Marj Brown

• Marj’s Snippets

to continue fighting to the end. The U.S. had been secretly developing a new weapon; the atomic bomb. It was tested successfully on July 16, 1945.

On July 26, 1945, Harry Truman, Josef Stalin and Winston Churchill came together in Potsdam, Germany, to determine how Germany would be divided. They also drew up a document called the Potsdam Declaration which stipulated the terms of an unconditional surrender, to be presented to Hirohito, the emperor of Japan. Stalin did not sign the document because Russia had not entered the war with Japan. Hirohito refused to surrender and would not sign the document.

As a result, during the early morning of Aug. 6, 1945, the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan – killing 70,000 to 80,000 people. Still, Hirohito refused to sign the surrender document. In retaliation, on Aug. 9, 1945, the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki – another 40,000 people killed. Later approximately 30,000 more died

from the aftereffects of the fallout. All in all, it has been estimated that around 150,000 to 200,000 people were killed or maimed from the bombs. Always, when leaders enter and stubbornly choose to remain in war, it is the innocent citizens who suffer the most.

Japan surrendered on Aug. 14, 1945. That day became known as Victory over Japan Day or V.J. Day. I remember that being a great day of celebration with people running out into the streets to celebrate and people in cars stopping and honking their horns.

The Potsdam Declaration was probably the best thing that ever happened to Japan. It prevents Japan from ever entering into war again and made them destroy all of their weapons of war. In the following years, all they have had to finance has been rebuilding their country, and the U.S. did a great deal of that for them right after the war.

It wasn’t long until people in this country were getting back to their normal ways of life, and once again building for the future. Later, in 1950, Colby city leaders began to think about building a Scout Hut in Fike Park. I’ll tell about that project and others in the next column. Please look for it.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it’s one of her favorite things to do.

Congress should engage on issue of force

It’s encouraging to see the possibility of real congressional debate on the projection of U.S. power. On such difficult issues in the past, Congress has sidestepped its constitutional responsibility, deferred to the President, and then sniped from the sidelines.

As Washington swirls with proposals, counter-proposals, and political brinksmanship in response to diplomatic efforts on Syria, the situation has a lot of people scratching their heads. Couldn’t President Obama and Congress have handled this differently?

I prefer to take a step back and ask a different question. Given that we are stronger as a country and our foreign policy more effective when the President and Congress forge a unified response to an international crisis, how can the two branches of government work together less chaotically to confront a dilemma like this one?

Let’s put a possible congressional vote on Syria in context. Washington has long been divided over the power to use American military force, thanks to ambiguity in the Constitution itself: it gives Congress the power to declare war, but makes the President commander-in-chief. The last time Congress formally used its war powers was during World War II. Ever since, as we’ve engaged often in military action, it has ceded authority to the President. It tried to regain lost ground with the War Powers Resolution of 1973, which passed over a presidential veto and which no President since has considered constitutional, but it has been a losing battle. Grenada, Kosovo, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Libya – all were launched by presidents without prior congressional authorization.

So I’m encouraged to see the possibility of a real debate on Capitol Hill on Syria, on what to do when another country uses chemical weap-

Other Opinions

• Lee Hamilton Center on Congress

ons, and on the projection of U.S. power. Congress should have returned much sooner from its vacation to address issues of such obvious national importance. But at least it’s stepping up to the plate in a way it has preferred to avoid before now.

For let’s be clear. Presidents should not get a free pass on foreign affairs, but neither should Congress get to avoid declaring itself. On such difficult issues in the past, Congress has preferred to sidestep its constitutional responsibility, defer to the President, and then snipe from the sidelines when things go wrong. It has done so repeatedly not just on military issues, but on such matters recently as developing a national cyberwarfare strategy – which it failed at, leaving a matter of critical national security to the President – and on the National Security Administration’s surveillance of Americans’ electronic communications, which members of Congress in the know never saw fit to bring up for public debate, even though it amounts to the largest expansion of government power in recent history.

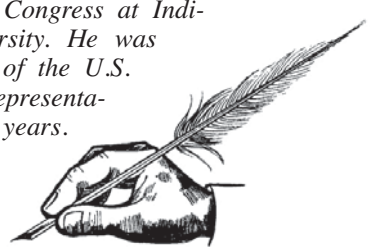
This time, for better or worse, is different. The arguments both for and against a limited use of American force are reasonable, and congressional leaders are correct when they say this is a matter of conscience. I happen to believe that the United States’ credibility in the world is at stake here and that restoring an in-

ternational norm against the use of poison gas is important. My guess is that, should a full-fledged debate take place, members will acquit themselves well.

What I don’t want to see is a chaotic process that leaves the U.S. appearing divided and indecisive, with the President forced to wonder how to “consult” with a disorganized Congress in which power is diffused. There is a better way, but it requires a regular mechanism for consultation. A few years ago, a bipartisan National War Powers Commission, of which I was a member, came up with a pragmatic framework that would create a routine process for the President and Congress to follow. It would require the President to consult with congressional leaders before any military action expected to last more than one week – and then would require Congress to declare itself, either by voting to approve action or, if that resolution fails, to allow for a vote to disapprove military involvement.

Had this structure been in place already, a high-stakes vote on Syria wouldn’t seem so unusual and the consultative process would have been far less messy. My hope, once this is over, is that the idea will gain greater currency. When international crises arrive, a routine process that’s allowed our political leaders to build credibility with each other would save them a lot of heartburn.

Lee Hamilton is Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

