

from other pens...

## A look at all those recession plans

What Congress is considering can bring a whole new twist to the candidates' presidential campaigns and another level of frustration and confusion for voters.

While America was out Christmas shopping, the people with the fancy calculators and equations were punching in numbers and the results they were getting showed the country headed for a recession. Congress, which has a joined-at-the-hip relationship with those mathematicians, has since tried to figure out how to either avoid or limit the impact a recession will have.

Remember, it's an election year. Great opportunity for somebody to come up with razzle-dazzle, voter-appealing answer.

Sure, there are lots of suggestions on the table, but one that appears to be attached to the table is offering families tax rebates from \$300 to \$600. No, it's not a done deal, not yet. Government has paid back before, most recently in 2001, right after the Bush Administration got started, and the last time America was in a recession according to the economic eggheads.

The \$600-check solution sounds (and looks) good on paper. But that's as far as it goes. America has mastered the possibilities with its economy. Credit card companies, like Discover and American Express, are doing well. No, not the bank behind the names, the companies that actually produce the cards. America's consumer spending via credit is rampant. Cards are all over the place and are being used all over the place. We Americans are spending more than we are earning. Very scary.

How far will \$600 go for each American? That could be the total payment for some Americans and their credit cards for just one month.

The recession fear may put a twist on all the presidential campaigns. Most of the campaigns and debates have been based on the Iraq war, health care and immigration. Smart economic plans have not had the attention they deserve.

If Congress and the candidates want to make Americans happy and a little more proud of their bank accounts, create jobs for them. Make the American worker happy, not just the American stockholders. Create tax incentives for companies to stay in the States. Don't let the companies blow a raspberry at American tax laws after they send those jobs overseas. America needs productive jobs, building more than Big Macs and Whoppers.

That may mean the party or candidate will lose the big donation from Acme Corp.

But that also may be enough for American families to not rely on or abuse a credit card, which partially led to our economic woes in the first place.

What's more important? — *John Van Nostrand, Colby Free Press.*

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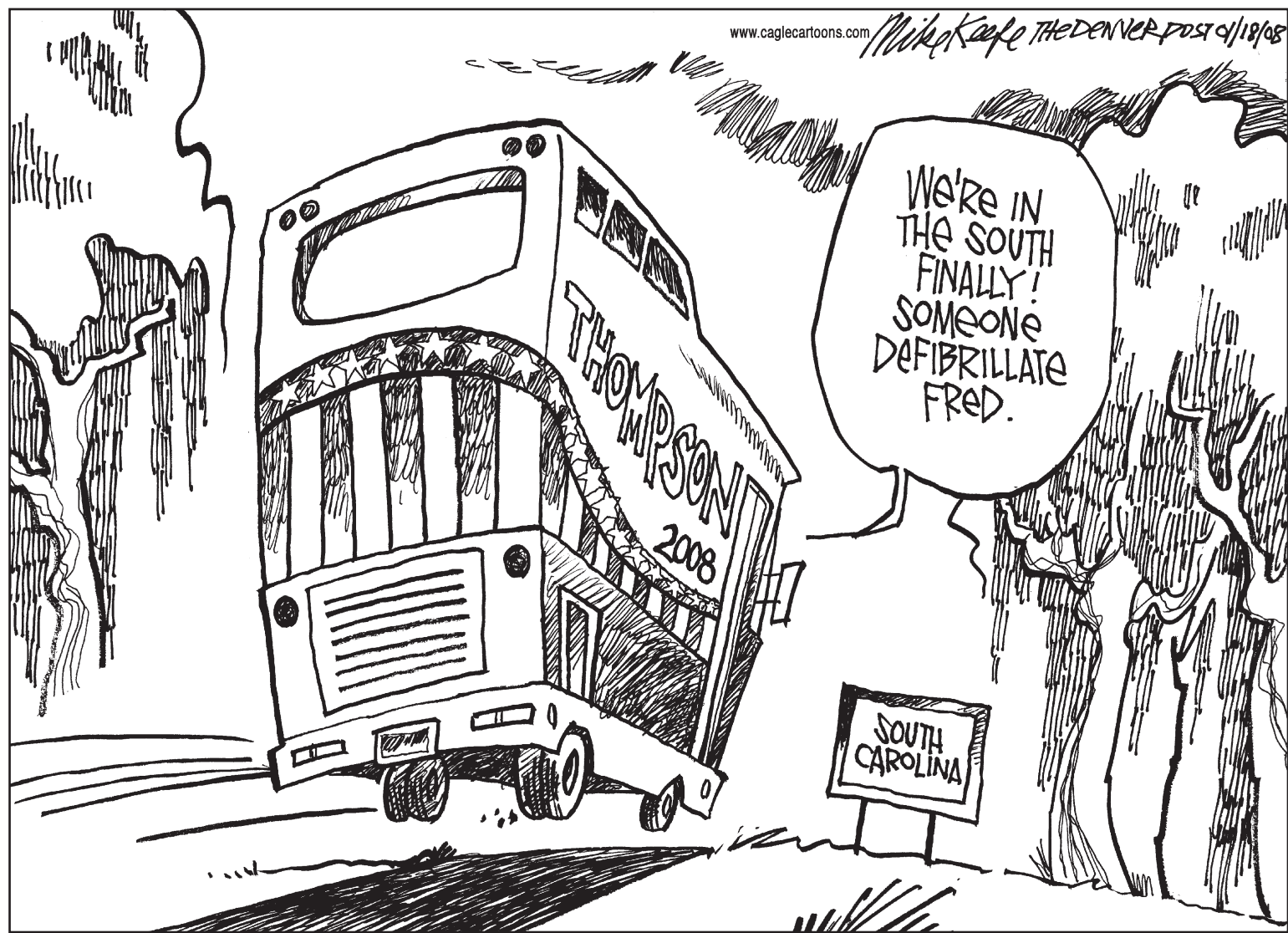
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## I don't have time to make any resolutions

Geez. Where'd the time go? New Year's has come and gone, and I still haven't had time to make any resolutions.

That may not be a bad thing, because it saves me the trouble of breaking them.

But it seems sort of nontraditional.

I should resolve to lose some weight, but I should do that every year. And with all the meetings and conventions I have to go to over the next nine months, there'll be a lot of temptations.

It's hard to lose weight when your traveling. It's not that the food is so good — often it's better at home — but it's so there, and there's always a lot of it. At home, portion control is easier. And there's less to drink.

I could resolve to cut out midnight snacks, and that would help with No. 1. But some nights just seem to demand one. My dietician even recommended late-evening snacks. Small ones after a really skimpy dinner.

Or at least, that's my excuse.

The best way to lose weight, Cynthia says, is to cut everything in half. Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner. Even snacks.

She saves the rest if she's at a restaurant. Our fridge is full of leftovers someone may have for lunch next week.

At home, there's just portion control.

And believe me, it work. She lost 40 pounds and I lost 30.

Only I think our half has been growing. At



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

least our butts haven't been, but no weight has been lost of late.

So, get out the knife. That's a resolution. I should resolve to travel more, but this year, that's not a problem. I have to go plenty of places. There won't be much time for those places we want to go.

What I'd like to do is slow down and enjoy travel more.

Poke my way down the overgrown old highway. Stop to look at the town museum or depot. Go five miles off the road to see a historic site. Take six hours to get to Denver if I feel like it.

But that's not going to happen this year. This year, it'll be straight to the airport, straight to the meeting, straight home, where my bed will be waiting. I hope.

I really need to resolve to walk more, even when there's no time. And there's often no time when you're on the road. Someplace alone, where you don't know the best trails or the safest parts of the city.

We've been walking for exercise for more than 23 years now. When we're home and the

weather is halfway decent, it's no problem. When we're on the road, it's hard to make time.

When we're home, the dog looks longingly at us whenever we go out. It's hard to ignore those big brown eyes. She's been the best thing ever to happen to our exercise plan.

So maybe I should resolve to remember her when I'm on the road. That might get me out on the sidewalk.

I'd resolve to read more books, but I'm not sure where I'd find the time. Maybe on airplanes. Since I got the portable computer, though, I seem to work whenever I'm on the road. The other day, I wrote four editorials and two columns on the way to Kearney and Concordia.

Not while driving, I might add. Without Cynthia's help, it wouldn't be possible. But all this work does cut into my reading time. Such a shame.

Maybe I should resolve to make my resolutions sooner next year. It'd mean giving up my holiday procrastination time, but hey, every resolution requires a little sacrifice.

And then by the middle of January, I'd be well on my way to breaking some of those resolutions so valiantly made on the first.

That'd be progress.

## Why Huchabee stumbles and McCain surges

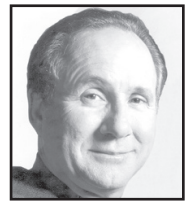
Although Mike Huckabee once suddenly leaped into the lead in the Republican primary contests, he began to drop back just as suddenly as the New Hampshire contest approached.

On the other hand, John McCain — once considered all-but-finished — has reportedly now surged ahead in New Hampshire and is showing signs that he could go all the way to the nomination.

Why these developments have surprised a lot of the so-called experts is puzzling. There are solid reasons for the sudden turnabout vis-à-vis Huckabee vs. McCain, and close observers should have seen them coming.

Everybody agrees that Huckabee's strength comes from the evangelical Christians. This Baptist minister loudly proclaims his Christian faith at every whistle stop, and the evangelicals eat it up. It is the reason why he came to the forefront in Iowa and it will be the reason for his downfall in New Hampshire and the rest of the primaries.

What few seem to realize is that his entire campaign rests on his strength among the evangelical Republican voters in Iowa, where they are a majority. Without this advantage elsewhere, he has nothing left in his quiver. He is a single-issue man, and once his faith — the only arrow he has — is no longer sought, he will have nothing else to offer but his quips, his ready wit, and his Clinton-like charm.



**michael reagan**

• making sense

Huckabee has become the Tom Trancredo of the evangelical Christian vote in Iowa. Trancredo was a one-issue candidate. If you asked him about anything he brought it back to immigration. You cannot win the presidency being a one-issue candidate.

By going after the evangelical vote in Iowa, he has made himself a one-issue candidate. Voters no longer think of him as the former governor of Arkansas, but rather as the Baptist minister running for president.

Moreover, he has revealed a shocking ignorance about foreign policy and national-security issues, showing himself totally unprepared to grapple with matters such as the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the kind of event a president must be prepared to confront at a moment's notice.

When voters think about God they think about Mike Huckabee; when they think about the economy or foreign policy they think about other candidates.

John McCain is surging because when vot-

ers sit back and look at the field of candidates, out of all of them he's the only one in the Republican upper tier who is consistent. He is consistent in a field of GOP candidates who appear to be inconsistent from one year to the next — and from one decade to the next — on issues important to this campaign.

He's his own man and he's the only adult in the field who has shown consistency. You always know where he stands. You may not agree with his positions on immigration or campaign financing, but he leaves no doubt about his positions on those issues.

John McCain is a man of great courage, in-your-face honesty and gravitas. He stands out among the leading candidates who seem to be one way today and another way tomorrow. John McCain has been the same yesterday, is the same today, and you know he will be the same tomorrow.

That's what the voters are looking for and this is why we are seeing this movement to John McCain in New Hampshire and other states.

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