

from our viewpoint...

Shutdown averted in 11th hour deal

The country exhaled a bit on Friday night when the politicians in Washington managed to avert a government shutdown literally at the 11th hour.

Neither side came out looking like winners, but each side is spinning the budget agreement as a great step toward getting the country's fiscal house in order. The spending cuts were touted as the largest in American history. This is not a huge cut in the total scheme of things, but getting both Democrats and Republicans to reach an agreement is a step forward.

The fact it took until the 11th hour to reach the agreement is about what most political observers expected because in the end neither political party wanted to face the potential wrath of a government shutdown.

In the debates and skirmishes in the budget battle many examples were used to try to push the agreement forward including not paying the military. Using these as up front pressure points created a lot of discussion around the edge of the real battle, and added stress on many of our brave men and women and their families already under enough pressure from the continued deployments around the world.

The agreement will be the focus of several votes this week as the Senate and House move to approve the remaining months of this year's budget. As that battle nears an end the next battle is beginning over the proposed budget plan for 2012 presented by House Budget Committee Chairman Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.).

Included in the Ryan budget plan are significant cuts and policy issues dealing with Medicaid and Medicare that could impact a large portion of those who are retired or nearing retirement. The need to review and modify these programs to cut costs but continue to provide the health care is obvious, and hope is both parties can find ways to get beyond their partisan rhetoric to find acceptable options.

The Ryan budget plan option is to privatize Medicare, and while it sounds simple it would be anything but, and leave millions of seniors looking at increasing health insurance costs at the same time the politicians are talking about cuts or changes in Social Security.

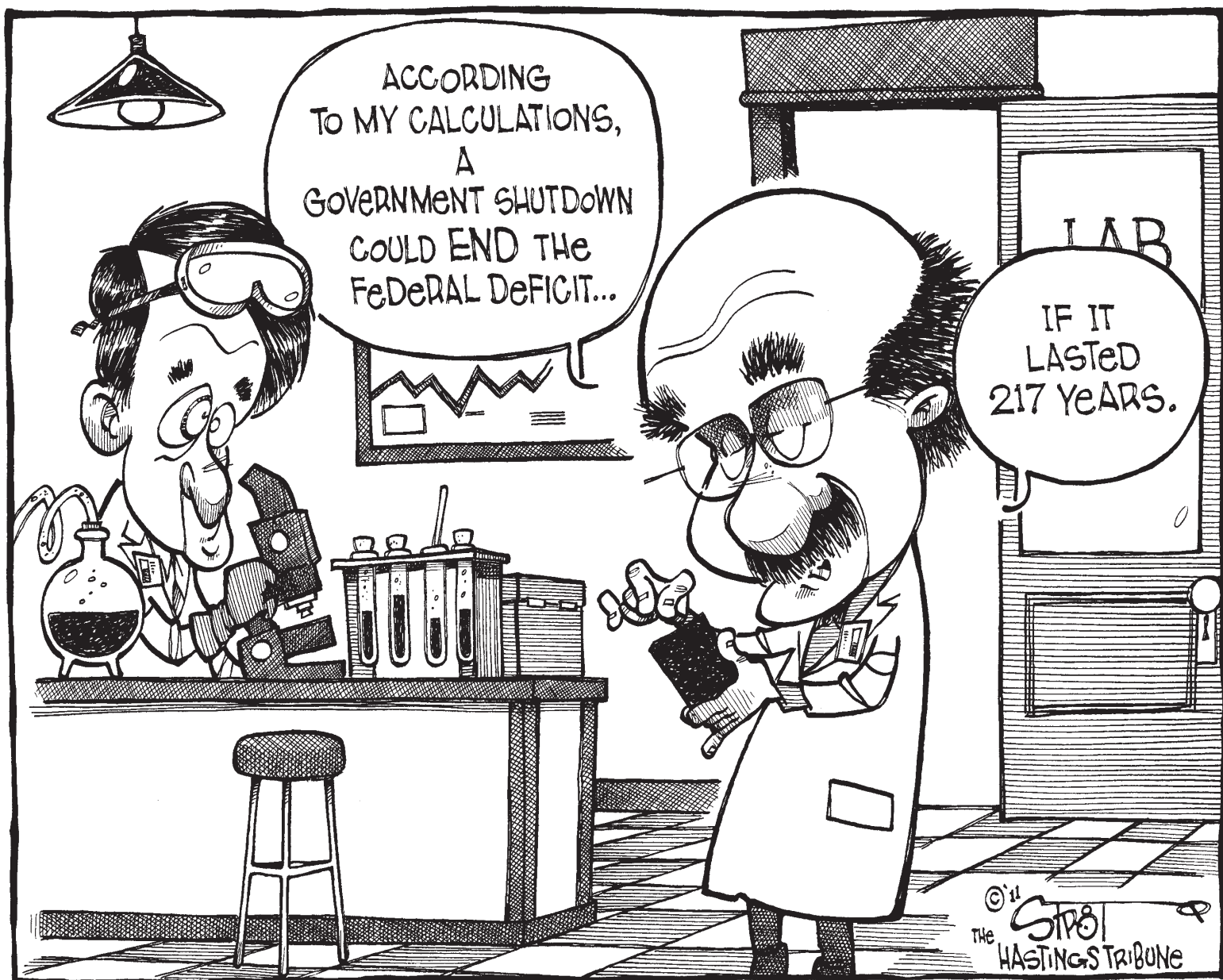
A lot of the skirmishes and rhetoric being heard over the next several weeks and months is more for positioning for the upcoming elections next year, and trying to give one party or segment of the population an advantage.

Some of the same rhetoric and posturing was seen in the recent vote on the Goodland School District bond issue that lost by a huge margin on Tuesday. The large turnout of voters was a sign people in Sherman County did not want any increase in taxes, and it did not matter if it was an investment in the future education of the kids in the district.

The proponents expected it to be a close fight, but the wide margin appears to mean the people did not want any increase and voted their pocketbooks entirely. That is an understandable point of view given the back lash about taxes previously seen for economic development and the ultra conservative results from November.

Goodland school board members will have to wrestle with the same budget cuts they were facing before the bond issue vote. Now they have another issue in trying to find a way to handle the continuing problem of reducing the number of buildings the district has and cannot afford to continue to operate.

The school bond issue defeated on Tuesday will not be the end, but when the efforts begins again the hope is after three years of discussions and public meetings the voters will see the value in moving ahead — even if the cost is higher. — Tom Betz



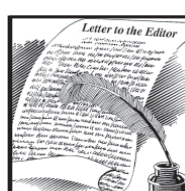
Thanks to all who supported me

To the Editor:
After eight years on the City Commission I want to thank everyone who's supported me and even those who haven't, both groups are what is needed in a democracy.

It's been one of the most rewarding things I've been able to do in my life. I appreciate those who ran against me in the election, it shows there are people who care about our City and I wish the new Commission good luck.

I've learned many things the last eight years, both positive and negative about our community. One thing that makes the most difference is the people who get involved. Those who do are the solid structure our community sits on and our future is only as good as those who are involved.

One of the things that destroy a community are people who aren't involved and say, "Good-



from our readers

to the editor

land is dying" or "there's nothing to do here," that aggravates me more than anything.

Negativity is the fastest path to a community's demise. There's bad things in every community, but when that's the focal point, that's what you get. Deal with the bad and fix it as soon as possible.

When people outside the community hear it, they have nothing else to base Goodland and Sherman County on and they think that's all there is. Goodland has it's problems, like all cities, but it has more good than bad.

Tell people about the good things, talk about those, take pride in what we have, fix what we don't. If you're not part of the solution, you are the problem.

Goodland is growing and getting better, look at all the things happening. New roads, new water treatment facility, new business, expanding business, enhanced parks and playgrounds a growing Tech College and many other things too numerous to count.

Get involved in your favorite organization or group, volunteer, enjoy what we have here and make it better, YOU are our community, take pride in it.

Thanks again to all the people who make our community better.

David J Daniels
Goodland

The heart of the country

Only once in a blue moon do Kansas farm and ranch families have an opportunity to tell their story to people half way around the world. That was the case March 23-24 when a Dutch (public broadcasting company in the Netherlands) television crew traveled to Smith and Sheridan counties to portray life on the farm in rural Kansas.

Theron and Lori Haresnape and family, Smith County, Harold and Bridget Koster and grandchildren and Wilfred Reinert from Sheridan County provided an up-close and personal view of their farming operations, family, faith and how folks live in the Heartland.

So often visitors from other countries travel to the United States and they only travel to the East or West coasts, says Paul Rosenmoller. He interviewed the Kansas farmers and ranchers as part of the Dutch film crew.

People who live and work in the Midwest are often overlooked and seldom included in visits by travelers from abroad, he continues. The same holds true for television documentaries.

"Farms, ranches and small villages of 14 people like Seguin are an integral part of the United States of America," Rosenmoller says. "I believe these rural areas are underestimated. The people who live here have sentiments, opinions and views just like other parts of America. So what is happening in the countryside has a huge impact on what we know in Europe as the United States."

Rosenmoller and the other three members of the crew were fascinated by the big sky and wide-open spaces. All expressed the feeling of being at the edge of the world — albeit very, very beautiful with so many acres of land and so few farms and people.

"It gives you the ultimate feeling of free-



Insight this week

john schlageck

dom," Rosenmoller says. "It's like you are here by yourself, on your own and you can do anything."

And that's what the Dutch crew found with the farm and ranch families they interviewed. They met their families, broke bread together and shared a fabulous, home-cooked meal, walked on their farm/ranch land and looked at their crops and cattle and even attended mass in St. Martins church in Seguin.

The Haresnapes, Kosters and Reinert shared their faith, family and vocations with the film crew from the Netherlands. These Kansas families all opened their hears and homes to the Western European visitors while extending the legendary hospitality of those who inhabit central Kansas and the Great High Plains.

The three Kansas family's willingness to share their intimate thoughts on life's tough day-to-day issues was inspiring. All provided a comprehensive, thoughtful portrayal of their farm and ranch vocation as well as family life in rural Kansas.

All were truly outstanding representatives of our state — true ambassadors for agriculture, family and their faith.

The three Kansas families demonstrated their care for livestock. They said doing so allows them to continue in their vocation of farming and ranching. They also talked about the thirsty winter wheat crop.

At their final stop on Reinert's farm on the northwestern edge of Seguin, the life-long

(75-years-old) Angus cattleman fed his cow herd as the Dutch cameras rolled. When he finished, he told the film crew his cattle love him.

"I look after them every day," Reinert says. "I feed them, doctor them, fuss after them and care for them in return."

On the Haresnape farm, the central Kansas family expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to, "teach four people from another country about our industry and make friends in the process."

During their interview, the Kosters emphasized how important every person is in the community of Seguin.

"We may only have 14 people here, but they're 14 of the best people anywhere," Bridget says. "You can count on them. They look out for you and you reciprocate."

When the Dutch crew departed Kansas, they left knowing they had indeed spent time they would remember always with some unique, wonderful people.

As he departed, Rosenmoller asked the Kosters if there had ever been a film crew in Seguin.

They replied, not to their knowledge. "You did very, very well," Rosenmoller told them. "You can be proud of the way you conducted yourselves and proud of your story."

And while the Dutch camera crew had traveled half way 'round the world for this story — it was more than worth the effort.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

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