

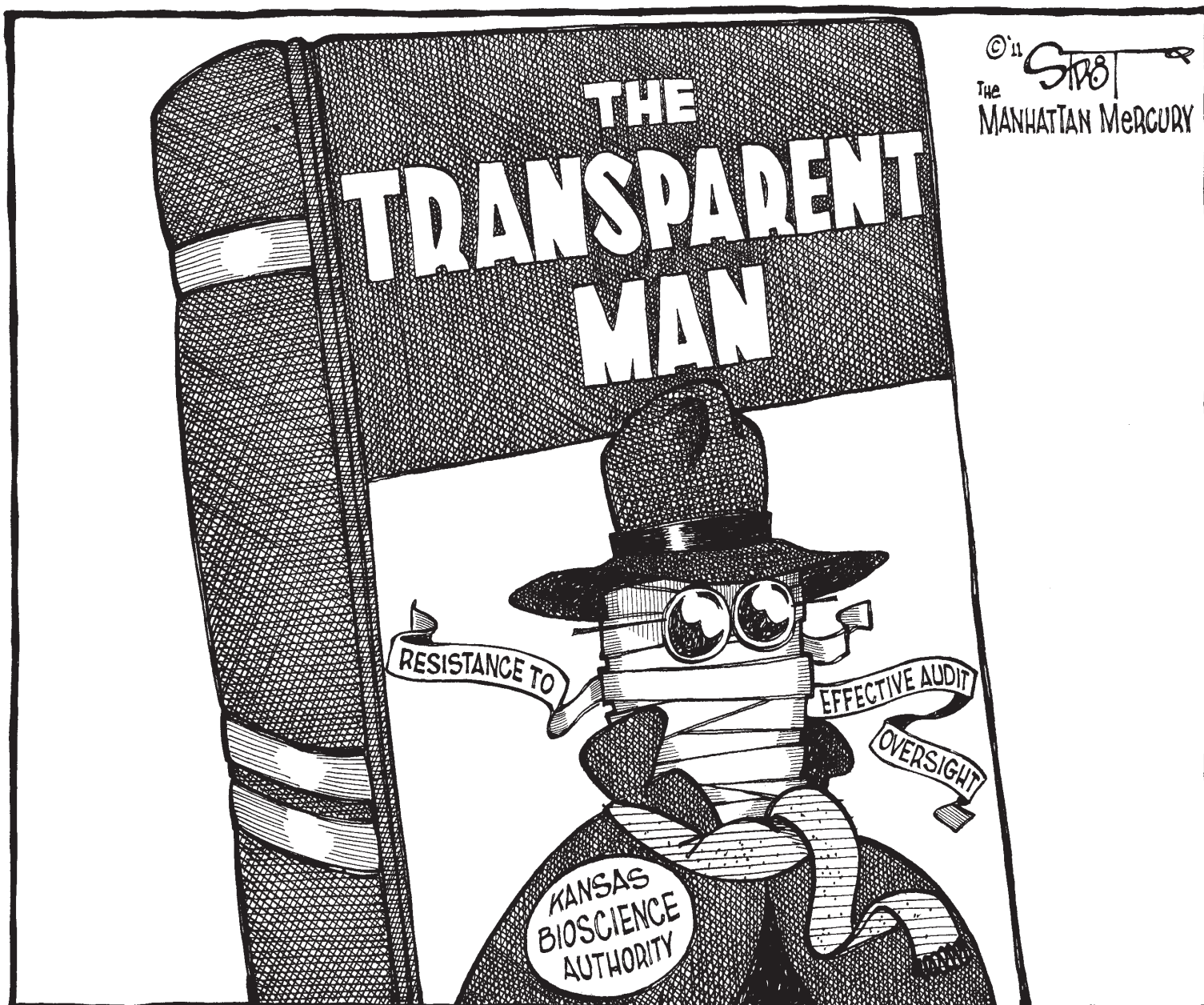
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The MANHATTAN Mercury

from our viewpoint...

# Good thing country didn't shutdown

Whew!  
The government didn't shut down. Some say that's too bad. Especially the "tea party" bunch. But those people didn't include the military wives who were freezing food in case their husbands didn't get paid later this month because of the feared shutdown. Nor the great mass of Americans whose stock holdings and other investment might have plunged. The millions of federal workers who would have missed paychecks, only to be paid later for time they didn't work. The workers in "critical" jobs who'd have had to work despite the lack of a check. No, the Republican party did the right thing when it settled for \$38.5 billion in cuts from this year's budget, rather than demanding the full \$60 billion it had asked for. For one thing, the GOP lost ground in the Clinton era when it forced a shutdown. The Republicans had the upper hand, but people didn't like to see their government embarrassed. There would have been no gain for the GOP from a shutdown this year, either, no matter what the hard liners think. There'd have been plenty of blame to go around, but the Republicans would have been painted as the bad guys. If the deal stands, and Congress goes ahead and passes a budget for the current year, budget cutters will face a far bigger task. Republicans are projecting a need to cut \$6 trillion over the next decade, about \$600 billion a year, from the budget. To do that will require skill and compromise. The vast military budget will have to be part of the discussion, and Republicans have a hard time cutting that. Otherwise, the cuts would have to come mostly from "discretionary" programs, and there's not enough money there to cut \$600 billion a year. Worse yet, the deficit is running more than twice that amount, about \$1.3 trillion per year. To balance the budget is going to take two things: some really deep cuts, and a return to prosperity that will refill the federal treasury. Prosperity produced big surpluses in the Clinton era, for which the Democrats took credit. Bad times are producing big deficits today, deficits made much worse by unrestrained "stimulus" spending.

Now, it's time to pay the bill for all this borrowing. And with the national debt at \$13.2 trillion today, no one is even talking about paying it off, or even putting an end to borrowing. Right now, it's enough to talk about slowing the increase. Shut down the government? It won't save any money or reduce the debt. Most of us might not miss it much, but there are those who would be hurt through no fault of their own. The best course lies in learning to work together in Washington to do what has to be done, without partisan wrangling or showmanship. That's a lot to ask, of course, but it's what we need. Then, a united nation could focus on the future deficits and a plan to pay down the debt. It has to happen someday, and with work and cooperation, we just might be able to pull off a reform before financial collapse overtakes us. — *Steve Haynes*



## Working on special projects

I spent all night working on a special project. So why isn't it done?  
'Cause I did it in my sleep. I really hate it when that happens. Couldn't my subconscious go skiing, sky diving, motor crossing or some other activity that there is almost no possibility that I will ever voluntarily do? If I have to work in my sleep, why can't I do something like design a new kitchen, upgrade my wardrobe or wash the car? Why do a project that I should have started last week but am still procrastinating on? This project is a special section the newspaper is doing with several others in the area. It's a big job and requires contacting and getting information from a lot of people, then put-



**cynthia haynes**  
• open season

ting it all together. We do the same thing almost every year, and every year at the last minute I find that there are several pieces of my puzzle missing. That means getting on the phone and making hurried and harried calls. I suspect that if I got started earlier, my subconscious might not bug me so — or maybe not. I remember my mother complaining that

when she was redecorating our living room, she spent the entire night wallpapering. Maybe that's just the way it is with big projects. When you are in the middle, you can't seem to escape even in your dreams. In the meantime, I'm going to need to get this project done, because I'm real tired of fighting it and two cats, who seemed to want to sleep in my space, all night. I guess, in some ways, I'm lucky. I could have spent the night working in the garden I haven't gotten planted yet. Then in the morning, I would have woken up not just tired and cranky, but sore from all that planting and hoeing.

## We will miss Father Hal

To the Editor:  
Father Hal Lycett of the Episcopal Church of Goodland has announced he and his wife Mary (and their dog Major) will be relocating to the Denver area shortly after Easter. The entire community will miss him for his generosity, wisdom and countless acts of kindness including spreading cheer among the sick and elderly and visiting the hospital and nursing homes in both Kansas and Colorado.



**from our readers**  
• to the editor

He always went "above and beyond the call" in his devotion to others and will be dearly missed by his many friends in Goodland and the surrounding area.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish him and his caring wife Mary the best of everything. I wish we could keep him here, but lets hope they will come visit us in the future or even move back here some day. Donice Monhollon Goodland P.S. The saying is, "You don't miss the water till the well runs dry."

## Peace of mind



**Insight this week**  
• john schlageck

consumers become further removed from the farm and ranch that provides them with the food they eat. As these same consumers become more detached from the farm, they've decided to look for and buy "brand name" products including food that often implies great quality, safety and taste. Livestock producers today are participating in cattle identification programs, including the Beef Verification Solution. Such programs allow an individual producer to track his/her cattle from the cows to the calves to the processing plant as the marketplace continues to demand exact animal traceability to satisfy consumer demands. The main reason for traceability or an animal identification program is to know exactly where each and every animal comes from. With the new programs it can be traced throughout the entire life cycle to determine it is healthy and disease free. And while beef from such programs must meet strict U.S. Department of Agriculture standards to ensure its safety, like the food industry and our government, we have an obligation to keep food healthy and safe, the way we handle, store and cook food can mean the difference between a satisfying meal or a bout with E. coli or salmonella. Purchasing, storing and preparing food, especially traditional and new meat and poultry products may present challenges. As a wise and safety-conscious shopper, it is our responsibility to keep food safe once it leaves our local grocery store or meat market. Always buy food from a reputable dealer, with a known record for safe handling. If you don't know if the meat is fresh ask a neighbor or friend who's shopped there before.

U.S. Department of Agriculture advises to buy dated products only if the "sell by" or "use by" date has not expired. While these dates are helpful, they are reliable only if the food has been kept at the proper temperature during storage and handling. Although many products bear "sell by" and "use by" dates, product dating is not a federal requirement. When we purchase products labeled "keep refrigerated," do so only if they are stored in a refrigerated case and cold to the touch, USDA advises. Buy frozen products only if they are frozen solid. Never buy something that feels mushy. Buy packaged precooked foods only if the package is sound — not damaged or torn. Avoid cross contamination. To prevent raw meat and poultry from contaminating foods that will be eaten without further cooking, enclose individual packages of raw meat or poultry in plastic bags. Position packages of raw meat or poultry in your shopping cart so their juices cannot drip on other food. Always shop for perishables last. Keep refrigerated and frozen items together so they will remain cold. Place perishables in the coolest part of your car during the trip home. Pack them in an ice chest if the time from store to home refrigerator will be more than one hour. When it comes to making sure the beef and other food on your family's table is healthy safe and tastes great — it's a team effort. Everyone from the livestock producer, packer, retailer and family who buys and prepares the finished product has an obligation to follow sound, tried and true steps to ensure each every one of us eats a healthy food product. 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.

### Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters and letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: <star.news@nw-kansas.com>.

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