

from our viewpoint...

People want change in deficit spending

With this year's federal deficit expected to hit a record \$1.7 trillion, attention has been focused on the national debt and deficit spending as never before, from Congress to the "tea party" and with both major political parties.

The national debt is now \$14.35 trillion and climbing. States have \$1.18 trillion in debt and local government \$1.73 trillion.

Plus, the unfunded liability for Social Security is estimated at \$131.7 trillion. Everyone recognizes the huge and growing debt threatens our economy and our way of life. No one seems to know what to do.

People made it clear last fall, however, they want things to change. And the truth is, any solution will be painful, as European nations have discovered. Spending is addictive. Every state or federal program, every grant and "entitlement," goes to someone. Government spending provides jobs, helps people live, feels good to those who get the money.

So how do we break the cycle and bring some sense back into state and national capitols?

Dr. Ed Flentje, a Washburn University political science professor in Topeka, made some suggestions in an "Insight Kansas" column last month.

Dr. Flentje recalls, as an advisor to former Gov. Robert Bennett in the 1970s, hearing the governor say again and again, "Spending is more responsible when the government that spends is the government that must finance that spending."

In other words, it's a lot easier for government officials at any level to spend money someone else has taken from the taxpayers. Yet that's exactly how the system works. Billions raised by the federal government are passed through to states for highways, schools, "homeland security," you name it. And much of that money trickles on down to the local level.

Have you ever heard a local official say, "We can get federal money for that," or "Well, it's federal money. Not our money?"

Of course, the city or county officials didn't have to raise taxes to get the money. The federal government just "gave" it to them. Never mind the federal government is broke, deeply it debt and has no money to give. It can always borrow more.

Except it can't. The government has borrowed so much now, it's credit rating is threatened. Dr. Flentje says people have trouble understanding this system:

"This behemoth has become incomprehensible to the public, breeding cynicism, distrust and outright anger at government - national, state, and local government," he writes.

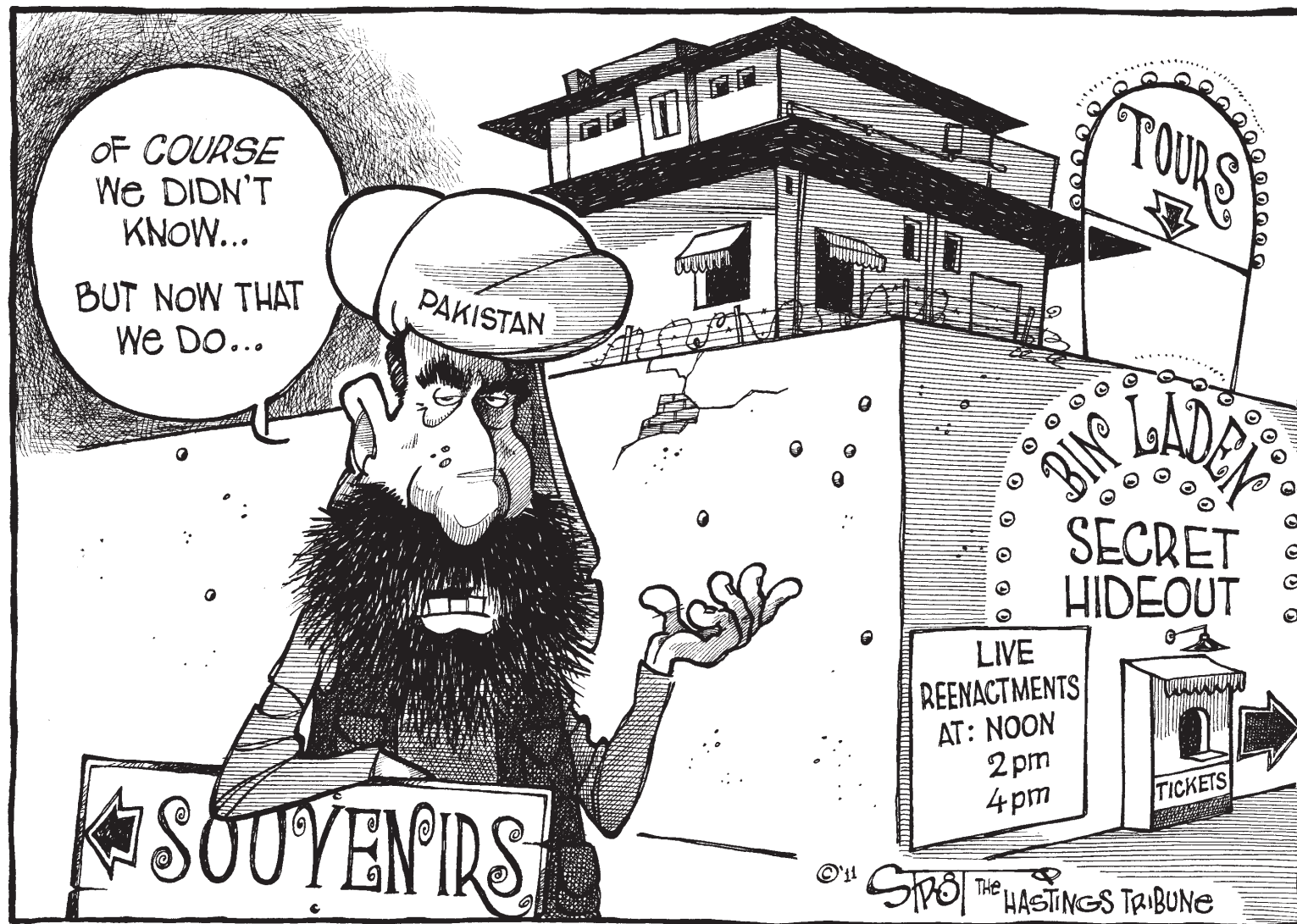
He says Alice Rivlin, the founding director of the Congressional Budget Office and former vice-chair of the Federal Reserve Board, has a handle on the problem. Nearly 20 years ago, he said, Rivlin proposed two steps to settle this hash:

- "Devolution. The federal government should eliminate most of its programs in education, housing, highways, social services, economic development and job training."
- "The productivity agenda. The states should take charge of the primary public investment needed to increase productivity and raise incomes, especially to improve education and skill training and modernize infrastructure."

Wow. Put the responsibility for raising taxes with the people who actually spend the money. It may be an idea whose time has come. It's certainly as good a suggestions as we've heard.

And we can't wait to hear the wailing from all those who feed at the public trough.

Until we can face reality, though, our debt issues aren't going to vanish. It's simply time to get real. - Steve Haynes



I finally got to travel to Florida

I've always wanted to visit Florida. Steve's been a few times. He even attended the 1969 Orange Bowl to watch his K.U. Jayhawks beat, then lose to Penn State.

But that was back when he was in college and we had just met.

Since then, we've traveled all over the country and all over the world. But never to Florida.

So, when the invitation to attend a wedding on Miami Beach arrived, I was thrilled, excited and overjoyed.

Steve thought it sounded expensive. I whined.

I won. Aw, it was a family wedding. He wanted to go, too.

Although we hadn't seen the bride for several years, she's always been a favorite of ours, and we were dying to meet her future husband, a retired British military man.

So as the weather warmed up in Kansas, and our flowers all started to bloom, we took a plane to Florida to enjoy the sun and beach.

Wait a minute. Something is wrong with this. Why was I heading into the world of humidity and sun cancer when spring had finally arrived in our little corner of the world?

Because, like I said, I've always wanted to visit Florida, and we both wanted to be part of this wedding. If we'd had to go in August when



cynthia haynes

• open season

the temperature and humidity both were 99, I'd have jumped at it.

The wedding went off without a hitch. The bride was beautiful, the groom dashing and the ceremony on the beach.

Which was the only time I stepped on sand during my entire trip.

We visited downtown Miami Beach on a couple of emergency shopping trips. I had to have a beach bag to carry all my junk to the wedding - purse, camera, sunscreen, hat, bottled water. Then Steve found out that he had packed six shirts, two pair of shorts - and no slacks. Another quick trip downtown.

We took a boat ride and enjoyed the beautiful Miami skyline. We ate Cuban food and listened to people talking in a dozen languages.

I watched the storybook royal wedding on television, then watched my daughter's sister-in-law marry her Englishman in a different, much smaller, but equally beautiful ceremony the next day.

While the bride and groom tried to figure

out how to pack up her household for the move to England and the other wedding guests scattered, we headed north with our children, driving by the fabled towns of Palm Beach, Daytona Beach, Cape Canaveral and St. Augustine.

We didn't have much time to explore most of those places. We did spend a little time in Jacksonville while oldest daughter met with others on her Internet work team.

(I have no idea what she or her husband do. They work in the Internet and she works for Billy Morris, who owes several newspapers. So, she's still in the newspaper business, sort of, I think.)

Our time in Miami and Jacksonville was way too short. We had to get back up to Augusta, Ga., so we could visit our granddaughter, Taylor, and her mom, and the kids could get back to work.

I got rained on, got sand in my shoes, suffered mosquito bites and a very mild sunburn while in Florida.

I met and saw people from all over the country and the world. I tasted interesting food and drank way too many mojitos.

I got to see Florida and had a great time doing it.

And, I only had to wait 63 years.

Spring safety



Insight this week

• john schlageck

Before long kids will toss their schoolbooks and pencils in the far corners of their rooms, don their Magellan garb and embark on a summer course of outdoor exploration.

For many rural children, railroads, dumps, junkyards, abandoned properties and ponds make exciting places to explore. It is up to parents to decide where suitable adventure sites may be found.

Each year, hundreds of railroad trespassers are killed and injured, according to the National Safety Council. Children who crawl under or pass around lowered gates, walk the tracks, cross trestles, take shortcuts across railroad property, hop trains, climb in, on or around railroad cars run a tremendous risk.

This spring take the time to warn your children of these dangers, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety director. Instruct them to obey warning devices and insist they never cross a railroad track until they have looked both ways and are sure it is safe.

"Never assume children will act like responsible, mature adults," Higgins says. "Advise them often because they forget."

Kids will be kids. For most, life is an adventure. Anything and anywhere is fair game for exploration.

When I was a boy growing up in northwestern Kansas, there was always something magnetic about a junkyard. We had an abandoned dump within easy walking distance. We

dug and sifted through the trash at the site for hours, collecting little treasures to add to our growing collections. Sometimes these "keepers" as we called them consisted of rusted iron spikes, neat-shaped bottles, broken wrenches and tools, discarded containers and other cast-offs.

While we weren't aware of it or didn't care, the risk of injury was always present. Wasps, snakes, rats, spiders and other creatures scrambled and slithered to move out of the way of our excavation projects. Broken glass and boards with rusty nails threatened to cut or puncture our small feet. I will never forget the pain and tears of stepping on a nail.

Dumps feature trucks, bulldozers and other heavy equipment. It's difficult for operators to see children scooting among the debris. Such equipment can easily crush kids. Warn your children to stay away.

Dark deserted buildings - including barns and abandoned farmhouses - often have the reputation of being haunted. Such structures were always considered another adventure when I was a youngster.

Big kids often dare little kids to go in. I re-

member accepting the challenge and brushing my way through cobwebs and crawling around rodent holes and fleeing mice. Although I survived, I wouldn't advise any child of mine to do the same.

As a youth, my dad always warned me again and again about swimming ponds. I guess the repetition paid off because I never swam in such pools of water until I was in high school and an "okay" swimmer.

Remember to tell your children about such ponds. They are deep. You can be into water up to your knees the first couple of steps and the next - over your head.

There are no lifeguards. Fencing off ponds may help. Warning signs may serve as a deterrent, but kids always find a way into the water.

Warn children about such potential hazards. Then warn them again. Saving one child's life is worth the effort. Many times it takes more than once for them to grasp your warnings.

Lead by example and remember as a parent you have been entrusted with safeguarding your children's well being. Summertime is a special time for kids. Having a child is indeed a treasure. Take care of, cherish and nurture this wonderful gift.

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.

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; E-mail address - <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=EmailPat>

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966. E-mail address - <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., 20575-1601. (202-225-2715) E-mail address - [https://huel-](https://huel)

skamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me
State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking State Office Building Rm 724, Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7659, cell (785) 899-4770, home (785) 899-5824. E-mail rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785-296-7399; e-mail address - ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association
e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President
Tom Betz, Editor
Pat Schiefen, Society Editor



Jessica Corbin, Josh Harenberg, Anne Selfridge
Advertising Department

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager
Jim Bowker, Betty Morris, James Jackson,
Lana Westfahl, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel,
Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight

nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan. Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman
County Herald
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY
STAR
Founded by Eric and
Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

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@nwkansas.com.