

from our viewpoint...

Looking back after 10 years of changes

Sunday, Americans will pause to remember the 2,973 souls who died in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. It's a good time to ask where America is after 10 years.

- We're a little less free. We've traded some of our freedom and our anonymity for a greater sense of security.

Remember when flying used to be fun? When you could skid up to the airport 15 minutes before departure, grab a ticket and rush down the jetway without being poked and prodded and X-rayed?

But the security state goes way beyond airline travel. Crossing the border, returning home from a foreign land, driving through any major city, even some small towns, we're being watched. Records are made. Government computers track us. Government cameras film us. We never know who is watching.

Some will say those who are doing nothing wrong have nothing to worry about. Others will say it's a fair trade, privacy and freedom for security.

- A lot poorer. We've spent billions on two wars, untold billions more on beefed-up security. The 9/11 attacks stopped the economy for three days and kicked the country into a deepening recession.

No one, that we know of, has ever added up the full cost. Without that, would we be in the kind of recession we've seen the last four years?

- Deeper in debt. One cost of having wars, tax cuts, security costs, border fences and "normal" government spending has been trillion-dollar deficits. Now the government spends about 40 percent of the budget just floating the national debt. The attacks didn't cause the deficit, but the responses certainly did help grow it.

- More secure, certainly.

You can't prove that we're secure, and certainly we face many threats. But no major terrorist act has touched U.S. soil since 9/11. We know many have been foiled, others undoubtedly discouraged by tighter security.

The cost is great. Since no one knows when terrorists might strike, the agencies must watch everywhere.

- Less feeling of security, more anxiety. How can you feel secure when everyone from the local sheriff's deputy to the county agent have been trained to watch for terrorists? It makes us all a little nervous. The guy next to us on a plane or a train could be a terrorist. Could be a sky marshal.

Worse yet, we all could be looking for the wrong thing. The world moves on. The security beast grows. But terrorists keep thinking of something new.

The next threat is out there. No one knows what or where.

That's the scary thing. No one knows just what it will look like. No one ever thought of hijackers using airplanes full of people as bombs, after all.

In America, life goes on. In large measure, we have recovered and rebuilt. We will do just fine. But in many ways, nothing will ever be the same. — Steve Haynes

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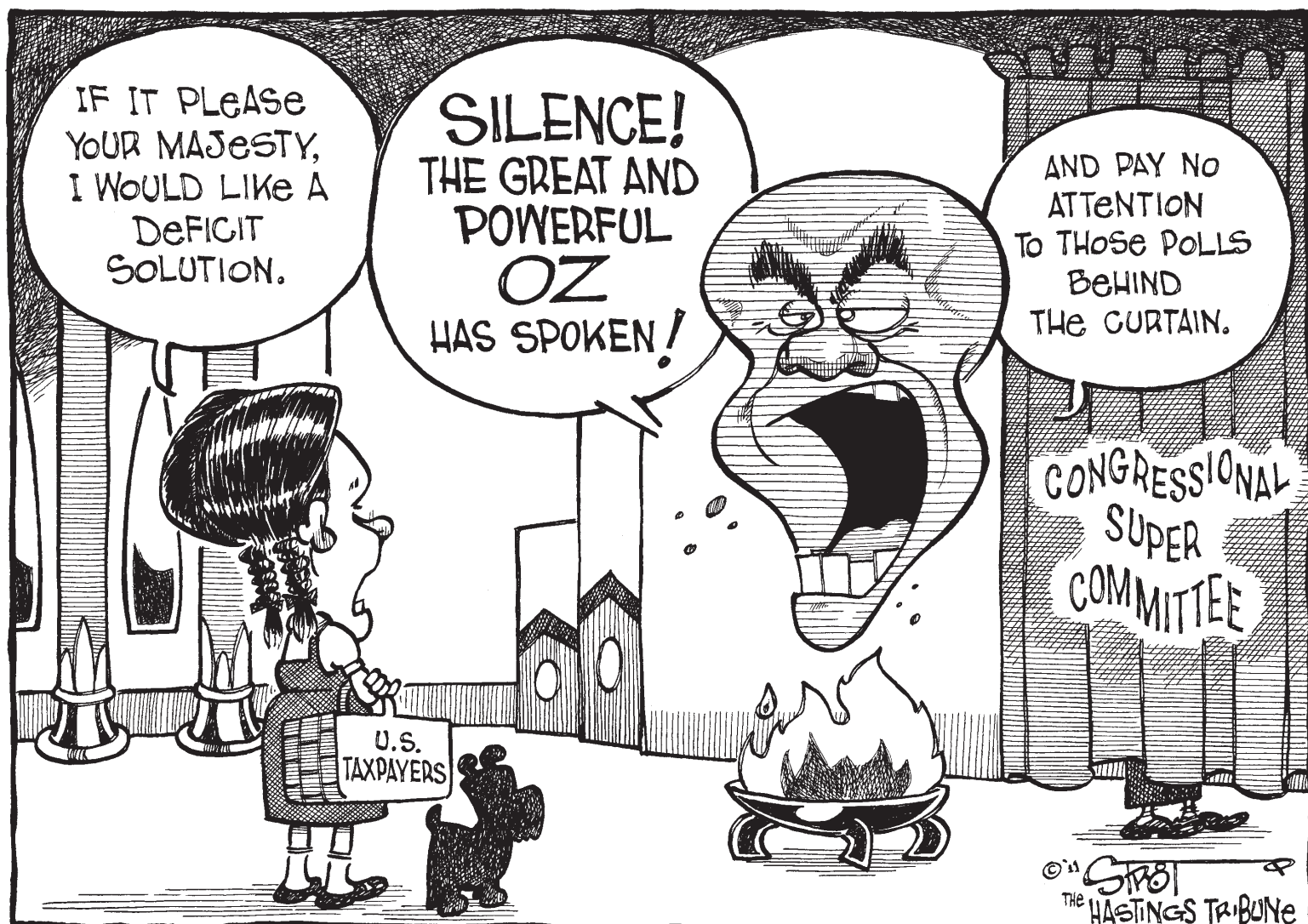
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We attended a special service in Santa Fe

I should of known we were in for something a little different when I saw a bishop's mitre in the procession while we were on the way into church.

The archbishop doesn't show up for just any service, after all. And this one would be different.

Regular readers know Cynthia and I try to go to church wherever we are, and Saturday, that happened to be Santa Fe, N.M., where we went to see a photography exhibit. We saw the pictures, then discovered it was the week of the annual Indian Market downtown.

Cynthia wanted to go see what was going on, so we started walking around among blocks and blocks of tent-like booths put up in the streets around the downtown Plaza. Artists from native tribes across the continent were selling jewelry, paintings, pottery, you name it.

After circling the square, we wound up by the cathedral, the focal point of downtown Santa Fe. There the bells were tolling, loud and long. We figured it was a wedding, the end of a



steve haynes

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war or maybe just Saturday evening Mass. We looked at each other and decided if they were having church, we could go and free up some time in the morning before we started back to Colorado.

So there was the archbishop, in full regalia. An usher explained that it was the annual Native American Mass, with participants from all the New Mexico Pueblo tribes. Everything from music to prayers would have a native theme, with songs, prayers and a dance by tribal representatives.

The old cathedral, a block off the plaza, was packed, as the market had just shut down. The audience seemed to be split among locals, visiting Native Americans and tourists like us. We were hardly dressed for church, but then

neither were many of the others.

The archbishop announced a new evangelism initiative for the pueblos and talked about the church's links to the native community. The highlight of the service was a presentation of the Eagle Dance by one of the tribes, with two dancers and several drummers.

The whole thing took about an hour and 40 minutes, more than twice as long as a regular service, but then, how often do you get to see the Eagle Dance?

We've gone to church on a couple of continents, and it's always interesting. We've been to the cathedral in Hong Kong, in tiny churches in Central America and Mexico and to Latin Masses blessed by the bishop — and one that was not.

I'd have to say this had to be one of the most interesting services we've stumbled into anywhere. But, we did find it a little hard to sing the hymn done in Tiwa, the Pueblo language.

You just never know what you're getting into when you go to church on the road.

Raising wages for a real recovery

This summer we've seen wild swings in the stock market, a last-minute debt deal, and even a rocking east coast earthquake. But one thing we haven't seen — from Memorial Day to Labor Day — is any improvement in the economy.

There are 14 million Americans officially counted as unemployed — many of them for over six months. If you count people who have given up looking for work, the number of Americans out of work climbs to over 17 million. Even people fortunate enough to keep their jobs have seen wages frozen or even cut. Families across the country are struggling to make ends meet.

The future promises even more pain. As the funds from the federal stimulus package expire, state budgets are collapsing. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the total budget deficit from 42 states and the District of Columbia is \$103 billion. One of the worst states is New Jersey, whose \$10.5 billion gap is nearly 40 percent of its budget. Nearly every state is facing a budget crisis this year brought on by evaporating tax revenue. State governments across the country will be forced to cut local jobs — teachers, state troopers and nurses — to balance their budgets. So will municipal governments. Hundreds of thousands of laid-off state and city employees will join the 14 million already on the unemployment rolls.

But one group is doing better than ever: corporations. By the third quarter of 2010, non-financial corporate profits had recovered to \$776 billion, or 5.3 percent of GDP — the highest level since the dot-com bubble. Profits for large corporations have recovered more quickly and more strongly than any other part of the economy. Businesses that pay minimum



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wages are especially profitable right now. Wal-Mart, McDonalds, Sodexo, Yum Brands (the operator of Pizza Hut, KFC, Taco Bell and other fast food chains) and Target all made greater profits last year than they averaged from 2002 to 2006.

Why are corporations making record profits but not hiring new workers? It's an economic problem: lack of demand.

The average American has over \$10,000 in debt. Their house value has plummeted and they see no chance of getting a pay raise in the near future. As a result, they're not likely to spend a lot of money. Businesses know that, so they aren't investing in new technology or new employees. Instead they're just hoarding cash, waiting for the day when consumers start spending again. But consumers aren't going to start spending again until businesses start hiring and raising wages.

It's a classic collective action problem. Everyone — including the corporations — would be better off if they started hiring again, but each business is maximizing its own short-term profits by being thrifty. Their hoarding has put the economy in a hole.

This was the same problem America faced during the Great Depression, and the government solved it with a massive fiscal stimulus. The government paid people to build bridges and tunnels and dams, which then gave them money to go out and spend. Unfortunately

conservatives in Congress have decided to focus on the debt instead of the economy — the equivalent of mowing the lawn while your roof is on fire — and the large fiscal stimulus the country needs faces strong opposition in the House of Representatives. State governments, most of which are constitutionally mandated to run a balanced budget, are likewise unable to spend.

But there's a policy tool that costs the government nothing and could get the economy moving again: the minimum wage. The Economic Policy Institute estimates President Obama's 2008 campaign proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$9.50 by 2011 would have generated more than \$60 billion in new consumer spending.

Without some help, American workers can't get themselves out of this hole, and each month we delay sees greater numbers of American workers losing their employment, more families depending on low-wage jobs and greater numbers of American children going hungry. If we want to help Main Street recover, we should raise the minimum wage. Even if we are politically unable to do so at the federal level, raising the minimum wage state by state would still make a great difference.

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Out in the cold

Since taking office, Gov. Brownback has professed an intense dedication to economic recovery. He has stressed in press conferences, news releases and media interviews that his administration has never taken its 'eye off the ball of job creation.'

However, if you paid attention to the issues addressed in the legislative session, you would have had to search long and hard to find any meaningful new measure that actually put a Kansan back to work.

There were, on the other hand, a few investments on the books before Gov. Brownback took office that were creating new jobs.

One such measure was Efficiency Kansas,



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a program — implemented in 2009 — that provided Kansans the necessary funds to make efficiency upgrades to their homes. The program was not only helping make Kansas homes more energy efficient, it put hundreds of auditors, contractors and everyday Kansans back to work as we upgraded our energy infrastructure.

Efficiency Kansas proved how partnerships between the public and the private sector can collaborate to get our economy back on track.

This is why I was disheartened when Gov. Brownback pulled \$22 million in federal funding designated for this program, leaving hundreds of Kansas families who applied for the program — and more Kansans who would have benefited from the jobs it created — out in the cold.

Annie Kuether
State Rep., District 55
Topeka