

from our viewpoint...

Government keeps driving in the gutter

Call it stalemate, gridlock or treading water, but it seems that our government can't get anything done these days without a partisan battle.

Our Rep. Tim Huelskamp has been right on the money in criticizing congress' failure to pass a budget. The congressman keeps a running tally on his web site: its been 1,020 days. That's almost three years.

Huelskamp blames it on the Democrats, but the Republicans are just as bad. Monday morning the president was set to introduce his budget, and it was already facing partisan attacks before the public got a chance to see what was in it, mostly from Republicans saying it spends too much.

That's funny, considering one Democrat was saying it cut too much spending in a time when the country was still facing recession. Obviously the two sides can't even agree on what to criticize when they are both denouncing the same thing!

A good case study is last week's controversy over a federal mandate that all health insurance plans, even those offered by religious institutions, provide for birth control. A furor erupted—rightly so given our principals of religious freedom—and the president put forward a compromise that puts the coverage burden on insurance companies rather than the religious institutions.

Whether you liked what it contained or not, at least the president was willing to compromise in the face of what the public wanted. The opposition still isn't happy, of course. They want it all gone.

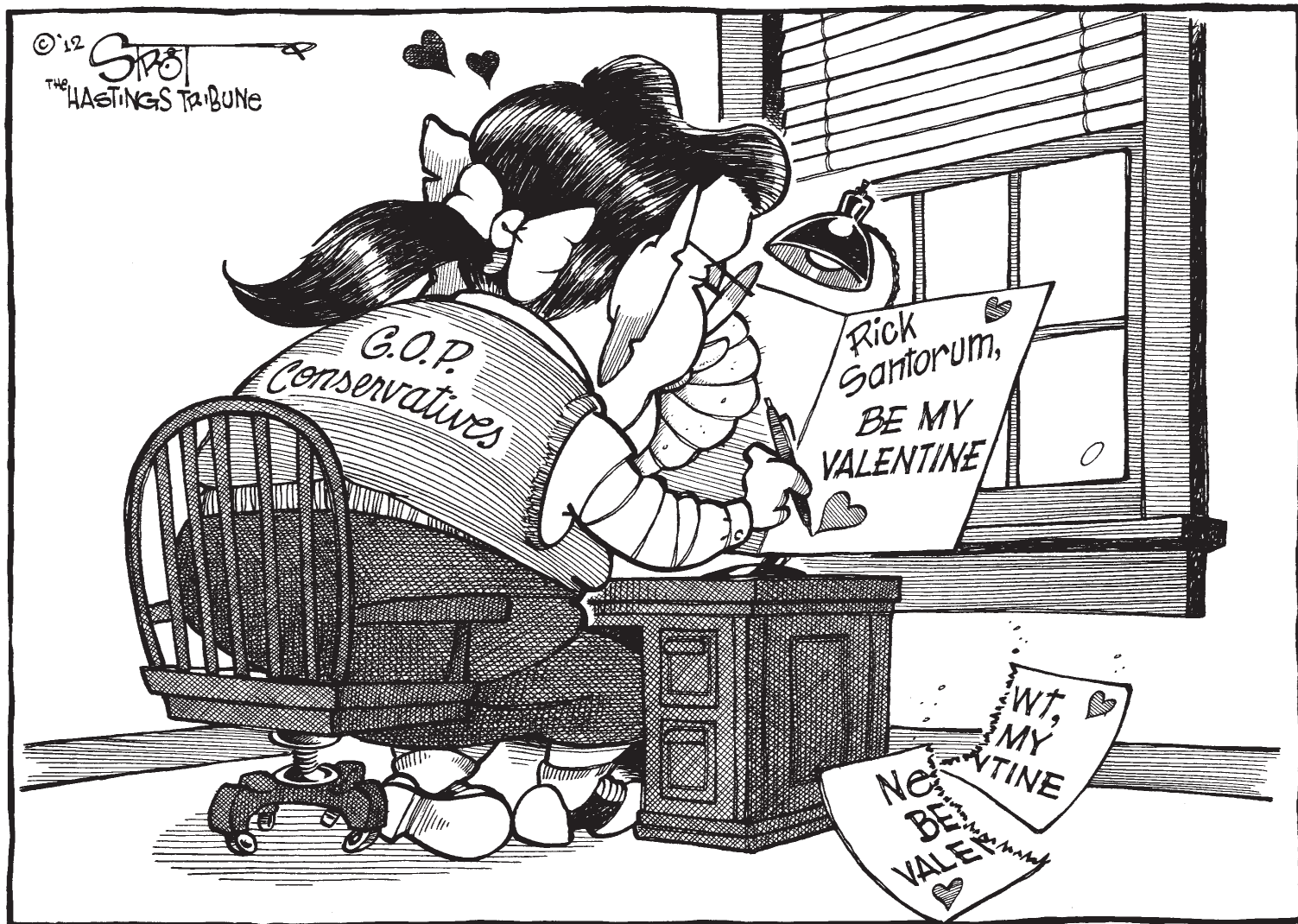
Another good example is the failure by the Congressional "supercommittee" to pass a compromise plan for cutting a trillion dollars from the budget. That failure was supposed to result in an automatic, across the board cut, but that's stuck in gridlock too.

Kansas Dwight D. Eisenhower—a Republican—said, "People talk about the middle of the road as though it were unacceptable. Actually, all human problems, excepting morals, come into the gray areas. Things are not all black and white. There have to be compromises. The middle of the road is all of the usable surface. The extremes, right and left, are in the gutters."

Ike had his own gridlock problems with civil rights, foreign policy and other issues. But he knew the value of compromise.

The problem is ideology has taken over in place of a willingness to get things done. Anyone who tries to compromise is called a flip-flop or a coward.

The parties had better wake up and start compromising, start getting real work accomplished, or they will quickly find themselves on the receiving end of an angry electorate, declaring a pox on both their houses. —Kevin Bottrell



Love it or hate it, Episode I is now in 3D

I'm a geek, there's no getting around it. I don't wear thick rimmed glasses, I don't live in my parents basement (except that one time), I've had relationships with real women and I have a successful career, but I'm a geek nonetheless.

I've been watching Star Wars for as long as I can remember. We taped them (remember VHS?) off HBO when I was a kid and I watched those copies so much they nearly disintegrated. My third grade teacher actually gave me nice new copies since she knew I like the movies so much.

With "Episode I: The Phantom Menace" coming out last weekend in 3D, the debate over the quality of the prequels has come to the forefront again. Given the popularity of Star Wars, the debate has even gotten to big news outlets like CNN.

Personally, I don't hate the prequels, but I don't think they're very good either. The script was stilted and cheesy and the acting is for the most part stiff and uninteresting, and that's sad because I've seen those actors in other movies and they're very good. Hayden Christiansen is excellent in "Shattered Glass" or "Jumper;" Natalie Portman is great in "V for Vendetta;" and Ewan McGregor is good in just about everything I've seen him in.

There's also an over-reliance on computer animation. It's telling moment when in a gag reel Portman is running through a maze of blue blocks and she just starts laughing and tells George Lucas this can't possibly be for the real movie and asks if he's making fun of her. Of course the blue was going to be replaced later with computer animated special effects, but if the actor doesn't buy it, how is the audience supposed to?

Director Peter Jackson had a much better approach on his "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, marrying physical models and sets with computer animation to create something with a lot



kevin bottrell

• simple tricks and nonsense

more weight. And it seems actors always work better when they have something physical to interact with.

The animated "Clone Wars" television show that's been running the past few years—in which Lucas has had only minimal involvement—has been a lot more fun to watch.

I've always thought Lucas is a genius. He has an unparalleled imagination and quite a lot of business sense. When he made the first Star Wars he kept all the rights to all the merchandising, which made him so much money he financed the next two films all on his own.

He also used to be a great director. The original Star Wars and American Graffiti are brilliant movies, rightfully earning their places as classics. But it seems like somewhere along the way he lost his touch.

In a behind the scenes feature on the Star Wars DVD set, the actors tell of how Lucas would always tell them between takes to play it "faster and more intense." Obviously he wasn't saying that to the prequel actors.

The best decision he ever made was to step back from the director's chair on The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi. He hired directors while he wrote and produced the film. I think those directors, Irvin Kershner and Richard Marquand, brought new and different ideas to the movies. Neither had ever done science fiction before, and didn't approach the genre the way Lucas would have.

Had Lucas taken that approach again, I believe the prequels would have turned out a

lot differently and perhaps the fans wouldn't hate them so much.

However, I'm the type to look for things to like, rather than dislike, and I find things to like in each movie. The pod race in "Episode I" is quite enjoyable. To hear reviewers tell it, it's a thrill ride in 3D, and in fact is one of the points where the 3D conversion really shines. The opening battle sequence in "Revenge of the Sith" is a masterpiece of computer animation and it was great to finally see the city world of Coruscant on the big screen after having read about it in so many books.

The action choreography is lightyears beyond the originals. Lightsaber fights are fast and furious and worth re-watching. Lucas says in behind the scenes material that this was somewhat intentional, as in the original trilogy, the fights were often between old men or an old man versus an untrained youth, while fights in the prequels were between trained and experienced warriors.

Villainous performances by Christopher Lee and Ian McDiarmid are fun to watch, as is Ray Park's Darth Maul, who is sadly underused and killed off far too early in the series.

What it always comes back to for me is, fans wouldn't be so passionate about their dislike of the prequels if they didn't love Star Wars to begin with, and I hope Lucas gets that message.

As tempting as the 3D pod race is, I probably won't go see "The Phantom Menace," nor will I be seeing "Attack of the Clones." I prefer those movies on Blu Ray at home, where I can skip to the good stuff. But I remain an unrepentant Star Wars fan, and if the original trilogy comes out in 3D, I won't miss out.

Kevin Bottrell, editor of the Goodland Star-News, is a Colorado State University graduate who believes that the middle road is often the high one. Contact him at kbottrell@nwkansas.com

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>.

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
Kevin Bottrell, Editor
Pat Schiefen, Society Editor
Advertising Department
Jessica Corbin and Jeff Dreiling
Sheila Smith, Circulation Manager



Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager

Jim Bowker, 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

Celebrate 'Check-Out Week' Feb. 19-25

As many Americans continue to face economic hard times, there is no reason to compromise the welfare of your family's diet. The cost of eating healthy hasn't changed as much as some less-healthy alternatives. It does require strategic shopping however.

Helping Americans learn how to stretch their grocery dollars with healthy, nutritious food is the theme of Farm Bureau's Food Check-Out Week, Feb. 19-25. America's farmers and ranchers are committed to producing safe, healthy and abundant food. And they share a common concern with consumers when it comes to putting nutritious meals on the table while sticking to a tight budget.

Recent U.S. Department of Agriculture food price data shows prices for unprepared, readily available fresh fruits and vegetables have remained stable relative to dessert and snack foods, such as chips, ice cream and cola. Translation—the price of a healthier diet has not changed compared to an unhealthy diet.

Farm Bureau's Food Check-Out Week is aimed at helping American consumers learn how to shop wisely while putting nutritious meals on the table with fewer dollars.

Learning to use your grocery dollars wisely helps ensure nutrition isn't neglected. Fruits and vegetables—along with whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, fish, beans, eggs and nuts—are an important part of a healthy diet.

Buying fresh produce when it's in season and costs less, while buying frozen fruits and vegetables when they're not in season, is a smart way to stretch that dollar.

Consumers in Kansas and across this country share in this wealth of food products every time they step foot in their favorite supermar-



Insight this week

• john schlageck

ket. Yes, today's shopper is fortunate to reap the benefits provided by America's farmers and ranchers.

Crop and livestock producers are proud of their profession. Nowhere is this more visible than the Midwest and our home state of Kansas in particular.

Members of this profession take great pride in producing the cleanest, most abundant crops including wheat, corn, milo and soybeans. In addition, Kansas ranchers produce some of the best cattle, hogs and sheep.

Kansans are proud that Food Check-out

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://>

huelskamp.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