

from our viewpoint...

No more talk, Congress must act

Congress simply has to act this fall.

Otherwise, the nation could plunge off the "fiscal cliff" created by failure of the two parties to compromise on important tax and spending issues — straight into a new recession.

Each party blames the other for the chasm, but in truth, both are to blame. The Senate is so tied up in party infighting that it has not been able to pass a budget in more than three years. Neither party has the votes to push through its bill, and neither has been willing to back down.

The Republican-controlled House has plenty of solutions, but the Democrats aren't buying any of them.

The betting is that the two can get together in the "Lame Duck" session after the election, when political posturing will no longer mean much, and pass some compromise bills. It's either that, or the Bush and Obama tax cuts will expire, along with a lot of other legislation, and billions in automatic, across-the-board spending cuts will go into effect. The impact on the economy could be more than \$600 billion.

Combined, experts say, that could shrink the U.S. economy by 3 percent next year, plunging the world into a new recession. U.S. unemployment could jump to 9.1 percent. That's just what a shaky economy needs, with Europe already in crisis and the economy just plodding along.

The approaching "cliff" already is making investors nervous, holding back the stock market and probably the housing industry as well, the Associated Press reports. Beyond that, investors are worried about a possible round of tax increases if the president is re-elected, which appears more and more likely.

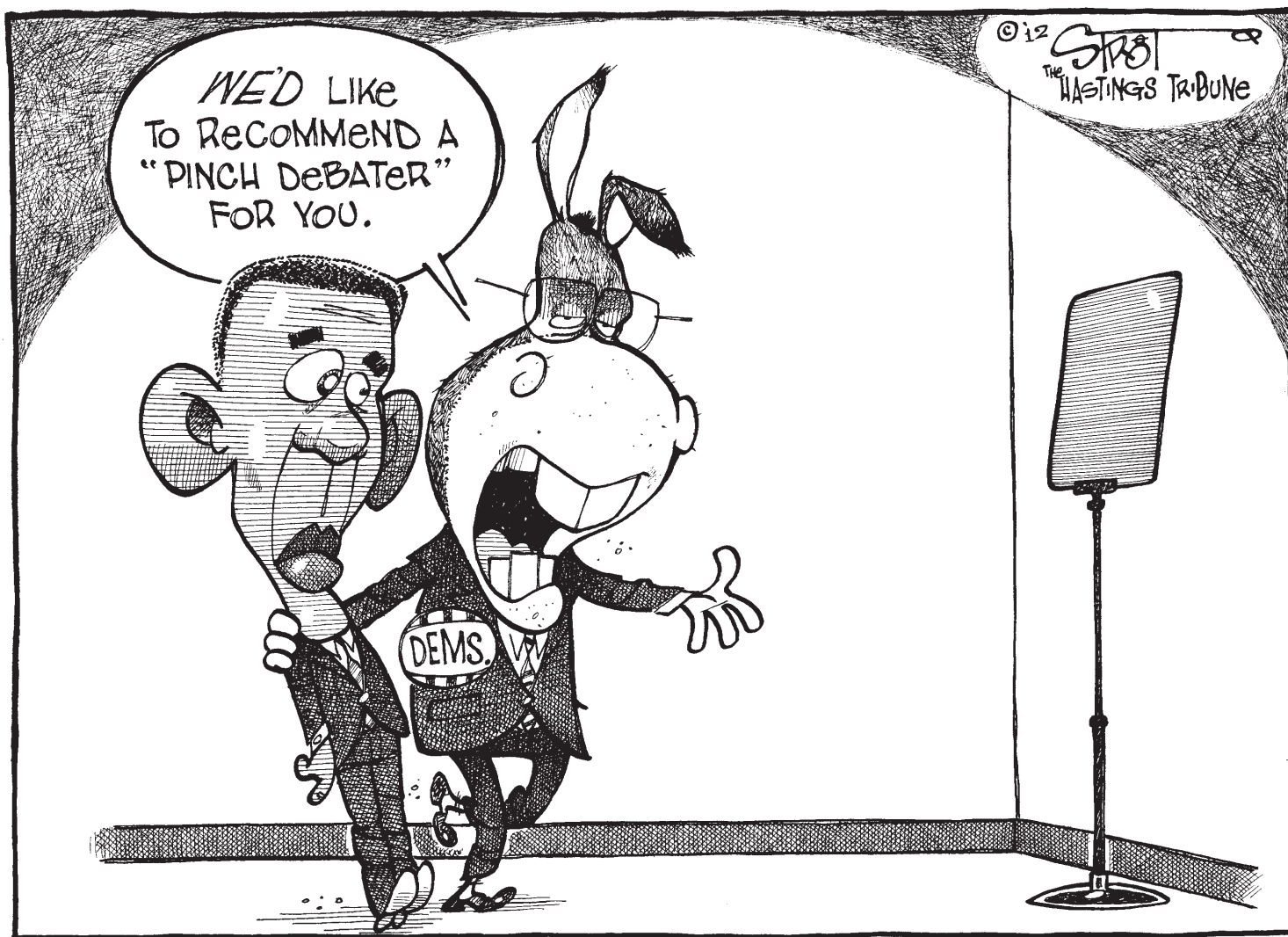
Without a deal, which could take some bloody infighting to achieve, the consequences are too great to ignore. But Wall Street observers predict that twists and turns in negotiations themselves could send the market into fits and starts, plunging and climbing on the daily news from inside the Beltway.

Be that as it may, the parties know they have to come together this time. It'll be mostly up to the Senate to come up with a compromise, then to sell it to the more conservative House. That means a lot of wrangling before the end of the year.

If the markets falter, it'll put even more pressure on the parties to get together. And that eventually should produce a recession-saving bill.

Then, if Europe can keep its economy afloat, maybe we'll see continued recovery next year — and a return of prosperity. If not, well, we don't want to go there. Neither, we suspect, do the incumbents, who stand to lose their seats to a voter reaction that'll make the Tea Party look like an ice cream social.

We think voters are tired of posturing and delay, and they won't be happy if it wrecks the entire economy. — *Steve Haynes*



89-year-old still has the pulse of the town

Her hair is longer than it used to be, and the face has a few more lines, but her fingers are still on the pulse of the community, and if you want to know what's going on, you just need to visit her neat little cabin on a side street.

Mary J., we call her. She's one of the few Marys I know who doesn't use a middle name.

She doesn't get out much anymore. She's in a wheelchair and she said she's left her home just 10 times in the last five or six months. Each time was a doctor's visit.

She still remembers when Steve hired her to work for the paper. That was back in the mid 1980s. She said he just hired her to do a couple of stories, and here she is, nearly 30 years later, still writing for the paper.

Steve needed someone to cover the City Council the day Mary walked into the office. They got to talking, and before she knew it she was working for the paper.

"I thought I was retired," she said with a twinkle in her eye.

Before coming home, she had gone to work for Wal-Mart in southwest Missouri and won a prize for the speed at which she could run the check stand. She said she met Sam Walton just a few days before she was to retire. She had no



cynthia haynes

• open season

clue who he was when she met him in the break room. He asked her to stay on because she was such a good checker, but she told him no.

She didn't seem to be the least awed by one of the greatest businessmen in the world, but then very little awes Mary J.

After her retirement, she returned to Creede, the tiny mountain community she had adopted as her own in the 1940s, when she arrived in the middle of winter to find the snow up to her knees and the thermometer at 40 below.

Now at 89, she still writes for the paper. Not like she used to, but enough to keep her busy two or three days a week. She's been doing a column on her memories of those days back in the '40s, when she got off the bus and wondered why she had ever come to this cold, snowy place.

But, she told us, her store of memories — and her supply of old notebooks — is getting slim.

She figures she'll have to turn to her friends for ideas. She noted that she is one of the youngsters in the group, since Margaret is 92 and Edna and Nell both are 91.

She noted that Margaret lives just across the street now. She gets up at 8 and turns the light on and goes to bed at 10 and turns the light off. Her son comes by every day to check on her.

Mary checks on her, too. If she doesn't see that light come on at 8 in the morning, she calls the son. Poor Margaret never gets a chance to sleep in. Mary makes sure of it. But then, a 92-year-old woman who lives alone needs more than one person to watch out for her.

We had a nice visit with Mary and we hugged her thin frame as we prepared to leave. The hospice worker saw us out. Who knows, this may be our last visit. Maybe not.

About a year and a half ago, Mary left the state veterans' nursing home she had been moved to when she had broken both legs. She wrote that she was going home "for the duration." She says she's had a good life, and she's ready to move on, to see her beloved Ed.

Now, she's watching the birds at her feeder, checking on the neighbors and keeping her finger on the pulse of her tiny mountain town, just like she has for the last 30 years.

Local Romney supporters plan trip

Colorado is one of the most important battleground states in the country and it will have a huge impact in deciding the path our nation takes.

As Kansas Romney supporters, our neighbors to the west need us. You have the opportunity to join the boots on the ground and help Colorado lead Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan on a path to victory. We'll be joining Coloradans all day on Saturday, Oct. 13, as they knock on doors. We hope you will join us for the final Saturday before Colorado ballots drop and early voting begins!

We will be meeting at 2160 Commerce



from our readers

• to the editor

Road in Goodland (Walmart parking lot off Goodland Exit 17) at 7 p.m. (Mountain Time).

There is a group leaving from southwestern Kansas as well.

Please be prompt, and dress comfortable for a day of pounding the pavement. Our friends

in Colorado will be providing lunch.

Please contact local Romney Campaign representative Laurie Klemm if you plan to "Caravan to Colorado" for this event — Laurie@TheHomesteadRanch.com

Laurie Klemm also has Romney-Ryan yard signs available. You may stop by The Buffalo Guys office to pick up your free yard sign. Let's cover up Goodland showing our support for the Mitt Romney-Paul Ryan ticket.

Laurie Klemm
Goodland

Country moving far from the farm

With each new generation, more of this country's population becomes further and further removed from the farm. It's easy to understand why many people in this country have no concept where their food comes from. Many have forgotten, or may have never known, that individual producers supply staples for the U.S. diet. Some people believe there will never be a food shortage in our country — as long as the doors remain open on their neighborhood supermarket.

Today's farmer is a planning specialist. Producers understand marketing and using the incentives of free enterprise. This group of food producing folks also know the importance of incorporating government-sponsored programs in their individual operations.

Every year, this production machine made up of family operations comes under closer scrutiny and sometimes unfounded attacks. We've all read such articles in the New York Times, Washington Post and CNN. Social media is also rampant with such stories.

These exposés include the usual suspects and contain a story line that goes something like this: Federal money is going to supplement wealthy farmers who don't need it and who are ripping off the taxpayers. These payments should go instead to small and medium-sized farmers.

This just isn't so.

During the last few decades, farmers have relied on, and supported direct payments. These subsidies are based on the historic acreage and yield referred to as a farmer's "base." This base is tied to a piece of land, not a farmer.

Direct payments are issued by U.S. Depart-



Insight this week

• john schlageck

ment of Agriculture every year to producers with qualified base acres, regardless of what they planted or if they planted. Given the uncertainty of prices and production, it was one part of the federal farm program "safety net" that producers, and perhaps more importantly, their lenders, could count on year in and year out.

During the last two to three years, and in no small measure driven by drought and ever-increasing production and land costs, crop insurance is becoming more important to farmers than direct payments. This is happening because more growers have also benefited from the predictability of crop insurance, especially revenue-based products.

For instance, wheat growers purchased more than 136,000 policies for crop revenue coverage insurance, paying more than \$1 billion in premiums last year. That's up from 117,708 policies the previous year, with premiums of more than \$570 million.

Even though crop insurance is subsidized by the federal government, producers pay a significant portion of the cost. American taxpayers view crop insurance as a better alternative than a direct payment program. Consequently, many crop growers are asking whether or not the funds currently invested in direct payments could be used to make the federal crop insur-

ance program even better.

Today's farmer is using crop insurance as a risk management tool to deal with wide swings in the marketplace and a drought that has devastated many family farming operations. This valuable tool has helped provide some stability and allowed crop growers to project their revenue (or lack of) when they approach their lenders.

Crop insurance allows farmers to tailor their risk management to their individual situation and immediate needs. This tool returns an important part of the management decision back to farmers by providing a wide range of products, coverage and options.

This country needs stability in agriculture, especially during these troubled economic times. Few citizens of the United States have ever lived during a period of food insecurity. We've been blessed with an abundance of food at an affordable price.

Continuing to safeguard the interest of agriculture is in the best interest of all of us — farmers, stockmen, agribusiness and our customers. Safeguarding agriculture is critical because the contribution it makes to the health and prosperity of this country is beyond measure. Without agriculture, there is no way to ensure prosperity in our economy. Farmers will not be able to produce the food we take so much for granted.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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