

from our viewpoint...

# FEMA must learn to stay on task

While the jury is out on performance after "superstorm" Sandy, one thing for sure is that the much-maligned Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, needs to realign its priorities and pull back from trying to help every time the wind comes up a little.

If you don't think the agency has grown bloated and lost its sense of purpose, consider the fact that last year, right here in northwest Kansas, one of our counties suffered a disaster. Yes. Six inches of water running over a gravel road.

The commissioners, which straight faces, reminded to the road boss to get someone out there to take pictures and assess the damage "so we can get some FEMA money."

Every time it snows, every time there's ice, every little local flood now, public officials try to record everything because there might be some federal money.

What every happened to doing things for ourselves?

Well, if there's federal money out there, officials are going to try to get it. It's only human nature.

Still, you'd think we had some pride.

The genesis of the problem, we suspect, goes back to the Bush year. Congress and a president who'd been burned badly when Hurricane Katrina all but washed New Orleans away just threw money at Emergency Management. Standards were lowered; they had to spend it.

So counties and cities began to add up the cost of little storms.

We shouldn't forget that Katrina and Sandy are the kinds of events that this agency was designed to battle, yes oddly enough, are the hardest to prepare for. In a real emergency, it's usual that no one is in charge, no one gets much done at first and confusion reigns.

Go back through history, you'll find that's always been the case. It was as true a century ago in San Francisco as it was in New Orleans.

In both cases, order wasn't restored until the Army arrived. It's not that the civilian authorities weren't properly prepared. Events like those are impossible to be prepared for. The Army, for all its bureaucratic faults, is trained to deal with chaos. They call it combat.

We need an agency to deal with disasters, true emergencies. But if the one we have it ill prepared or spends its time and money replacing gravel washed away by a thunderstorm, we're in trouble.

Emergency Management needs to refocus and remember what the real priorities is: being ready to respond when nature turns right ugly.

Let the cities, states and counties take care of the little problems, even the big ones. Federal aid should be reserved for when it's really needed, not frittered away on minor problems.

And with the need to cut federal spending, the bloat in this agency ought to be a prime target. We're not talking about Sandy or money held for the next superstorm. Those rightly are federal issues.

But plowing snow, grading and graveling roads, fixing things up after a big wind, those are things a federal agency should never hear about - let alone pay for with money the government has to borrow.

Let's reign this agency in and point it at its real mission.

- Steve Haynes



# A thankful nation honors its veterans

The service to our nation our veterans provided can never be fully repaid. But, Americans like me who are indebted to their service will never cease trying to show the respect and gratitude of a thankful nation.

First and foremost, this includes fulfilling the promises made to men and women who have served our nation in uniform during wartime. To break our commitments is not only going against our word - and what are you without your word - but is also to set a bad precedent for the next generation. We rely on an all-volunteer force, which means we have to incentivize enlistment. If Washington breaks promises now, then what does that signal to the young men and women thinking about joining the military?

Chief among my responsibilities as a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee is oversight of the VA. In the 22 months I have been in Congress, I have heard horror story after horror story about the conditions our veterans face while pursuing the health care and resources they are due. Obviously poor conditions at our hospitals are an affront to our



**tim huelskamp**

• u.s. rep.

veterans, but also to the nation's taxpayers. We are working hard to fix that.

Second, showing gratitude and respect to our veterans and our currently active or reserve duty troops means not denying them the liberties and freedoms they have fought to defend.

When I learned this year that the Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains censored the reading of a letter from Timothy Broglio, Archbishop of Military Services, regarding the Health and Human Services mandate that religious employers pay for and provide abortion drugs and birth control in their health care plans, I was outraged. Catholics across the country heard a letter from their own bishop with the call-to-action: "We cannot - we will not - comply with this unjust law." But,

Catholics in the military did not get to hear this because of this shocking censorship. Non-Catholics, those not in the military, and even those who support the use of abortion drugs and contraception should take offense at this very obvious abrogation and stifling of First Amendment rights.

Third, the respect and gratitude of a thankful nation can be kept by keeping the American Dream alive. The American Dream is defined as making sure the next generation is always better off than the current. With that in mind, we owe it to the next generation to not leave them \$16 trillion (and growing) in debt. We owe it to the next generation to keep America an attractive place to start a business. We owe it to the next generation to protect the right to pursue prosperity. And, ultimately, we owe it to the next generation to protect their freedoms and liberties.

It's time to get back to the America that our veterans fought to defend.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp represents the First District of Kansas.

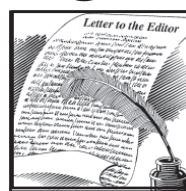
# Outrage over Benghazi

To the Editor:

Many Kansans are outraged with the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2012 in Benghazi, Libya. They believe the president has not been straight with them and is now avoiding the issue.

Many, especially veterans and those in the military, have expressed the fear that the sacred bond of never leaving a comrade in distress or danger may be worthless as of the date of this disgrace.

As the most senior U.S. Marine in Congress, I cannot agree more. We cannot allow this to fester and infect the bond of taking care of our own.



from our readers

• to the editor

I wrote the president an open letter urging him to set the record straight. The letter can be viewed on my website at [roberts.senate.gov](http://roberts.senate.gov)

Until the president, as commander in chief, informs Americans of what happened and why, that bond, which has existed as long as the United States of America has fielded armies, is

breaking. We must know why American assets nearby were not used to save American lives.

This request for the president to set the record straight and restore the bond of "sacrifice for each other" is made with the deepest sincerity. The future morale and effectiveness of our military services may be at stake, and the consequences of this broken bond will be a burden for whomever is in the White House this coming year.

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts  
Dodge City

# Trip to historic city



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

From its great plantations to the harbor that gave it birth and prosperity, Charleston, S.C., is a fascinating city.

Steve and I got to visit this belle of the South last month during the annual National Newspaper Association convention.

This was not our first visit to Charleston, which is just about three hours from Augusta, Ga., where both our daughters live. During the many visits we've made to the South, we've gotten to see many of her gracious, old cities, including New Orleans, Birmingham, Savannah, Ga., Columbia, S.C., Nashville and Chattanooga, Tenn., and of course, Charleston.

But, this visit was longer and more intense, with tours by horse-drawn carriage and boat of the waterfront area and a visit to a working plantation.

We also got to tour a historic home, built in 1808 for the fantastic sum of \$80,000.

Out in the harbor sits Fort Sumter, where the Civil War began. The Union garrison refused to surrender the fort, hoisting a huge U.S. flag. Southern forces astounded by this affront bombarded the brick fortress for 34 hours. When reinforcements and the expected supplies failed to materialize, the garrison surrendered. No one was killed in the battle.

Broad Street is one of the main thoroughfares downtown. Anything on the south side of the street is near the waterfront and considered top-notch property. SOB is a popular designation for those business and people living South of Broad.

At the fancy restaurants South of Broad, we found fried green tomatoes, grits, collard greens and crab cakes on every menu. I think Steve tried them all. He dove into the myriad of seafood available in a coastal city.

Personally, I kept looking for a hamburger. What I came up with was a low-country boil. It's sort of like our cream-can dinners, only with corn, potatoes, sausage and shrimp. This is where Steve is very useful - he eats the shrimp and I get the sausage.

Our tour of Boone Hall Plantation was a visit back in time. The plantation is still a working farm. The land was given to Maj. John Boone in the 1680s. It produced cotton and bricks in the pre-Civil War days. Was a major pecan farm for many years until hurricanes destroyed most of the trees.

Today it exists on tourism and tourist-related agriculture, like pick-your-own strawberries and peaches and hay rides in the fall.

Beside the big house, where we saw a wed-

ding party getting pictures taken on the front steps, there is a row of small brick buildings - the old slave cabins. I was a little surprised that they were brick, a sturdier building material than you would think would be used, but since that was manufactured on the plantation in the early days, I suppose it was cheap.

The cabins have been turned into a series of museum rooms, each telling a story of slavery and plantation life including a list of the price of merchandise - horses, cattle, corn, whiskey, men, women and children. It was both fascinating and chilling.

Our entertainment for the evening was a storyteller, a woman who told us about the Gullah, a language and culture created by the slaves in the low country, as this area along the coast is called.

I know we just scratched the surface of this wonderful city and I'm hoping to go back again some day. There are more homes, churches, gardens and the aquarium to explore. I want to visit some of the islands and go crabbing.

Maybe next time. Our girls still live just three hours away.

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