

from our viewpoint...

U.S. needs better elected officials

On the news Monday morning was a CNN pole that says about 2/3 of Americans are predicting that negotiations over the so-called fiscal cliff will break down because politicians will act like spoiled children.

Has it come this this? Have we so little faith in our leaders' ability to get together and make some simple decisions?

All polls, no matter what the source, must be treated with a grain of salt, but this does seem to be the general attitude in American today. We have no faith and no confidence in our elected officials. The Congressional approval rating has ranged from a low of 10 percent during the summer to about 21 percent in October.

We need to turn this around. We need leaders we can have confidence in. For this to happen, two things must occur:

First, Congress and the president must solve the fiscal cliff issue. In essence, the fiscal cliff is \$7 trillion worth of tax increases and spending cuts spread over 10 years. It includes the expiration of the Bush tax cuts, reductions in spending across the board, the end of a payroll tax holiday and extended unemployment benefits and more. It doesn't sound bad on paper, but experts are saying it will be too abrupt and arbitrary and might throw the country back to a recession.

We've seen signs of positive movement, with many Republican lawmakers backing off a decades-old no-taxes pledge. If Democrats are smart, they'll look for a way to meet the Republicans half-way.

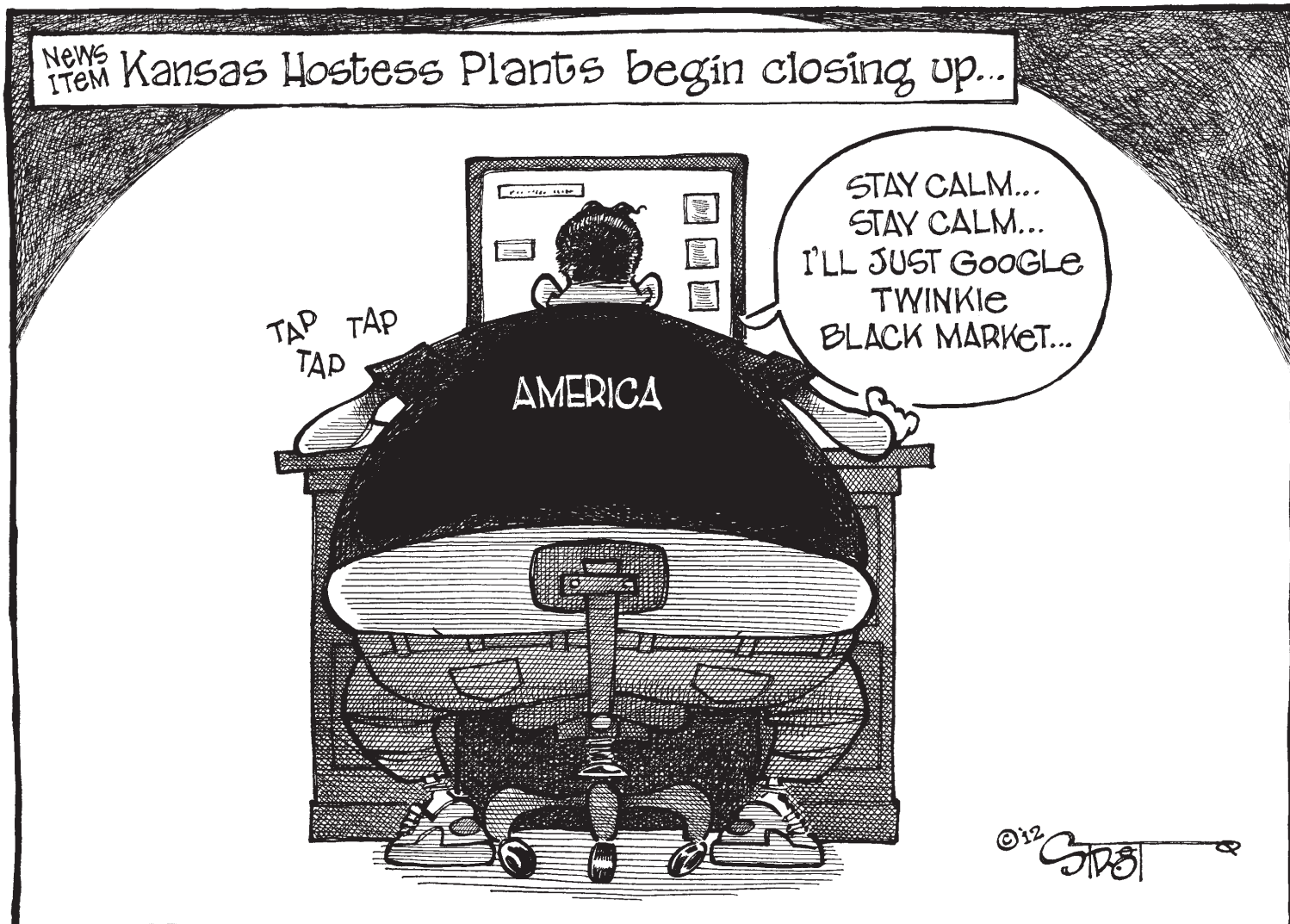
Our current leaders need to show us that they can be statesmen. Simply put, they need to show us they can do the things we sent them there to do.

The other thing is we need better candidates. How often during the last election did you hear someone say "I don't like Obama, but I'm voting for him because I like Romney even less," or something similar. Our elections have become an exercise in voting for the lesser of two evils. Instead of the best candidate, we get the one who isn't the worst.

We need candidates that can inspire across all groups, not speak to a base of voters while alienating others. We need the best and the brightest, or what chance can we possibly have of overcoming the vast problems that out nation faces. Immigration, the economy, foreign policy, human rights; why are we leaving these things to the lesser of evils?

We need these better candidates at all levels of government, from township clerks to the president. The only way this will happen is if more people file. In Sherman County during this election cycle we had only four contested elections on the ballot. One was the presidential race, one was for Kansas Senate, the other two were sheriff and one county commission district. There were two more during the primary. The majority of positions on the ballot were uncontested.

It is difficult to find qualified candidates for many of these positions, given that they all require particular skillsets. However, we must always continue the search for the best elected officials, and how can we do that when either nobody runs for office, or the candidates we do get leave a lot to be desired? —Kevin Bottrell



Sometimes deadlines are unhelpful

An editorial appeared in Friday's paper that was out of date by the time anyone got to read it.

When I wrote the editorial — in which I said the United States should support Israel through diplomatic efforts aimed at stopping the fighting — it was about 10 a.m. Thursday morning. We make Friday's newspaper up Thursday morning with a deadline of 11 a.m. This way we can print it and have it to the post office before 1 p.m., so that all our subscribers can get it with their Friday morning mail. The paper is available Thursday in the office and is taken to Kanorado and to the various newspaper racks around Goodland.

Unfortunately, at noon Thursday the news broke that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had brokered a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, making my editorial suddenly out of



kevin bottrell

- simple tricks and nonsense

date before anyone had a chance to read it.

It demonstrates one of the difficulties faced by newspapers. Unlike the 24-hour cable news networks, we can't necessarily do things up-to-the-minute. We can do all the news up until that 11 a.m. deadline. Once we're done and those pages are on the press, that's it. If something happens in Goodland at noon on a Thursday, I often have little choice but to wait and put it in the next week. This is one of the reasons

we have been trying for a greater Facebook presence.

In this case, I was contacted just after noon by our paper in Norton. We often share stories and opinion pieces between the six papers our company owns, and Norton wanted to know if I had an editorial they could use. I had to tell them that the one I had written just a couple hours before was woefully out of date. I was able to update it for the Norton paper, which also comes out Friday, but has a later deadline. So if you happen to have read both papers, you'd have seen two different versions.

The irony, however, is that despite this issue, the United States seems to have done what I had recommended in the editorial. Clinton helped get the two sides to stop fighting, for now at least. We can only hope that the peace will last.

A time for statesmen, not partisans

Two myths we hear a lot about:

Myth 1, that the partisan division we see in Washington (or Topeka) is a phenomenon of the 21st century.

It's not. In our history, it's probably more the norm than the exception.

Bitter partisanship goes back to the Founding Fathers. Only George Washington enjoyed nearly universal respect and support, and he fell into the partisan trap after leaving office.

In the bitter campaign of 1800, Thomas Jefferson finally defeated John Adams after a tie in the Electoral College and a stalemate in the House of Representatives. It's said that Adams left the White House in the night so he would not have to greet his one-time friend.

The two, both revered today among the Founding Fathers, had become bitter opponents through two long campaigns said to be filled with lies and slander. The only difference, it seems, is that today, lies and slander travel faster. Today, we have television and the Internet; then, they had the post office — on horseback.

American history is replete with tale after tale of partisanship, deadlock and woe. Finding times when the two major parties could work together may, in fact, be more difficult than finding times when they could not.

Myth 2, we would be better off if the parties got together and did something.

We would?



steve haynes

- along the sappa

Problem is that they have done way too much.

Most of the time, we're better served when Congress does nothing.

Not today, though.

Having gotten us into the mess we are in, Congress needs to lead us out. That will require statesmanship, that most rare commodity. Not partisanship, the norm. And it will require long-term solutions, not the usual short-term patch.

The nation is about to be crushed under a mountain of debt. We cannot spend our way out of this crisis; that is the road to Greece.

We cannot tax our way out of it, either. That could lead to renewed recession, more unemployment, lower revenue and more deficits.

The federal government needs to learn to live within its means. Since it is borrowing right now roughly 40 cents of each dollar it spends, that is not going to be easy.

The budget needs to be cut until the government gets back to a sustainable level. Can't do that all at once, and it will require some judicious tax increases (Listening, Republicans?)

as well.

Cuts will have to be noticeable, though, and should include, where possible, whole programs. The government needs to stop trying to do everything and start focusing on its core mission. That includes Social Security, Medicare and other "entitlements." (Listening, Democrats? Senator Reid?)

While nearly everyone agrees that "something has to be done," nearly every voter benefits from one or more federal programs, tax breaks or entitlements. All will have to be on the block.

Forty percent deficits are not sustainable. This house of cards is going to collapse some day, and if we don't do something now, the crash will make 1929 look puny.

Can Congress and the president pull together to actually accomplish something?

Only if BOTH SIDES are willing to compromise and put together a package that will work. So far, both say they are willing to work on it, but the president has been quoted as saying the voters chose his way.

A narrow victory is not a mandate, however, and he has to deal with those Republicans the votes left in control of the House and still substantial in the Senate.

Still, you have to believe — and pray — that miracles are possible.

Tips to remember better

Better sleep, better memory.

It sounded like a good idea for a seminar, and besides I'd get six hours of continuing education credit and get to have a night out with my sister.

Each year, Marie and I get together in either Kearney, Neb., or Wichita for one of these seminars. A couple of companies put them on, attracting a wide range of health professionals, from doctors to physical therapists.

Marie is a psychiatric nurse and I'm a registered pharmacist, so this course was good for both of us.

She lives in Concordia, so we met in Kearney, had supper and shared a room at the hotel. We got some sleep after gabbing half the night, then figured we were ready to learn how to sleep better and have sharper memories. (Not staying up half the night talking would probably be a good start, we figured.)

It was an interesting course and neither of us went to sleep during the discussion. Among other things, we learned that a young man in California stayed awake for 11 days for a science-fair project. He had some hallucinations but came out of the experience without any lasting problems.



cynthia haynes

- open season

While sleep loss causes decreases in concentration, motivation, perception and thinking capacity, the experts say, if the person gets his or her normal amount of sleep, they seem to recover within a day or two.

Some tips for travelers include:

- When switching just one or two time zones, don't shift out of your regular sleep cycle. Just go to bed a little earlier or later to keep your body on its normal schedule.

- Delay routines on trips spanning many time zones. Don't go to bed until it's bedtime in the new time zone and spend a lot of time outdoors in the sun the first two days. (I did this when I traveled to China, and it works great but it's sure hard to stay up for almost 24 hours waiting for "bedtime.")

- Drink lots of fluids but no alcohol or caffeine. (Notice how these people always take all the fun out of that drink lots of liquids bit?)

There are, we were told, five stages of sleep, and we spend six years of our lives dreaming. But we forget half of a dream's content within five minutes of waking up and 90 percent after 10 minutes.

While this might seem to be a waste of six years, they did suggest how to train your brain to solve problems while you are sleeping and dreaming.

- Write down your problem. Place it with a pen, paper and flashlight next to your bed.
- Review the problem and then visualize it as a concrete image as soon as you go to bed.
- Tell yourself you want to dream about the problem as you drift off.
- On awaking, stay in bed and try to recall any dreams and write them down.

I'm not sure this works, because whenever I've tried it, I haven't been able to go to sleep because I keep worrying about my problem.

Our instructor did say this was a good way for students to study. They should read their material just before going to bed and studies have shown that they will retain more of it than by just studying at a desk.

So I guess when someone tells you to "sleep on it," that might actually be a good idea.

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, Kayla Bentley and Tori Mari

Sheila Smith, Circulation Manager



Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager

Gary Stewart, Jim Bowker, James Jackson

Kris McCool, Tracy Traxel,

Judy McKnight, Sheri Arroyo.



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nbetz49@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