

## Who will fill the cabinet positions

It's nomination season in Washington, so get ready for a round of political wheeling and dealing and probably a healthy dose of obstructionism.

There are a lot of cabinet posts open for President Obama's second term. With Hillary Clinton stepping down as secretary of state, the front runner had been U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice. However, she was forced to withdraw from consideration over statements on the Benghazi consulate attack. Her nomination never even came to a vote.

Sen. John Kerry has now been nominated to the post. Despite the fact that he was a one-time Democratic candidate for president, which likely earned him a few enemies, his approval seems likely.

Timothy Geithner, a controversial figure if ever there was one, may be stepping down, as is Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who said he would stay on until the question of military spending cuts is answered. Word is former Sen. Chuck Hagel may be in line for defense.

Attorney General Eric Holder is expected to stay on for at least another year. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood may take private sector jobs. The commerce secretary job has actually been vacant for about six months. John Bryson had medical problems, which caused a car accident, and Rebecca Blank has been filling in.

Likely staying are former Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, the health and human services secretary, as well as Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan, Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki.

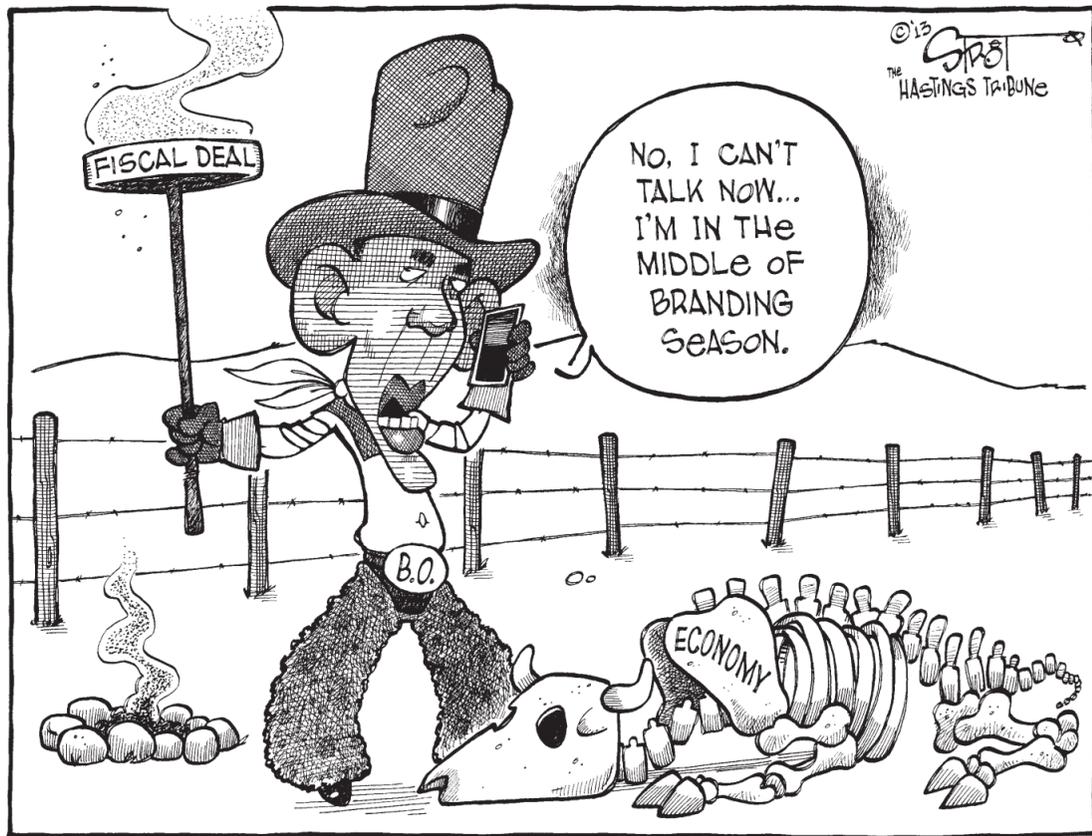
The problem we run into isn't usually the nominations themselves. The nominees are almost always qualified for the position in question. The problem is politics. Whatever party holds the White House, the opposition always makes cabinet and even sub-cabinet nominations a battleground. This has happened to just about every president in the modern era. After all, what better way to stick it to your opponent than to make sure he doesn't get the people he wants?

Presidential nominations are often blocked or held up before they ever come to a vote. This forces nominees to withdraw or forces presidents to make recess appointments, which are dubious at best. There has even been a recent court case challenging recess appointments to the National Labor Relations Board. The appointments were made to ensure that the board didn't shut down from lack of a quorum, but the challenge alleged that the Senate hadn't actually adjourned.

Checks and balances are good. After all, we need that to ensure we get the best people in these extremely important positions. But the process, like most Washington processes, has become bogged down in politics. The way these things should be done is with a vote. If you support a nominee, vote yes. If you have a problem with a nominee, vote no. It's that simple.

Making sure it never comes to a vote is undemocratic. It denies the people's representatives their right to make that vote. That's why we send them there in the first place.

**Simple tricks and nonsense**  
**Kevin Bottrell**



## Pet peeves that bite us back

One of my pet peeves has been the unkempt manner in which some people go out of the house. You know the ones I mean. Their hair hasn't seen a comb all day; you're pretty sure they didn't brush their teeth; and they're still in their pajamas.

It all stems from being raised on a farm. When farm kids went to town they were made to not only dress up, but to clean up. You could be dirt from head to toe for life on the farm, but when it was time to "go to town" it was time to bathe, wash your hair and put on your best.

Town kids could spot a spit and polished country bumpkin a mile away; and vice versa. A country kid knew who the townies were because of their disheveled appearance. That and the fact that town kids probably weren't being drug all over town by a mother with a death grip on their ear.

I wish I were more the Donna Reed type who looks like a million all the time, but to this day I make the distinction between what is acceptable attire at home and what is appropriate when you go to the store. I might look like the "wreck of the Hesperus" at home, but a quick trip to the store for bread and milk warrants a clean shirt

**Out Back**  
**Carolyn Plotts**



and slacks, a poof of the hair and a slather of lip gloss. Maybe even a quick squirt of perfume if there's no time for a shower.

I hate to admit it, but I had a bad attitude about people who looked like they didn't even try to make themselves presentable. That is until I became one of them.

Saturday was one of those days. We slept in. I didn't dress, wash my face or even fix breakfast before I began working on the books for the non-profit organization we are part of. The annual meeting is next week and I had a kajillion reports to create. I was totally immersed in my work. I didn't eat all day - just coffee. The day flew by and before I knew it, it was after 5 p.m.

The night before we had loaned our van to a friend who needed to take a raft load of kids to a wrestling tournament and she called as she was on her way home. The thought came

to me in a flash that if I met her at a certain intersection on the highway, it would save us a 30 mile round trip. I could ride with her into her hometown and drive our van home. She was about ten miles from the intersection and we lived about 11 miles away.

It was a plan, but it required Jim and I to leave the house immediately. No taking a look in the mirror; no changing clothes; no combing hair. We met our friend and as I was getting out of the truck Jim said, "Hey, could you go by the store and pick up some bananas, potato chips, sour cream and cough syrup?"

And that is how I found myself at the local grocery in my pajamas. I can't lie - they weren't even my pajamas. They were Jim's. He has the warmest, plaid, fleece loungers and, in the winter, I love to wear them. I prayed I could slip in, make my purchase and get out unnoticed. But no. Barely in the door and someone says, "Hi, Carolyn. What are you doing out?" So much for anonymity.

This experience has humbled me. I promise, from now on, I will cut people a little slack and not be so judgmental. Perhaps they had a day like mine.



Thanks to everyone in the Norton community who helped make Christmas so special for all our guests at The Haven. Thanks to Toys for Tots who made sure all the kids had presents to open Christmas day; thanks to the Bible study group who "adopted" one of our bedrooms and completely made it over; to the group who brought in soup and all the fixin's for a Saturday night supper. And, of course, thanks to everyone who gave to our financial support. Without help from the entire community we couldn't meet the needs of so many people. Thank you all so much. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to Daffer Construction who has been in business in Norton for 40 years. Called in.

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## Whack on the side of the head

There's an old saying that sometimes you need a good whack on the side of the head. Nothing could be truer today in this speeding world of instantaneous communication.

While there are countless ways of doing so, many of us remain tied to the comfort of doing something in the same way. As a result, it becomes more difficult to think about doing it any other way.

It's time for all of us to break out of this rut of familiarity. Finding new ideas or a new way of doing something is akin to prospecting for gold. If you look in the same old places, you'll find tapped out veins. If you venture off the beaten path, you'll improve your chances of discovering new ideas.

Crawl out of your comfort zone. Every culture, industry, business or organization has its own way of looking at the world. Often the best ideas come from exploring the way others in different walks of life do things.

Where will you look? Borrow ideas. Throughout history people have used novel and interesting ideas that others have used successfully. Our ideas must be original only to their adaptation to the problem we're working on at the time.

Dig deeper. Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it's the only one we have. Never stop with the first right answer

**Insight**  
**John Schlageck**



you find. Look for others. Remember, the best way to find a solution to something is to come up with lots of them.

See the big picture. In 1866 an Iowa farmer watched the construction of the transcontinental railroad near his fields. After seeing the track laid and a locomotive steam by he thought, "So that's what railroading is all about: tracks and trains."

The Iowa farmer saw the steel and wheels, but he didn't see the consequences. Look for the larger implications of an idea. Look at the big picture.

Expect the unexpected. Columbus was looking for India. Bell was trying to invent a hearing aid. Often what you're looking for leads to something entirely different.

Listen to that hunch. Your subconscious mind continually records and stores unrelated data from the outside world. Later, it combines these data into good answers, or what might be considered hunches.

If you simply ask, trust and listen

these hunches can sometimes lead to the right solutions.

Look for the obvious. "Only the most foolish of mice would hide in a cat's ear," designer Scott Love said, "but only the wisest of cats would look there."

See what's in front of your face or ear. Think about what you may be overlooking. The resources or solutions might be right in front of you.

Ask a fool. That's what the kings of old did to break out of the group-think environment their "yes-men" environment created. It was the fool's job to see any proposal or discussion underway in a fresh light.

Here's an example. If a man is sitting on a horse backward, why do we assume that it's the man who is backward and not the horse?

Never assume things are a certain way. Shake up people's assumptions and this will allow them to see things differently, sometimes more clearly.

Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "To those who are awake, there is one ordered universe, whereas in sleep each man turns away from the world to one of his own."

Your dreams can help resolve conflicts, refresh thinking, inspire solutions and suggest different approaches.

Follow your dreams.

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