

Price too high for panel to fail budget-cutting job

It's the latest scare: the "poison pill" in the law creating the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction, better known as the "supercommittee," this fall.

The committee is supposed to come to an agreement cutting \$1.2 trillion from the budget, or automatic cuts totaling the same amount will be taken from all federal programs across the board. And that is going to hurt — a lot.

No one envisioned that the committee would deadlock so tightly that it could not come up with a plan. The across-the-board cuts would be painful for both parties, especially with a possible \$600 billion cut at the Pentagon.

Even measures designed to mitigate the recession and continuing high unemployment would be slashed, including unemployment benefits and aid to states.

The deadlock probably means some sleepless nights for the supercommittee, which includes six senators and six representatives, three of each from each of the two major parties.

The panel has only a week, until next Wednesday, to come up with a bill. Then Congress has until Dec. 23 to pass it without changes — or reject it. If that does not happen, the "poison pill" clause goes into effect, slashing all budgets for 2013.

A poison pill is a provision inserted into a law or, say, a corporate charter that's so bitter, it's assumed no one will swallow it. Corporations use poison pills to prevent hostile takeovers, but this one is designed to force two parties to compromise.

It may yet work. Washington is a place

where last-minute reprieves do exist.

But if it doesn't, a lot of lawmakers are going to be sorry they voted for this law.

The supercommittee itself has been deadlocked over party-line issues: Republican opposition to any tax increase, and Democrats' insistence that "new revenue" must be included in any budget solution. Republicans also want to cut or curb "entitlements" like Medicaid and Social Security, while the Democrats want to tax "the rich."

That's the split that prompted Congress to invent the supercommittee to start with. There's been no shift so far by either party. Nor is there any sign of one — yet.

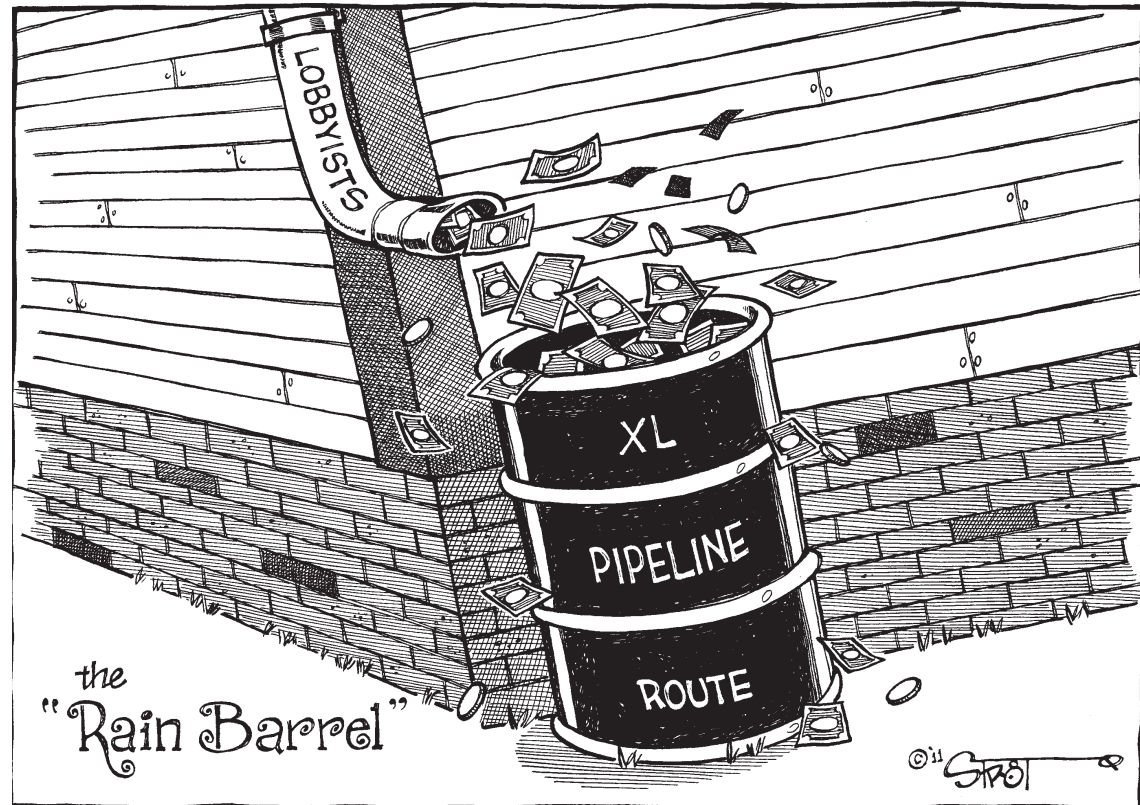
Compromise is required here. The Republicans may need to agree to some "revenue enhancements," and the Democrats will have to come around on retaining some of the popular Bush-era tax cuts. Unless both sides give a little, nothing can happen.

And we're pretty sure, people want something to happen. Like most of Europe, the U.S. needs to learn to live within its means, and needs to start before a worldwide panic sets in, not after.

That means the supercommittee — and the Congress — need to come to an agreement by next Wednesday. If they don't, the price the members pay could be severe, come November 2012.

The rest of us face all manner of problems, from a likely new recession to higher prices and higher interest rates. It's that important.

It's time for something to give in Washington. — *Steve Haynes*



'Volunteer' pops up a corn

When will I learn? My mouth keeps making promises my body has to keep.

Every year on the opening weekend of pheasant season, there's a craft fair in a neighboring town. Hundreds of shoppers flood the town and I got the bright (?) idea to sell my homemade caramel corn as a fund-raiser for the house we help operate for inmates' families.

My family has enjoyed this treat for years and I was sure others would, too. How hard could it be to "whip out" a couple hundred gallons of caramel corn? Well, I found out.

I got permission to use our church's kitchen with its six ovens. I started popping corn, melting butter and measuring brown sugar, salt and corn syrup. In an hour, I had three ovens going with roaster pans full of caramel corn. Each batch had to be stirred every 15 minutes, and soon I was getting confused as to which pan had been stirred, which needed to be and which was ready to come out of the oven. Not to mention that I was trying to start a fourth batch, keep an eye on the clock and wash dishes as I went. I am a multitasker, but this was ridiculous.

When the preacher turned out the lights and said he was locking me in, I knew it was time to shut down for the day. The final tally: six batches done. The yield: about 13 gallons.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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That's a long way from the downgraded goal of 100 gallons which I had set as a final number.

Next, I moved operations to our kitchen at home. Surely, I thought, I could make caramel corn while going about my daily chores. Pop corn, make a bed, cook caramel sauce, throw a load in the washer, stir sauce on corn, run vacuum, pour corn in oven, wash kernels, pop dishes, sew a sauce, button a brown sugar. Oh, dear, where was I?

The day of the craft fair arrived, and I was as ready as I would ever be. One last batch came out of the oven 10 minutes before I left the house. Final total, about 30 gallons. I set up my display table with a dish of samples, remembering my mother's advice, "You have to give something away before you can sell it." Two hours later, I was sold out and taking orders. So, I'm not done yet.

The caramel corn was a hit and

I might do it again next year. But I will recruit some volunteers. Any takers? I promise to share the old family recipe with anyone who steps forward.

A side bar to this story is a personal one. Jim has not had a decent meal since I began this project. I caught him eating caramel corn for breakfast. It's good, but I'm not sure you can live on it.

The other side effect is the "crunching" sound you make when walking across my kitchen floor. Popped corn, unpopped kernels and caramel corn are everywhere. Where is a good dog when you need one?

Cats, unfortunately, are too picky to resort to eating crumbs off the floor. The sad part is, I'm too tired to care. So, until Tuesday, it will just have to stay. If company drops by, I'll tell them the corn popper exploded, but not to worry. No one got hurt.

Winter follows her around

It was supposed to snow, six to eight inches, the weatherman said. It didn't.

We kept looking outside for flakes, but at 40 degrees, you don't get much snow. It did rain a little. Not even much of that.

Winter would have to wait a little longer. Fall was still holding sway in northwest Kansas.

I wasn't disappointed. I'm not ready for winter, even though I went outside and cut the last of my cabbages and pulled some, but not all, of my root vegetables.

Besides, I was leaving for Colorado, and driving in the snow really isn't all that much fun.

The drive was fine. We had dry roads the whole way, nothing to worry about. The temperature stayed pretty much between 29 and 35 until the sun set.

It started to get colder as we moved into the mountains, and there was more snow by the side of the road. By the time we were an hour from our destination, the temperature had hit 15 and we watched it dropped lower and lower. As we pulled into the driveway of our weekend home, the temperature hit 5 degrees.

It was almost 10 p.m., and the inside temperature was a balmy 42.

We unloaded and started a fire in the wood stove. It took another couple of hours for the inside tem-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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perature to get up to a reasonable 68. The sheets in the bedroom were still icy, but the room was warm.

Overnight, the temperature hit 0, and as the sun rose in the morning, we looked out on a Christmas-card picture, mountains and trees covered in snow. Icicles dripped from the eaves and smoke curled out of the chimney.

It was pretty, but it was still freezing, and the wood stove needed another feeding before the living room became tolerable again.

We had gone from fall to winter in a big hurry.

Our stay was more of a long weekend than a vacation. It warmed up each day. By the time we were ready to go home, the daytime temperature was above freezing and it was only getting down to 9 degrees at night.

The locals were all complaining that winter had come early this year.

Hey, they live in the mountains

of Colorado, where the temperature falls to 40 below in the winter, and if it gets to be 80 in the summer, everyone complains of the heat.

Me, I'm glad to be back in Kansas, where it's still fall, and winter won't be here for — hey, was that a snowflake? — Noooooooooooooo.

From the Bible

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

— Matthew 24: 34, 40

Bossy speed signs too much

Whoever thought of coupling a radar gun with a road sign has an evil mind. Come the revolution, I say he's at the top of my list.

OK, it gets kinda crowded up there.

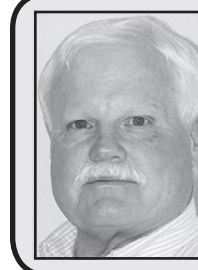
I remember when a radar gun was quite the novelty. Most cops didn't have one, just a few elite state guys. And the trooper had to stop the car, open the trunk and set up the radar on a tripod on the shoulder. A second trooper would do the stopping.

Even when they started mounting them on the dash, the cruiser had to be stopped to get a speed reading. Darned things wouldn't calculate if they were moving.

I remember, nearly 40 years ago, riding along with a Kansas Highway Patrol trooper using one of the first moving radars. It could read both its speed and the oncoming car's and figure the difference.

We were on the Turnpike, though, and the trooper had to find a place to turn around, no easy task with the deep, narrow median in the original design, and harder now with the concrete barriers in place. He'd turn the lights on, point and hope they got the message.

Anyway, the moving radar was such a novelty, the story and photos made Page 1 in the old *Kansas City Times*. Of course, nearly every patrol car has a radar on the dash, capable of shooting speed fore and aft, moving or still. It's part of the equipment, like a red light.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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And little miniature radar units fit in an oversized traffic sign. One flashed at me the other day: "Speed limit 55," it said. "Your speed 59" "Slow down."

I thought it was kinda rude, really. I wasn't going *that* fast.

This "feedback radar" thing started a few years ago with trailer-mounted units that the authorities could put wherever speeding was a problem. Today, apparently, the whole thing fits on the back of a standard-size road sign equipped with a digital display.

Next, the sign will call a trooper to report any unrepentant speeders. Or just take their picture and have the computer send them a ticket, like the stoplight cameras they have in the city.

But if you ask me, the signs already are getting too bossy. I have my wife along for that.

For the last few years, Kansas drivers have had a big loophole in the technology used by Colorado toll roads. The powers that

be figured out that paying live toll collectors — or even maintaining those change-eating bins — costs too much. Close-up television cameras could record the front license tag and the driver's image and just send the owner a bill.

So, they did away with toll collectors and went to computerized billing. Only in Colorado they have front license tags, and in Kansas, of course, we don't.

You could drive up and down the toll roads around Denver all day and never pay a dime. In fact, unless you mailed in a check, you couldn't find anyone to pay.

That worked for a couple of years, but it appears they've finally caught up with us. The other day, we were in Denver, and Cynthia used the toll road to get to the airport. Next week, she got a bill for \$3.

So, apparently, they have enough cameras to read your rear license tag, too.

I wonder how many Kansas toll-runners they have to catch to pay for those?

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High stamp price set for long ride

To the Editor:

Social Security or Stealing Savings?

A local (only) stamp should be cheaper! What is cost of hauling mail off (to Wichita), for jobs there and hauling it back? Then closing small post offices, devastating rural

people!

It would be more efficient to build a refinery there, for Alaska, Canada and North Dakota oil, than

Letter to the Editor

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:

Elsewhere: Susan Cotterill, Portland, Ore.; Donald Stackhouse, Roseville, Calif.; Millie Marietta, Casper, Wyo.; Elwood Walker, Dover, Okla.

Kansas: Brandon Dirks, Ludell; Tony Larue, WaKeeney; Crystal

Mahan, Frances Bader, Hays; Robert Shuler, Larned; Rodney New, McPherson.



pipe the profit to Texas.

In all of Social Security — whose money was ever saved for, and returned too — plus interest? If anybody but Congress had foisted this pyramid, Ponzi, chain letter scheme on the people of U.S.A., they would be punished for fraud. Abolish retirement (\$) for every elected official; if budget is not balanced, dock their pay, by the same percent!

"Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your soul. — Jeremiah 6: 16.

Frank Sowers
Benkelman, Neb.