

Administration should admit failure in Libya

The jury is out yet on Monday's presidential debate, but whatever was said — and whatever else voters hear about foreign policy — we need to do something to restore some basic honesty to the discussion.

For its own reasons, whatever they may be, the Obama administration tried to paint the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi which killed Ambassador Christopher Stevens as the result on an out-of-control demonstration. Even during the vice presidential debate, Joe Biden persisted in trying to blame the intelligence community for this lie.

Anyone who watched the news the night of the attack knew this was not the result of a demonstration aimed at the U.S. in retaliation for an anti-Muslim video. It was apparent from reports available to the world even then that a coordinated attack by trained forces had overwhelmed the consulate.

The administration, from the president to Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, tried to make us believe otherwise. The world was not buying it. Then the vice president tried to blame the CIA and the rest of the intelligence service. The secretary of state did the same.

One of two things: either they were taken in by false reports, or the intelligence they get is so bad they deserve to be defeated and thrown out of office.

Now on the defensive, the administration

has taken to accusing Republicans of "playing politics" with the deaths of three Americans, including the ambassador. What, we wonder, were they playing when they tried to convince us this was some innocent, spontaneous demonstration gone awry?

As opposition parties are wont to do, the Republicans are threatening to investigate. By the time Congress gets around to it, though, it'll be a postmortem: the elections will be over.

To be sure, mistakes were made. The ambassador was staying at a location that, apparently, was far from secure, even though Libya is not exactly a stable location. A consulate, unlike an embassy, is not a fortress. It wouldn't have been designed to withstand a military attack.

Requests to Washington to beef up security were ignored, it seems. Now it is too late to do anything, too late certainly for those who died. Too late to save the truth.

Then Mrs. Clinton tells us she will take the blame, though as secretary of state, she *obviously* wouldn't have known about the security conditions. She said that, by the way, during an appearance in Peru.

Let the investigation roll. We'll find out what happened soon enough, but well after the voters have spoken.

— Steve Haynes

We've always been divided

It's become popular to decry the deep division which has all but paralyzed our Congress in Washington.

And it's true, partisan division is near an all-time high. But this is nothing new. It's been part of the Washington scene since the 1700s — remember, it's said that Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, once and later friends, did not speak when they exchanged places at the White House. Partisanship may have reached a bitter peak when Andy Jackson was president a few years later.

The intensity comes and goes for a lot of reasons, but for, again, a lot of reasons, the feelings are always there. Parties compete; that's why they form and what they do. But it's easy to miss the fact that often these divisions are not just about who gets to run the country.

Parties — and their followers, ordinary people like you and me — tend to vilify the opposition, especially when out of power. Thus, Republicans tried to get us to believe that Bill Clinton was in league with the Devil, then for the next eight years, Democrats told us the same about George W. Bush. In truth, neither was a bad, nor an innocent, president.

More important, though, is the fact that both parties, most parties of the past and probably of the future, start from some logical premise, a set of deeply held beliefs that attracts us to one or the other.

Scratch any Republican, and you'll likely find someone who believes with all his or her heart that deficits and debt will be the ruin of this country. Ask any Democrat, you'll probably find someone who thinks the government is not doing a good enough job to help and protect



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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us, and that debt just stimulates the economy.

These people look at government decisions through different lenses, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Two things about politics today do stand out: The near gridlock which persists for years. Go back to the Clinton or Bush eras, you'll find that both parties blocked the judicial appointments of the opposition president — some for the entire eight years.

Today, though, the Democrat-controlled Senate refused to pass a budget and the Republican-run House is holding all manner of bills on vital issues, from saving the Postal Service to doing something about the "fiscal cliff" in front of us.

Holding onto principle may be a noble thing, but it doesn't get much done.

One thing that most people forget is that the nature of our system gives one party or the other control over a given branch of government or house of Congress, but only for a while. As a nation, we are so evenly divided when it comes to party and ideology that just a few votes can shift us from the liberal Bill Clinton to the conservative G.W. Bush to the ultraliberal Barack Obama — and now, maybe, back to the somewhat conservative Mitt Romney.

A percentage point here and there

in any election can produce what looks very much like a landslide to the outside observer, but the current may run the other way in a month or two. Today, there's almost no such thing as "control" of the government, only shifting sands.

Why, then, if we're so close and yet so far apart, don't the "moderate" politicians of both parties dominate? Mostly, I suspect, because they have no power to stir men's souls. It's the partisans who generate the electricity.

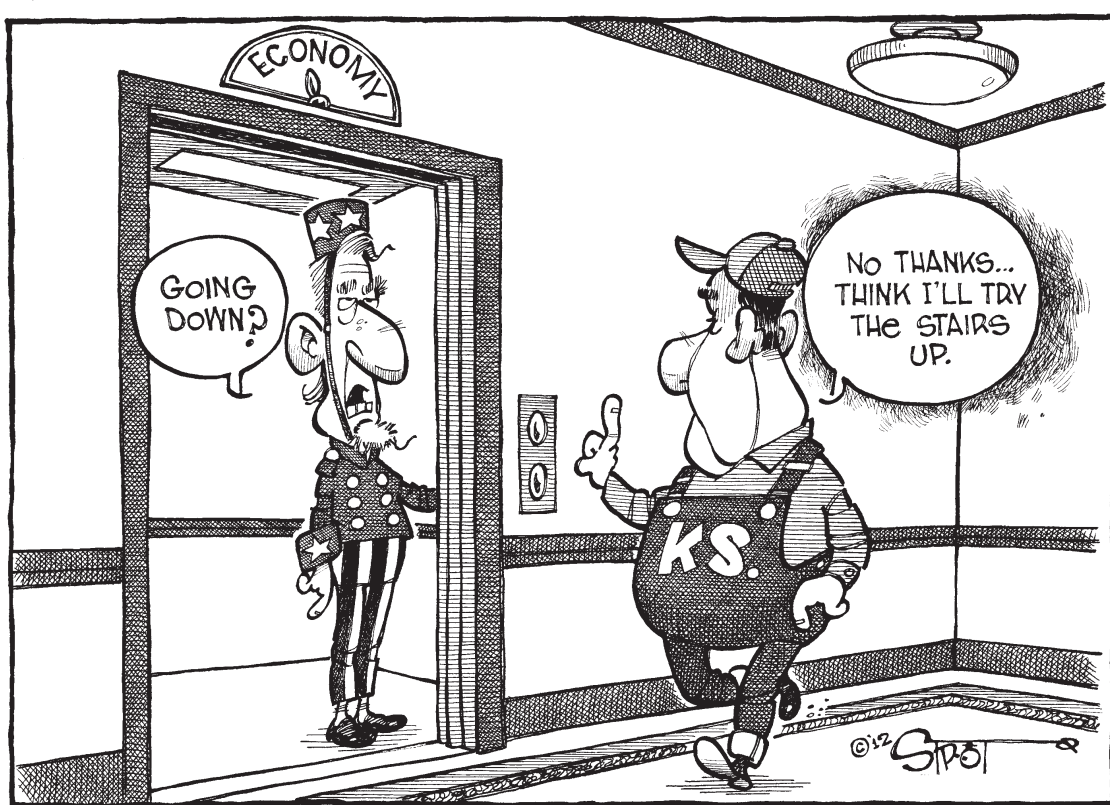
But the closeness of our division, and the frequent change, may be a good thing. It keeps us from going too far one way or the other, even if it makes it hard for us to work together.

One day soon, that will come back. For a while, anyway. For a while.

From the Bible

But now, hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

—Hebrews 8: 6-7



Our fathers looked to future

"We're so lucky to have had the fathers we did," Willa said. "They gave us all this."

We were sitting at a picnic table near the swimming pool, looking out over Oberlin's City Park. Our topic was the upcoming election to see if voters would approve a sales tax to pay for a new pool.

Willa had just told me the stories of her father working to get Oberlin's iconic canopies put up, and I had responded with stories of mine carrying petitions, when I was in high school, for voter support of the new community college.

Our parents and theirs had put their time, money and resources on the line so that we could have the benefits of parks, a swimming pool, community buildings and a college close to home. They hadn't been rich or famous, but they left the whole town a legacy that endures today.

I think Willa supports the pool project partly because she's a supporter — one of those people who see good ideas and put their heart into them — and partly because she's a mother and grandmother and wants her descendants to have the same chances she did.

Me? I guess I support the idea because it's a good idea. I supported the idea of a new pool the last time it



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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was brought up, and I've never used our swimming pool. My children never used the pool, and my only granddaughter is too young and lives too far away to use it in the foreseeable future.

But I remember being young in the summertime. I'd walk or ride my bike to the city pool, and after several hours of baking in the sun, return home via the library. Those two community facilities were my world.

I want to pass that on to others. But I have other more selfish motives. I'm a businesswoman. My livelihood depends on the success of this town. I want and need to see Oberlin thrive. To do that, the town needs to keep moving forward — even when that's tough.

This is a beautiful town. That's one of the reasons we moved here and bought a business here. We loved the parks, the canopies, the

brick streets and old-fashioned street lights.

We appreciated the advantages of The Gateway, swimming pool, library and movie theater. Although none of them is ever going to be a money-making operation, we have to have them to draw and keep people here.

So, I'm willing to put my money where my mouth is. And I will be. I buy everything I can in town — groceries, hardware, clothes, toys, gifts and gas. I will be paying 15 cents more for everything for each \$10 I spend.

I think what I get out of it is well worth the money.

I'm voting in favor of the pool — although I might never use it — because it's as important to the landscape of our community as the streets, water and sewer system — and a lot more attractive.

House was toughest to build

Pinch me. If I feel it, I must still be alive.

Because, seriously, I was afraid this last mission trip killed me. It may have something to do with the number of candles on my birthday cake, but this was, without a doubt, the hardest build I have ever done. And the need for this house was the most desperate we've ever seen.

Jim and I have been going on these trips for years. We thought we had seen it all. In the past, we had built for a family that lived in an old minivan body; for a couple in a tarpaper shack with a dirt floor and for a man living in a six-foot square hut. But we had never built for a family who had no shelter at all.

Paula (pronounced Pow-la), her two daughters and two grandchildren were all sleeping on a queen-sized mattress on the bare ground. As best we could tell, their entire worldly possessions were stuffed into an old wardrobe. Her husband had left and she had injured herself while tearing down what little shelter they had about a week before our team was to arrive.

The site was not properly prepared, and we weren't sure that our team would be able to build there. When Paula learned we were discussing whether or not we could build her house, her eyes filled with tears. My Spanish is not good enough to understand all she said, but I know she was pleading with our team leader to not abandon her, to not make her and her family sleep



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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out in the open. I heard the desperation in her voice.

Our team leader, Scott, has been building houses in Mexico for more than 10 years. I think he probably has seen it all. Now, he might appear to be a little crusty, but as Paula begged him not to leave her with no shelter, even he teared up. We all had tears in our eyes, but we knew there had to be a solution.

Someone suggested bringing in fill dirt to prepare the site. A few phone calls later, a truckload of dirt, sand and gravel arrived. Now, our work began in earnest. Leveling the site, building a form, digging the footings, cutting lumber for walls and the roof, pouring the foundation. I wish a movie camera had captured the action, because I know we looked like a little colony of ants, each with an assigned task, each scurrying about the site.

We finished the house in our allotted time. To say we all worked hard would be the understatement of the year. But would we do it all over again? In a heartbeat! Because those tears of desperation in Paula's

eyes just three days before were replaced by tears of joy and gratitude when we handed her the keys to her beautiful new two-room home with the orange trim.

Our team's scripture verse for the week was Psalm 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it." I know the Lord had His hand in this, because we couldn't have built it without Him.

In the U.S.A.

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and success of liberty."

— John Fitzgerald Kennedy
May 29, 1917 - Nov. 22, 1963
35th President

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

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Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Nor'West Newspapers

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Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.



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Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we *cannot* run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with

stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser proofs of photos which have run in *The Herald* are available, first come, first served.

