

VIEWPOINTS

Deadbeat Congress proving to be a dream-killer

A lot of attention has been paid lately to the squabbling that's been going on over Obamacare and the debt limit, and how some leaders linked the two together to shut down the federal government for a short time.

It causes us common folk to simply shrug. It's hard to believe what happens, and sadly, doesn't happen in Washington, DC.

We shouldn't be all that surprised, however. We don't need to focus on the debt limit debacle to easily conclude that Congress does a really rotten job at paying its, or should I say, our country's, bills.

There's a big bill that Congress has chosen to practically ignore for the last year or so. And, during times when it has decided to make a payment at what it owes, it has proven to be a royal deadbeat.

It hurts. It hits close to home. This inaction by our leaders in Washington appears to be stopping a dream in its tracks.

Some may even argue that Congress is demonstrating its potential to turn this dream into a nightmare.

For more than 20 years, hard work, lots of planning and a commitment by Congress – let me repeat that – a commitment by Congress made it possible for work to begin on the Lewis &

BETWEEN THE LINES



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Clark Regional Water System.

Congress authorized the water project as a multi-state water supply system for 300,000 people in South Dakota, Iowa and

Minnesota. The authorization calls for 80 percent of the construction costs to come from the federal government. State governments pitched in 10 percent of the costs, and the remaining 10 percent of needed revenue comes from the member communities.

This system is a pretty big (I'm so tempted to type a Joe Biden expletive here, but I won't) deal to thousands of people in the Midwest. It certainly isn't pork barrel. It is a necessary infrastructure development in order for regional communities in South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota to thrive.

A celebratory groundbreaking marking the beginning of work on the system was held at the Missouri River near Clay County Park about a decade ago. Two

years ago, local citizens and dignitaries celebrated the completion of the water system's new treatment plant, located just a few miles north of Vermillion.

Work on a feasibility project for the water system began in 1990. The project was authorized by Congress as a Bureau of Reclamation project over a dozen years ago, and workers began burying pipe from the source of the water – a well field near the Missouri River in the vicinity of the Clay County Park – in 2003.

When completed, the Lewis & Clark system will supply water to 15 cities, including eight in South Dakota, and five rural water systems. Water is flowing to seven of those eight communities – Sioux Falls, Beresford, Centerville, Harrisburg, Lennox, Parker, and Tea. Madison is scheduled to receive Lewis & Clark water in the near future. Today, it's hard to say whether Madison will be the recipient of water any time soon.

Missouri River water is also flowing to the Lincoln County, South Lincoln County and Minnehaha County rural water systems in South Dakota, and the Rock County Rural Water District in Minnesota.

Still waiting to be hooked up to the system are the Iowa communities of Hull, Rock Rapids, Sheldon, Sibley and

Sioux Center. In Minnesota, the communities of Luverne and Worthington, along with the Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water System are also destined to one day be recipients of treated water from the new Lewis & Clark plant.

Today, further development of the system has nearly stalled. There's plenty of water flowing in the river, and being pumped to communities lucky enough to currently be on line.

What's dried up, however, is the occasional appropriation from Congress needed to complete the project. It's stopping the hard work and planning of scores of local people who only want to make our corner of the Midwest a better place to live.

By the time you read this, the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System's board will have voted on whether to borrow \$16 million from members to extend the system to Luverne.

Sioux Falls and Madison's board representatives have already said that they will vote against putting up more money for the project.

Luverne's representative, board chairman Red Arndt, said he will vote in favor of fronting the money in the hope that the federal government will pay the system back, but Sioux Falls

representative Chad Huwe said that based on talks with other members he expects the plan to fail.

"We feel that we have fulfilled our commitment to Lewis & Clark financially. Now we're waiting for the federal government to make their end of the commitment," he said.

Troy Larson, the system's executive director, said he doesn't like that members are being called upon to put up more money – but is either that or continue hoping for more federal money.

"The federal government has forced the members in choosing a very bad option," Larson told the Argus Leader.

This is an example of a government shutdown of a different sort. Congress has proven that in some fiscal matters, it easily ignores its commitments, whether or not the government is up and running. For people involved with Lewis & Clark, being constantly slighted by Washington has become routine.

It also appears that hopes of any federal funding to keep the water project moving forward are very slim.

Congress is indeed a dream-killer.

SD EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls,
Oct. 12, 2013

Lunches within the guidelines

These days, it's easy to blame the federal government for aggravating our lives.

Here's one example: The new school lunch program standards unveiled last year. The healthier eating guidelines, effective at the start of last school year, set limits on calories and salt in the lunches. They also phased in more whole grains and required fruits and vegetables to be included in the menus daily.

The problem is many students just didn't like the foods being served.

So, many observers quickly blamed the federal program for the problems in implementation. Some parents started supplementing their children's lunches or replacing the meals altogether with foods their kids would eat.

That's certainly one corrective avenue to take.

But it's refreshing to see some school districts take a different approach. Maybe, the school officials said, if we work at it just a little — add a dose of ranch dressing here and there for example — we can get our students to try new foods and to eat the healthier meals.

In Baltic, for example, school lunch supervisors tinkered with the menus, and presented more familiar foods to kids more

often. And meal planners started serving one-ounce servings of fat-free ranch dressing with the carrot sticks and broccoli.

In Tea, when students refused to try green peppers, refried beans and garbanzo beans, the school lunch officials also went back to a more familiar list of vegetables. And they're marketing the foods differently, changing the names of some offerings to entice kids to try them.

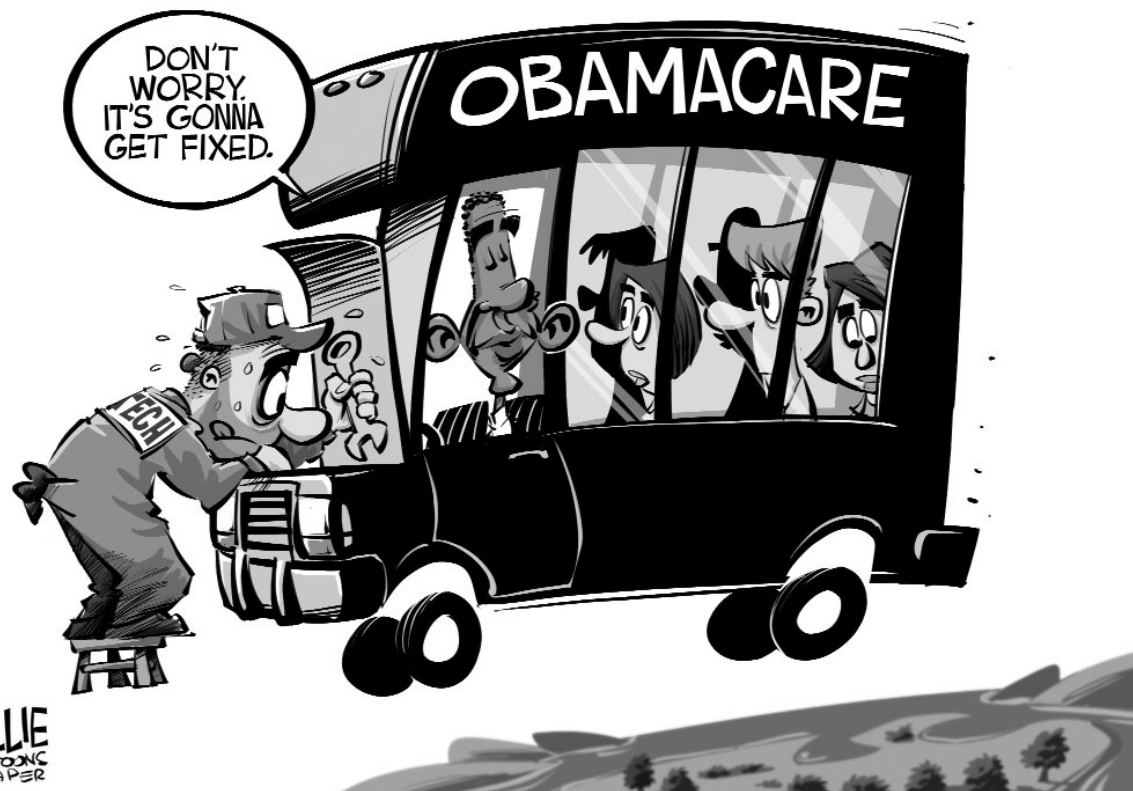
Some of their tactics seem to be working. And that's the point.

The standards set up in the National School Lunch program are designed to be healthier for children. We cannot deny that childhood obesity is a problem in our society. Healthier eating habits, even small bites at a time, will help these young people live longer, happier lives.

It's a goal that's certainly worthy of effort by school districts. We applaud those school lunch officials who haven't thrown up their hands and blamed the federal government or simply blamed the media for the problems with the reception and implementation of the healthier lunch guidelines.

They're being imaginative. They're communicating with parents, and they're working out healthier eating solutions.

Wouldn't it be nice if all federal government disagreements could end in compromises such as these?



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Road to greatness paved by hand signals

"Taps, touches, tugs and tips... they carry complex messages among pitchers, batters, coaches and managers. The wordless codes can be raised to an art level and are protected as if they are state secrets." — Kevin Baxter, reporter, Los Angeles Times

I love watching baseball, and for a long time now, I've intently studied the many strange hand signals used on the mound, from the dugout and on the bases.

Signing in baseball, has been around for a very long time, was originally devised by William Ellsworth Hoy, a hearing impaired center fielder who played major league baseball before and during the turn of the 20th century. Hoy began signing when he could not hear coaches during games, the method caught on and prolifically used to this day.

Whether brilliantly developed or crudely handed down through the leagues, signals in baseball today actually drive games and determine outcomes.

This mysterious and clever telegraphing of simple commands — what to do and how to do it — make players into chewing maestros conducting orchestral bodies through symphonic performances played out

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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on diamonds all across the United States. These baseball "signers" offer fingertip directions that butterfly about their bodies: tugging ear lobes; touching noses; pinching or sliding thumbs along the brims of their ball caps, chest or

sleeve; tapping shoulders and toddling hands from side to side with anywhere from one to four fingers extended as their monologues continue inning after inning after inning.

At times light and fleeting, other times genteel and jerky, such a code is an artful playbook of sorts, silently directing teams in a trickledown of commands from managers in the dugout to third-base coaches, from third-base coaches to batters, from first base coaches to runners.

Exhaustively applying every conceivable bodily gesture, coaches dramatically rotate their arms like massive windmill blades propelling base runners, telling them to go, stop or slide.

While umpires have more speaking parts, like "Play ball!" to start the game and "Strike," "Ball," "Foul ball" and "Time" when calling the game, they, too, use speechless codes to help players and fans navigate games.

With hands raised, an ump gives the count by signaling the number of balls with his left hand and the number of strikes with his right.

He indicates a fair ball by pointing toward the field with his right arm. For foul balls, he raises both hands with palms open and each elbow bent to a 90-degree angle. Signaling a timeout, he raises both arms in the air with hands straight up.

Left to interpretation, baseball's nonverbal language is simultaneously vulnerable and virile.

Mostly masked and indiscernible to viewers, this sign language is part dance, part boyish, part archaic communication, part methodical, part sporadic and part trinitarian as to how the game was, is and will continue to be played.

Whether the ball is in the alley, around the horn, a backdoor slider, base hit, a Baltimore chop or a moonshot, baseball's marvelously masked and mesmerizing silent speak sends batters running, fielders moving and pitchers catching.

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

Sen. Johnson (D-SD) and Sen. Thune (R-SD) voted Wednesday, Oct. 16, for a bill to avoid national default & end the government shutdown. Rep. Noem (R-SD) voted against this bill. What are your thoughts?

Johnson and Thune acted appropriately 51
I agree with Noem's vote 35

Total Votes 86

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net.