

## A Few Thoughts to Start the New Year

Written by Marty Carlson  
Friday, 04 January 2013 13:57 -

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A few passing thoughts to start the new year ...

Those as old as I may remember the “Graffiti” series; more one-line commentary than cartoon, one of my favorites was: “Nothing gets a project started like the last minute.”

And that should be the motto of the US Congress – where only the bare minimum gets done at that last minute. Worse, there appear no statesmen left in our elected federal government. In response to a question of whether the era of grand bargains and compromise is over by a newscaster, Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) responded that upcoming fiscal debates will have “spirited” debate.

Unfortunately, such spirited debate — absent a fundamental understanding of that apparently long past statesmanship responsible for sweeping historic legislation – will not solve the problems of the near future. Those include the debt ceiling, deficit, sequestration, a more than temporary extension of the farm bill ...

The next “last minute” is about two months away. In the meantime, members of Congress like our own Sen. Mary Landrieu are already in heavy fundraising mode for 2014. Perhaps we could ask for a little more attention to the several looming fiscal cliffs before members of Congress suggest they’re worthy of re-election. A demonstration or two of American statesmanship could be helpful as well.

There’s probably little on the patriotism front that brings out our pride like a crisp American flag snapping in the breeze. And in the last several years many businesses have taken that practice to a new level with high flagpoles featuring very large flags.

Unfortunately, all cloth flags eventually fade and fray – and very often the hoisters of those flags don’t seem to notice the sad decline of their stars and stripes.

Such a flag flies down the way from my home, on Highway 71 South over a popular eatery. If

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the flag's owner's haven't changed it out in the next day or so, I'll be personally asking them to do so. And I invite BPT readers to do the same when they see a tattered and faded American flag flapping in the wind.

Finally, and in response to Mr. Marvin Nelson's November 21, 2012 comments regarding one of my columns on the recent 26 Judicial District Court judge's race, over the next couple of weeks, this space will feature information about how our local governments are financed – and the sources of funding for employee pay.

Mr. Nelson accurately noted that taxes, and in some cases fees, pay personnel costs. However, the fees aren't paid by all – and some entities have funding sources of which the public may not be aware.

Thus, this seems a good time for a civics experience in reviewing the funding mechanisms for local governments.

In the meantime, a belated thanks to Mr. Nelson for reading the column, and particularly for taking the time to respond to it.

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