

Letters to the Editor - July 31

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Municipal energy

Not 'ready for prime time'

As a recent arrival into Boulder from outside the open space, I've been entertained by the machinations of the local elected officials -- most recently the efforts to municipalize our electric utility.

I've found that I've come to agree invariably with the thoughts of the columnist Bob Greenlee (it's all about a "power" play), and most recently the operational concerns voiced in the letter by Gail Promboin on July 21 (nothing focuses the mind like being asked to give our city leaders a blank check). Intimations of bi-partisanship ?

To those issues, I'd add a few more: How much of the "renewables" budget depends on government subsidies and for how long ? Do our leaders really think that the 90 percent renewable mix offered by Xcel can be beat by our own municipal utility (for starters, the wind doesn't blow all the time and the sun doesn't shine but maybe 50 percent of the time)?

And how do our leaders perceive that all this will work what with staffing up a new unregulated utility (er, corporation) that we all expect to function seamlessly from the get go? Do they intend to subcontract power production, and to whom specifically will be given the responsibility for the day-to-day operations, maintenance, rate structures, etc.? Who 'ya gonna call? And why don't they think that Xcel deserves to recover all their sunk costs (the "unconsidered" worst case scenario).

What with all the research and public outreach activity supported by our city leadership, city staff time, and hired consultants (some of whom have a dog in the fight), I don't think we are ready for prime time.

City Manager Jane Brautigam claims that while the true costs are yet to be sorted out, there are "off-ramps" that will allow the city to back out if the cost is too high. What with all the abuse that Xcel has had to endure on this subject from the city leaders and their supporters, how much longer do they think that Xcel will continue as the adult in this relationship?

KEN KINSMAN

Boulder

Debt ceiling

A new low in

U.S. politics

"I'll ruin your home/business/reputation if you don't do what I say." We have a word for that: extortion.

Boehner said, Obama "wants a \$2.4 trillion blank check that lets him continue his spending binge through the next election," a claim that packs three lies into a mere 17 words. 1) The debt limit is not a check. It allocates no new funds. Rather it authorizes the United States to borrow enough to cover the deficit already approved in the 2011 budget. 2) This non-check is not blank. The amount of the deficit was specified in the Congressional budget. 3) It's not Obama who is asking for more borrowing. Congress approved the deficit in a hotly fought compromise last April in Public Law 112-10, a bill which was approved by Mr. Boehner himself with a "yea" vote. Therefore Congress, Mr. Boehner included, is primarily responsible for the need to raise the debt ceiling.

Only three months later, the Republican Party has conspired to manufacture a crisis, holding our economy hostage to political and economic demands that are biased to benefit corporations, the financial elite and the very wealthy.

Such provisions include repeal of the new Affordable Health Care Act, cutting of Social Security and Medicare to finance corporate and high-end tax reductions and retaining tax breaks for financiers. This agenda is one the party lacked enough political support for to push through during the legitimate budgeting process, but one which they might now achieve by threatening to damage the creditworthiness of the United States.

For a major political party to threaten the economic health of our country in order to impose their minority agenda surely marks a new low point for U.S. politics.

No one will deny that we need to address our ongoing budget deficits. But to do so under threat, in secret, at the last hour, in order to impose a radical minority political agenda is bound to result in a terrible outcome for everyone. I can only hope that, on both sides of the fence, we Americans still despise being blackmailed and will let our elected officials know it.

DOUGLAS McLEAN

Boulder

Deficit

Deflate bloated

Pentagon budget

I am frustrated and perplexed at the limited number of options being looked at by the Congress for reducing the U.S. deficit.

Why do we hear so little about Pentagon spending? Experts agree that reducing the cost of our military can save billions without jeopardizing security. Gen. Colin Powell, Rep. Ron Paul and the Cato Institute join Rep. Barney Frank, the Center for Defense Information and Taxpayers for Common Sense in calling for rethinking U.S. military policy. Cutting Pentagon spending does not have to reduce its effectiveness and may force a healthy re-look at U.S. military policy.

It is actually not difficult to find savings of \$1 trillion in the next 10 years. We don't need to spend \$194 billion to beef up the nuclear weapons arsenal, including a new class of Trident submarines and continuing plans for the militarization of space.

We could reduce the presence of U.S. troops abroad: We now have more than 135,000 soldiers stationed at bases in non-combat countries, 227 bases in Germany alone. These bases will cost \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years and can easily be cut by one-third. Reducing the Navy fleet from 286 to 230 can save \$127 billion over 10 years. Procurement of unneeded and overpriced hardware could easily be reduced. It is unknown what additional savings and waste would be found if the Pentagon were subjected to simple audits. The list goes on.

Meanwhile, the House Foreign Affairs Committee just cut funding for State Department diplomacy, development assistance to fragile countries, climate change adaptation, U.S. peacekeeping and other programs that promote peaceful prevention of deadly conflict. These contribute far more to our security than a bloated Pentagon budget. Where are our priorities?

Sen. Mark Udall has been active in the discussions about deficit reduction and is in a unique position as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee to promote Pentagon savings. I urge him, Sen. Bennett and Rep. Polis to advocate strongly for the Pentagon to do its part in deficit reduction. Specific ideas for making the United States economically and well as militarily secure can be found at comw.org/pda/fulltext/1006SDTFreport.pdf in the June 2010 report of the Sustainable Defense Task Force.

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