



The Stealth Sequester

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

So far, the much-dreaded "sequester" — some \$85 billion in federal spending cuts between March and September 30 — hasn't been evident to most Americans.

The dire warnings that had been issued from the White House beforehand — threatening that Social Security checks would be delayed, airport security checks would be clogged and other federal facilities closed — seem to have been overblown.

Sure, March's employment report was a big disappointment. But it's hard to see any direct connection between those poor job numbers and the sequester. The government has been shedding jobs for years. Most of the losses in March were from the Postal Service.

Take a closer look, though, and Americans are starting to feel the pain. They just don't know it yet.

That's because so much of what the government does affects the nation in local, decentralized ways. Federal funds find their way to community housing authorities, state unemployment offices, local school districts, private universities and companies. So it's hard for most Americans to know that the sequester is responsible for the lost funding, lost jobs or just plain inconvenience.

A tiny sampling: Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., is bracing for a cut of about \$51 million in its \$685 million of annual federal research grants and contracts. The public schools of Syracuse, N.Y., will lose more than \$1 million. The housing authority of Joliet, Ill., will take a hit of nearly \$900,000. Northrop Grumman Information Systems just issued layoff notices to 26 employees at its plant in Lawton, Okla. Unemployment benefits are being cut in Pennsylvania and Utah.

These cuts — and thousands like them — are so particular and localized, they don't feel as if they're the result of a change in national policy.

It's just like what happened with the big federal stimulus of 2009 and 2010, but in reverse. Then, money flowed out to so many different places and institutions that most Americans weren't aware of the stimulus program as a whole.

A second reason the sequester hasn't been visible is that a large share of the cuts are in programs directed at the poor — and America's poor are often invisible.

For example, the Salt Lake Community Action Pro-

gram recently closed a food pantry in Murray, Utah, serving more than 1,000 needy people every month. The Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium is closing a center that gives alcohol and drug treatment to native Alaskans.

Some 1,700 poor families in and around Sacramento, Calif., are likely to lose housing vouchers that pay part of their rents. More than 180 students are likely to be dropped from a Head Start program run by the Cincinnati-Hamilton County (Ohio) Community Action Agency.

Most Americans don't know about these and other cuts because the poor live in different places than the middle class and wealthy. Poverty has become ever more concentrated geographically.

A third reason the sequester is invisible is that many people whose jobs are affected by it are being "furloughed" rather than fired. "Furlough" is a euphemism for working shorter workweeks and taking pay cuts.

Two thousand civilian employees at the Army Research Lab in Maryland will be subject to one-day-per-week furloughs starting on April 22, for example, resulting in a 20 percent drop in pay. The Hancock Field Air National Guard Base is furloughing 280 workers. Many federal courts are now closed on Fridays.

Furloughs spread the pain. The hardship isn't as evident as it would be if it came in the form of mass layoffs. But don't fool yourself: A 20 percent pay cut is a huge burden for those who have to endure it.

Bear in mind, finally, that the sequester is just starting. The sheer scale of it is guaranteed to make it far more apparent in coming months.

Some 140,000 low-income families will lose their housing vouchers, for example. Entire communities that depend mainly on defense-related industries or facilities will take major hits.

If you thought March's job numbers were disappointing, just wait.

With the sequester, America has adopted austerity economics. Yet austerity economics is the wrong medicine at exactly the wrong time. Look what it's done to Europe.

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Robert REICH

Obama Remark Leaves Sour Aftertaste

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

Dear Barry:
Ordinarily, I'd address you as Mr. Obama or Mr. President, in deference to your office. But we need to have us a guy-to-guy chat here, so I hope you'll excuse the familiarity, because I just have to ask:

Barry, brotherman, bubbleh, what the heck were you thinking? Did you really call California Attorney General Kamala Harris, "by far the best-looking attorney general in the country" last week at a Democratic fundraiser in the Bay Area? You weren't, like, nursing a cold and snickered on Robitussin or something? You didn't lose a bet with Joe Biden? You actually said that, of your own free will?

Dude. Wow.
Yes, MSNBC helpfully reminds us that you've also complimented men on their looks, dubbing Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and the entire Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team "good-looking guys."

Want to know how much that helps you here? What's the smallest measurable fraction this side of zero?

A man, particularly a powerful man, cannot always speak of or to a woman, as he would one of the fellas. This is what you forgot and what the folks who keep saying it was "just a compliment" don't quite get.

Is that a double standard? Yes. You darn betcha. A certain columnist who happens to be my mother's oldest son has, in years past, identified this as something he calls the Goliath Principle, after Wilt Chamberlain's famous observation that "nobody roots for Goliath."

The Principle holds that, wherever there is an imbalance of power — white vs. black, boss vs. employee, big guy vs. small, man vs. woman — a double standard is an automatic and inevitable byproduct. As nobody roots for Goliath, so are those with more power always constrained in the things our unwritten societal rules allow them to say or do to those who have less. The maid who snaps at her boss is cheeky; the boss who snaps at her maid is overbearing. The small man who hits the big one is brave (or

suicidal). The big man who hits the small one is a bully. And the woman who compliments her male boss's looks might be a kiss up or a flirt, but the male boss who does the reverse is a leech or a creep or, at the very least, the embodiment of sexism that imprisons a woman's entirety behind miscellaneous physical attributes given by God and enhanced by Max Factor. But a woman is more than her looks.

This is a truth we heterosexual men tend to stumble on. Years ago, a woman colleague asked me about famous women I found attractive. Stupidly, I began to reel off a list. It included Marina Sirtis, whom I called "an extraordinary woman."

My colleague flexed an eyebrow and asked what made her "extraordinary." And I was majorly busted, man, because I knew next to nothing about the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" star — certainly nothing that would make her "extraordinary" — except that she's gorgeous and becomes more so when she wears her "Counselor Troi" contact lenses, the ones that turn her eyes into dark, liquid pools of compassion and you gaze into them and feel yourself falling in and know there is nothing you wouldn't tell her, no secret you wouldn't ... um ... wouldn't ...

What were we talking about again?
Oh yeah. Women and their looks and the fact that the smart man avoids discussion of same. Especially if he presides over a Cabinet whose gender diversity is comparable to that of the club that meets in Bart Simpson's treehouse.

Nor is political embarrassment your only worry. The same day you praised Harris' looks, the first lady had a faux pas of her own. She called herself a "single mother." I'm thinking it was no accident.

So, Barry, guy to guy, I leave you with this: Citiflowers is a florist near the White House. They're open till 6 and take all major credit cards.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.



Leonard PITTS

YOUR LETTERS

School Defense

Brad Butziuff, Yankton

Why is the liberal media less than truthful to the American people? Sandy Hook School did not have security prior to the shooting, however, they had it after the incident and I am sure, continue to have school security today.

Newtown, Conn., is a very upscale community. The median income there is \$110,000 and the median single family home cost is \$452,000. Further, the population is only 2,000. Does Newtown look like a place for something like this to happen? I think not.

Does Yankton look like a place for something like this to happen?

Let the public decide and live with your decision. Just

remember, it only takes one student or in Sandy Hook School's case, former student, to "lose it." Do you remember Columbine School in Colorado? A rural Alaskan student, who had been bullied in school, dressed himself in black, then killed his principal, a teacher and some students with a shotgun. The rural Alaskan shooting was before Columbine and with little media attention, I guess because it was in Alaska.

For those in Yankton thinking that arming a certified school sentinel is crazy, I suggest you take some real time and think about it. Nobody will be given a gun that is not willing to do the job and certified by the state. Do you think the victims, staff and families in Newtown wish they had a certified School Sentinel the day of the shooting?

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

An Evolving Take On Gay Marriage

The real intrigue in Sen. Tim Johnson's decision to support gay marriage is going to be dissecting the decision and deciding what it really means.

Johnson announced his decision Monday in a press release, but it stands as more than merely making a decision on the issue of marriage equality. Instead, it marks a dramatic reversal in a long-held viewpoint. He had voted for the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996, which decreed that same-sex marriages are not recognized under federal law. This vote was entirely consistent with his career stand against the concept of gay marriage.

But on Monday, the South Dakota lawmaker became the latest Democratic senator to change course on the issue. He declared dryly that his "views have evolved sufficiently to support marriage equality legislation."

In the very next sentence, he declared: "This position doesn't require any religious denomination to alter any of its tenets; it simply forbids government from discrimination regarding who can marry whom."

So, it could be argued that, in a sense, Johnson isn't really changing his views on gay marriage so much as he is changing his views on laws governing marriage, gay or otherwise, and taking a more libertarian stand. Or so the senator's explanation would infer.

No matter. Supporters of marriage equality welcome Johnson's conversion, which now leaves just three Democratic senators who have not embraced the legalization of same-sex marriage. (Meanwhile, there are two Republican senators who have come out in support of it.)

Johnson is retiring from the Senate after the 2014 election, so it could be argued that there is no political price to be paid for this switch. After all, South Dakota has twice passed laws banning gay marriage and also passed an amendment to the state constitution in 2006 defining marriage as being a union of a man and a woman.

Critics from both sides could lash out at this decision. Those opposing gay marriage might say that Johnson, who is not running for re-election, is now free to show his "liberal" roots, while those who support gay marriage might find it cynical that Johnson is switching his views now only after many other lawmakers have done the same thing and public opinion polls now show a majority of Americans now back marriage equality — thus making it easier and safer to embrace.

The former view seems like predictable knee-jerk criticism, while the latter view is actually short-sighted.

Simply put, Johnson has changed his view on the topic (albeit with a legalistic qualifier), but he is far from alone. In fact, it's clear from public polling in recent years that many Americans are undergoing a similar transformation in their views. Back in 1996, when Johnson voted for DOMA, a majority of Americans opposed gay marriage. Now, the numbers are reversing themselves. A lot of people are "evolving sufficiently" to change their minds. Lawmakers like Johnson may well be lagging indicators of the trend.

It's possible that Johnson's change of view may anger some of his constituents, but we'd be surprised if it creates an earthquake of outcries. Things are changing all around us, even here in red-state South Dakota. The notion of gay marriage isn't as unpalatable as it once was. Johnson's evolution is simply a reflection of the times and of us.

kmh

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The PRESS & DAKOTAN encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the PRESS & DAKOTAN will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, April 10, the 100th day of 2013. There are 265 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On April 10, 1963, the fast-attack nuclear submarine USS *Thresher* (SSN-593) sank during deep-diving tests east of Cape Cod, Mass., in a disaster that claimed 129 lives.

On this date: In 1790, President George Washington signed into law the first United States Patent Act.

In 1866, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was incorporated.

In 1912, the RMS *Titanic* set sail from Southampton, England, on its ill-fated maiden voyage.

In 1925, the novel "The Great Gatsby," by F. Scott Fitzgerald, was first published.

In 1932, German president Paul Von Hindenburg was re-elected in a runoff, with Adolf Hitler coming in second.

In 1947, Brooklyn Dodgers president Branch Rickey purchased the contract of Jackie Robinson from the Montreal Royals.

In 1953, the 3-dimensional horror movie "House of Wax," produced by Warner Bros. and starring Vincent Price, premiered in New York.

In 1957, Egypt reopened the Suez Canal to all shipping traffic. (The canal had been closed due to wreckage resulting from the Suez Crisis.)

In 1962, United States Steel Chairman Roger Blough informed President John F. Kennedy of his company's decision to raise steel prices an average of \$6 a ton. (Under administration pressure, Blough changed his mind.)

In 1974, Golda Meir told party leaders she was resigning as prime minister of Israel.

In 1998, the Northern Ireland peace talks concluded as negotiators reached a landmark settlement to end 30 years of bitter rivalries and bloody attacks.

In 2010, Polish President Lech Kaczynski, 60, was killed in a plane crash in western Russia that also claimed the lives of his wife and top Polish political, military and church officials.

Ten years ago: Iraqi television aired videotaped greetings from President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Congress overwhelmingly passed a package of child safety protec-



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FROM THE BIBLE

For it is You who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness.
Psalm 18:28. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis