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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

Obama Loses 1st Round On Trade Deal

THE MIAMI HERALD (May 14): President Barack Obama learned the hard way this week that it's usually not a great idea to bad-mouth members of his own party in public. The payback came Tuesday, when Senate Democrats, with one lone exception, slapped down his "fast-track" trade-expansion deal with 11 nations around the Pacific.

But Wednesday, Senate Democrats reached a deal to allow full-blown debate on the issue. This time, Obama should try persuasion and cajoling, even negotiating, instead of feuding with other Democrats.

It was a particularly bad idea to take on Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, widely seen as champion of the middle class and someone who nearly always supports the president's agenda.

Instead of conceding that Sen. Warren and others may have legitimate concerns about the way the legislation is being rushed through Congress, he called their arguments illogical and "made up." His dismissive tone indicated he's not interested in trying to persuade potential allies to support his program, wanting them to just fall in line because he's the president and he knows what's good for them.

After six years in the White House, he should know better. Politics is hard work, but it goes with the job. And it usually works better than condescending speeches. By not heeding the concerns of fellow Democrats, he put at risk a program that carries major benefits for the country.

The immediate issue before the Senate was whether a "fast-track" approach to the trade-expansion bill would include protections for labor and penalties for countries that manipulate currency to gain a trade advantage. It also would extend tariff discounts for African and other developing countries. These are Democratic priorities that have already cleared Senate and House committees.

Instead, Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader, scheduled a vote that ignored all three issues, with the full support of the White House!

The result was a defeat for trade proponents. But it should not be the final word on the issue.

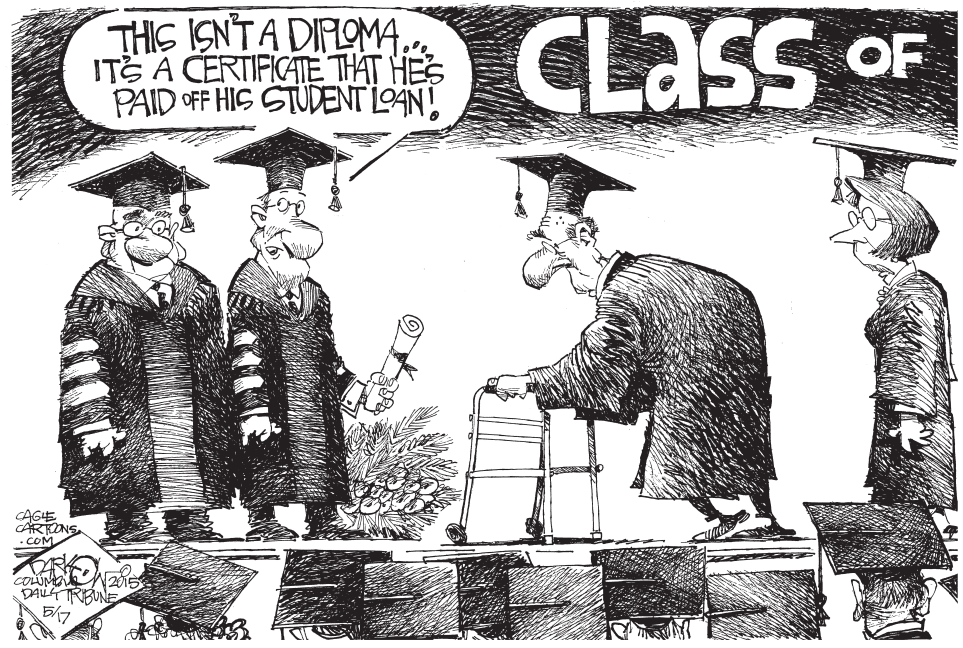
Trade-expansion programs represent a bet that globalization is here to stay and can be turned to the advantage of the American people, who have created the strongest economy in the world and should never fear competition.

It is particularly important for communities that stand to benefit directly from greater import and export activity. We are mindful of the disruptive effects of trade in some sectors of the economy, as well. That's why job-training assistance for workers should be an indispensable part of any trade package.

A report issued by the Congressional Research Service in April suggests that fears of job losses over the first of the expanded trade agreements — NAFTA, which covered North America — were wrong. The results show a net balance favorable to the United States in terms of job creation and high-wage jobs, as well as trade figures. And its success went beyond the purely economic, helping to diminish more than a century of hard feelings between the United States and Mexico.

In the same way, the Trans-Pacific Partnership can improve our relations with Asian nations, a national imperative at a time when China is seeking to assert its influence over this vast region.

It's time for Obama to rally Democrats to his side before hard feelings make a deal impossible. Less lecturing and more politicking can get the job done.



What Neighbors Do

BY KELLY HERTZ
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Delmont is lucky. Admittedly, that fact doesn't seem so apparent this week after the small Douglas County town was pulverized by an EF-2 tornado last Sunday.

But the battered, stunned residents of the community are lucky for a few reasons.

First and above all else, no one was killed in what they will always remember with a raw ache as the Mother's Day tornado. When you see some of the images of destruction from the town, you realize just what a stroke of great fortune it was that no one died. When you consider the kids in the basement of Zion Lutheran Church surviving as the building above them was demolished, you might conclude there was a little more than mere luck involved.

But Delmont is also lucky because it knows it has friends, especially in this hour of need.

This is South Dakota, after all, and while we generally tend to harbor a group inferiority complex about ourselves (recently reinforced when we became the last state in the entire country President Obama visited since taking office more than six years ago), we seem to excel in caring for our neighbors when they need some hand.

A telling statement of this came across the Press & Dakotan's news email Sunday night, just hours after the tornado pounded Delmont. A release from the state Department of Public Safety informed the public that donations for the town's victims were appreciated — but not just then.

"Once again, the hospitality of South Dakotans is evident as people want to make donations of items to the citizens of Delmont," the release stated. "... But for now, people are being asked not to donate any items until there is a better idea of what is needed."

That's one thing that South Dakotans do as well as anybody anywhere.

It brought to mind the aftermath of the disastrous 1998 Spencer tornado that killed six people and flattened much of that tiny community. When a call for volunteers went out to help clean up the



Kelly HERTZ

damage in a town of a little more than 300 people, 8,000 souls showed up. Goods poured in from across the region, turning a makeshift resource center into something like a local Walmart.

When towns are shattered by tornadoes or when people are buried by massive snowstorms, we respond.

When floodwaters rise and threaten to consume us, we pitch in. We saw that back in 2011 when the rising waters along the Missouri River made the filling and delivering of sandbags one of Yankton's most popular summertime activities. Volunteers came from everywhere when the call went out on Memorial Day weekend to help with the sandbagging efforts. (The sight of random broken sandbags splattered on local streets after having tumbled off trucks and flatbeds while being delivered to places in need was with us practically until fall.)

So, Delmont is lucky because they have neighbors — some they know, some they never knew they had — who have their backs.

Of course, the residents of Delmont may not feel real lucky right now. I could say that's understandable, but in a lot of ways, many of us probably can't truly understand it, at least not in the intimate, harrowing terms that Delmont's residents do now. Part of their hometown — that is, part of who they are — is gone. Yes, it can be rebuilt and probably made to be better than before, but it won't quite be the same old Delmont that those people have always known. No matter how it's put back together, what it once was — that familiar, safe feeling of home — will be different, starkly rearranged by an angry outburst of nature and the intentions to build again.

Most of us can't comprehend that on such chaotic, first-hand terms.

But the people of Spencer understand it. So do the people of Westington Springs and Pilger, Nebraska, and so many other places that have also endured the same onslaught.

They have survived, as will Delmont. And it won't be because of luck. It will be due to something a whole lot tougher and more determined than that.

Follow @kelly_hertz on Twitter.

Politics: Defining Deity Down

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — It is nearly axiomatic that presidential contests tend to shine a harsh light on conservative Christians — inasmuch as they are viewed as the Republican Party's base and are, therefore, deemed fair game.

Of course, religious folks come in a variety of stripes, checks and polka dots. Many are Democrats. But it is the members of the Christian right — evangelicals and Catholics, especially — who every four years are treated to the sneers of lefties, academics, proud atheists (allow me to quote myself: "There's no dogma like no dogma") and certain but not all media.

Roger Ailes' Fox News has succeeded in no small part because he doesn't treat Christians as though they're Darwin's missing link.

Fortunately for Western civilization, Christianity has survived worse insults. Lately, conservative Christians in the country that codified freedom of religion have been placed on the defensive. Often viewed as obstructionists to progress, a secular world wonders: What's wrong with those people? Why can't they just get with the program?

Why can't the Little Sisters of the Poor suck it up and sign off on the Affordable Care Act's demand that their insurance policy include contraception funding? Ditto Hobby Lobby, the family-owned craft business that prevailed in its Supreme Court fight to not fund insurance covering contraception that destroys embryos.

Hobby Lobby detractors argued that the company was trying to impose its religious beliefs on others. In fact, the family was resisting the government's insistence that they render those beliefs unto Caesar. (The Supreme Court granted the Little Sisters an injunction pending their appeal in the 10th Circuit that protects them from enforcement.)

These issues, I'll admit, can seem arcane and are tiresome at times. But I'm convinced, as Alan Dershowitz and Ken Starr agreed during a debate last year on these two cases, that the state should always go to extra lengths to protect religious liberty whenever possible.

If only more Democrats and Republicans were as agreeable.

Recent history and more-recent comments by the likeliest presidential candidates make it clear, however, that Democrats and Republicans will take very different approaches in future state/religion entanglements.

If Hillary Clinton becomes president, she has more or less promised that the state's inter-



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ests will crush the individual's as necessary to advance women's rights. Giving a fiery speech last month at Tina Brown's "Women in the World Summit," Clinton plainly said: "Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed" so that women can have unfettered access to "reproductive health care and safe childbirth."

One would like to imagine that Clinton was speaking only about primitive cultures where children are forced into marriage and childbearing, or where genital cutting is common. But we know that she also meant religious conservatives closer to home whose beliefs get in the way. She explicitly criticized Hobby Lobby for not paying for its employees' contraception.

By contrast, Jeb Bush, who will become the GOP nominee if Republicans are smart, assumed a much different tone and direction in his recent commencement address at Liberty University.

"How strange, in our own time, to hear Christianity spoken of as some sort of backward and oppressive force," he said. "It's a depressing fact that when some people think of Christianity and of Judeo-Christian values, they think of something static, narrow and outdated. ... I cannot think of any more subversive moral idea ever loosed on the world than 'the last shall be first, and the first last.'"

He also spoke of what our world would have been like without the "unalloyed compassion, such genuine love, such thorough altruism," as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described Christianity.

It would be defined, Bush said, by "power without restraint, conflict without reconciliation, oppression without deliverance, corruption without reformation, tragedy without renewal."

In a culture more attuned to the grits 'n' gravy style of a Mike Huckabee, it is rare to hear Christianity discussed in such elevated terms. Indeed, Huckabee can be expected to go after Bush as a blue-blooded elite who can't relate to everyday Americans. Well, yee-haw, one can hardly wait. But I suspect that even conservative Southern Christians, who can absorb more than one-syllable words, might appreciate hearing their beliefs so eloquently described as by Bush.

To be fair, Clinton likely would have reframed her comments — and maybe even her beliefs and accent — had she been speaking to a Christian audience. But her spoken words can't be deleted and her thinking is clear: Religious beliefs have to be changed.

Or else, what, pray tell?

Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleen.parker@washpost.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Your Name Here

Jane Rupiper, Yankton

Having been the recipient of various neighbors' garbage cans, I am suggesting that everyone put their addresses on their receptacles.

In the past, I have always found the owners but now I have a green bin with no idea who it belongs to. As I'm writing this, I actually went out and picked up another stray!

Help me help you with this simple fix to a windy problem. Oh ... and have a good

FROM THE BIBLE

Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. Zechariah 8:2. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.