

Editorial

Quick fixes or lasting solutions?

To many observers our most recent financial crisis appeared to be “part two” of the debt ceiling crisis. There were a few key critical distinctions between the debates, but mostly Congress handled it in the same disappointing fashion.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency helps coordinate response to disasters, provide disaster assistance to states, and help the individuals and businesses through recovery. It’s as non-partisan as you can get. Each side knows we need disaster aid this year.

We’ve had 19 tropical storms, three hurricanes and 1,276 tornadoes. In August alone the United States had over 8,000 reported wildfires and both Texas and Arizona have been ravaged by fires which destroyed thousands of homes. Through it all FEMA has been burning through its cash to help the people affected.

FEMA had a \$56,335,737 budget for the year and ended up short. As expected, Congress couldn’t civilly agree on a course of action. Republicans wanted to give FEMA a billion dollar boost to carry it through the end of the year, but of course they couldn’t allow any increase of funding without equal cuts. Just as predictably, Democrats disagreed and the two parties butted heads over the issue, just as they did months ago.

Our political narrative equates compromise as corruption and promotes stubbornness, which has led our country to near catastrophe time and again. It wasn’t until midnight on Monday of this week that the two parties could even agree to put a band-aid on the bleeding FEMA.

Congress seems to like Band-Aids. They did it with the budget, agreeing to push the issue onto a “Super Committee” of the future, and rather than deal with the funding issues underlying FEMA they agree to extend the budget for a few weeks. Let the future Congress deal with the issues.

However, it does not matter what party you affiliate with, as Band-Aids are not the purpose of Congress. Their inability to compromise is toxic and their delay creates festering infections. Instead of creating legislation for the issues, they oppose it. Instead of solutions, Congress is creating problems. Our country needs solutions to revive us, and Band-Aids won’t hold us over any longer. They did it with health care insurance, the budget and now FEMA. Disasters happen everyday, and they cannot be predicted. What matters most is what you do when they occur.

So, what will Congress do with the disasters of the future, especially since these old ones are set to revive? Can they undergo the procedures they need to fix them, or will they attempt more patch work to prolong the crisis?

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Online feedback may be used if first name and last name, major and year in school are included in the post. Feedback posted online is eligible for print in the Iowa State Daily.

Parking



File Photo: David Derong/Iowa State Daily
Aaron Steffen, parking enforcement supervisor for the DPS parking division, tickets a car illegally parked outside of Seasons Marketplace. Steffen estimates a parking officer can write 8-10 tickets per hour on weekdays.

Why I Don't park on Campus

Parking on the Iowa State campus — what a nightmare. I’m quite sure that if I got a group of seniors in an auditorium and asked those who have received parking tickets on campus to raise their hands, those with their hands down would be in the minority. Just about everyone that drives a vehicle on campus has purposefully or accidentally violated a parking lot rule at some time or another.

I usually try not to drive or park on campus before the school day is done, but yesterday I figured I would try to stop by the Iowa State Daily office in time to make our daily budget meeting after spending a few hours at the career fair. I figured I could park at a metered spot outside Hamilton Hall, run in for the end of budget or talk with my co-editor, and then I would retreat back to the safety of Frederiksen Court (parking lot 112), change clothes, and do the next thing on my list for the day.

As it happened, I missed the budget meeting, but stuck around for a bit to help the new Opinion page designer get on her feet. After spending some time helping her and a few minutes chatting with the other staff in the room I looked at my watch and realized that it was a few minutes after 5 p.m. I knew my 30-minute meter would run out around 5, so I quickly hurried out the door to move my car away from the meter. But alas, I was too late. A nasty yellow envelope had already appeared, citing a meter violation at 4:56 p.m., likely mere seconds after the 30-minute meter expired.

So now here I am, paying a total of \$10.25 for 35 minutes of parking when I would have happily plugged the meter at the beginning of this mess for 60 minutes (50¢) to give myself leeway — if I could.

So why, why, parking division, are there so many 30-minute meters on campus? Would



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60-minute meters kill you? They might even allow a student to rush in via car and attend a full class without having to duck out to feed the meter.

I realize that the meter times are normally very short for a reason, but surely there are better options than giving students absolutely no help or leeway with the meters.

If you look at the normal police department speeding ticket, checkboxes for “miles over” usually don’t include the 0-5 miles over the limit even though police can technically ticket you for that small violation. Apparently no small “fudge factor” exists as part of how our parking division operates. You better have your car moved by minute 30, the 1800th second after you put the coin in the meter, or else.

Another option I like as a computer engineering student is the idea of building smarter meters. Our campus is covered in Wi-Fi, so it would be ridiculously simple to simply build a solar-powered parking meter that could hold the cell phone number of its current “customer” and send you a text a couple minutes before it expires. If the meter’s security and payment systems were good enough, perhaps it could allow you to text it a code to pay for a time extension if you need a few more minutes.

I simply don’t understand why it is beyond the abilities of the parking division to notify the owners of vehicles with ISU tags that they are

getting ticketed for parking space violations.

A friend of mine, now graduated, had an experience during his sophomore year where at the end of a weekend during the winter he parked his car with the proper permits in the MWL parking lot, down the hill from our residence in the Old RCA area. After a week’s worth of classes, he returned to the lot to go out the following weekend only to find his car missing. After some digging, he found out that he had accidentally parked in a reserved row of the lot, one row away from where he could legally park (lines are harder to read in the winter). So after ticketing his car for 5 consecutive days, the parking division eventually had his car towed — costing him hundreds of dollars in tickets and fees to get it back — all for an honest mistake.

I think that if every American did their job with the vigor of the ISU parking division, we might have been out of our recession months ago. But seriously, lighten up. Do us all a favor and help us get our car in the right place if you can rather than penalizing us for leaving it in the wrong place at the wrong time. And if you, the reader, have your own story about the horrors of parking around campus, I encourage you to share them with us online or as a message to letters@iowastatedaily.com. I hope that one day Iowa State can reach a happy medium between strict regulation that provides open spaces on campus and lax enforcement that prevents newcomers from finding any place to park. Maybe it’s as simple as adding a few minutes to the meters.

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Politics

At least see opponents as human

Americans need to stop working against each other



By Craig Long
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While I was watching the recent Republican debates (it seems like there is one on every other day or so), I saw some very disturbing things. No, I’m not talking about Rick Perry, Michelle Bachmann or Mitt Romney. The most disturbing thing to come out of the debates has been the reaction of the crowd.

Two distinct events stand out in my mind. The first one was regarding a question dealt to Ron Paul, asking a question that relates to healthcare.

The hypothetical situation dealt with a critically ill, uninsured person. When asked if the person should be left to die, several members of the crowd quite disturbingly yelled “Yeah!”

The second event was the crowd’s reaction to a soldier asking a question about the recently changed American policy on gay servicemen and women serving openly.

This is a soldier who has served in Iraq, placing his life on the line. After his question was asked, members of the audience booed.

Thankfully, it was only a few

audience members who reacted in each situation. However, even a few people reacting in the way that they did gives a sad, sad image for where this country is and where it is heading. In the first instance, members were advocating the death of a person, assumedly under the pretense of wanting a smaller government.

However, most arguments for smaller government rapidly progress to wanting lower taxes. 47 percent of people didn’t pay taxes in 2009 (according to NPR), so there is basically a 1-in-2 chance that those who yelled don’t even pay taxes. Even if they did pay, the impact of the government assisting one person with unexpected health costs on their specific taxes (or the national deficit, for that matter) is negligible.

In the aggregate, I understand that healthcare is expensive, and some people may not believe that it is the government’s job to pay for individual healthcare. That’s fine. However, they didn’t yell “Bill him!” They yelled in support of the option to let him die.

The second example, the boos for the American soldier came from a Republican crowd, the patriotic folk who unwaveringly support our armed forces ... unless they’re gay, apparently.

I understand that not everyone supports gay marriage rights, particularly those in the conservative right. However, I must wonder: should a person, who would normally have been applauded and treated with the utmost respect and veneration, be booed because of an aspect of their private, personal life?

Where did we lose our humanity? Though the first situation was hypothetical, it is a situation that occurs to real people. And apparently, there are some among us who would have them die for being uninsured. The second was a real soldier, who has fought and bled for this country. He has risked his life while we have been free to pursue private gains for ourselves. All the while, he had to hide who he was from the government he was serving.

It seems as though we are mistaking our political colleagues as enemies. It isn’t just Republicans who do this, as you can find many Democrats with equally extreme views. It isn’t enough to have an open and honest discussion about policies; it seems that there is a genuine thirst for blood out there. We need to look at ourselves

and our increasingly apocalyptic views. For example, people threaten to move to Canada depending on elections. Though they may not follow through with it, it shows that our country is rapidly progressing toward political extremes. We don’t view the other side as a respectable adversary, useful negotiating partner, and fellow American, but as an enemy who must be feared and defeated.

This all-or-nothing, factional attitude is fatal to the American style of government. It occurs especially when we stop seeing the humanity in those we don’t agree with. We don’t see that the person in the hospital could be our best friend, or that our cousin, unbeknownst to us, could be that gay soldier.

When we begin to attack each other as enemies, we weaken ourselves. It is time to take a step back and realize that in order to rejuvenate the republic, we must understand there is more to our human condition than monetary gains and religious views. We must understand that we all share the same public space at the same time, and that self-interested action by one person harms everyone. The only way to truly benefit is to work together and respect each other.

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