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• **Don't underestimate the value of doing nothing**

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**By William Spence of the Tribune
Up Front/Commentary**

It's 7 a.m., time for another who-am-I-kidding hour at the local gym.

I don't know why I bother. This isn't fun. I've been working out for 30 years and have yet to see a single abdominal muscle. It seems pointless anymore. The padding around my middle may outlive me by decades. It isn't fat, but some new form of matter, as indestructible as fruitcake. If I could patent it, it would make my fortune. They could use it to pave our crumbling highways or cap nuclear waste dumps.

But I'm here now, trying to work up some enthusiasm for a healthy lifestyle. It isn't going well. I'm wearing the new running shoes I bought the other day. (The sales girl was very kind; she didn't laugh or roll her eyes.) They're comfortable shoes, only now that I think of it, I hate running. My body feels like old roadkill. I'm losing faith that every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better.

All this convinces me I would be an effective politician. I'm slowing down and growing more cynical with age - exactly the qualities we need in Washington. Not to be rude, but the people we've been sending there are freaks. They're just too darn optimistic. They have limitless energy, think they can fix things and they have the power to try - a combination that should scare the dickens out of every taxpayer.

These disturbing qualities aren't confined to any one party, either. They're bipartisan in nature. Whether Republicans or Democrats, conservatives or liberals, if you can vote, politicians are genetically disposed to listen to your concerns and try to do something about them. Even legislators who want lower taxes and less government often lack the fortitude to ignore their constituents.

That right there is the trouble with the whole system. You drop by, casually mention your aversion to running, and BAM, suddenly there are 300 pages of anti-fruitcake regulations and an entire federal bureaucracy to manage them, plus a pro-fruitcake lobby that's trying to slip surplus gut-bombs into the school lunch program.

What we really need - and I can't believe I'm saying this - is more Pooh in the nation's capital.

"Don't underestimate the value of doing nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering," Winnie the Pooh said.

What a perfect campaign slogan: "Oh, bother." We need more slackers like that in Congress, people who just don't care and who are comfortable telling their constituents to stop whining.

"Dude, seriously, health care is NOT that big a deal. All you need is to lose a few pounds."

"Lady, would you please stop harping about educational opportunities. What's wrong with just giving the kid a good book? La, la, la, I'm not listening. La, la, la, la."

I can do that hands-over-the-ears thing. I once went three years without answering the phone and I ignored my own mother for a decade, so I'm sure I could treat voters the same. Think of the money we'd save if more lawmakers had that kind of gumption.

And not to be too arrogant about it, but if I did decide to run, the competition next year isn't exactly stellar.

Walt Minnick? Pshaw. The guy was a Fortune 500 business exec, then went and started a successful garden center business. Not exactly a committed couch potato like me.

Ken Roberts just threw his hat in the ring. He's another one who doesn't seem to understand the value of hibernation. Down in Boise he had a schedule that would kill an ox. One day he mentioned his truck had quit, so he had to walk back to his apartment about three miles away. He wasn't complaining; he made it sound like he enjoyed it.

I haven't met the third candidate, Vaughn Ward, but he seems to be cut from the same cloth. He was a major in the Marine Corps and served in Iraq - one of those "I did more before 9 a.m. than you did in 2008" kind of guys.

Makes me tired just thinking about them. Think I'll go down to the donut shop and plot my campaign.

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