

## Evidence of our national stupidity just keeps piling up



**BARB GUY**

A helpful postcard from Sen. Orrin Hatch arrived the other day.

The topic: the upcoming transition to digital television. Hatch wrote to let all Utahns know that he's asked his staff to set up a series of free seminars to help constituents understand what's going to happen with television.

Granted, next February's switch from analog to digital TV broadcasting is a big undertaking and one that's bound to chap the hides of a bunch of folks who have no idea what's coming. But setting up a series of seminars to help citizens understand something, and sending out postcards to invite the whole state?

Those are great lengths to go to for something as trivial as TV. Television would certainly be about last on the list of critical

things we need to be informed about, wouldn't it?

Surely the good senator has felt just as much urgency about making sure his constituents understood - and were prepared for - other momentous events that the Senate helped to bring about, not just the TV change.

Remember the postcard Hatch sent out about how we were going to go to war? Remember how he set up a series of meetings for the people of Utah to become informed of all the ramifications? Remember the things we learned at the meetings, like that our war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan were going to cost us \$16 billion a month, \$195 million every day, year upon year?

Remember how we were notified that the total tab was going to be over \$3 trillion? Remember how someone in the audience confessed they couldn't even comprehend how much a trillion is? Another audience member supplied this simple illustration: 1 million seconds equal 11 1/2 days; 1 billion seconds equal 31 3/4 years; 1 trillion seconds equal 31,710 years.

Golly, remember how upset people got when they heard that each and every single household in Utah - and everywhere else in America - was going to have to pay well over twenty thousand

dollars for their share of the Iraq war? Whew, those meetings created quite a stir. It was great that our leaders were keeping us in the loop.

What? You don't remember being invited to an informative meeting like that? Me neither.

My favorite political science professor used to say we're a nation of idiots and we get the leaders we deserve. I don't mean anything against Hatch by saying this, but I was reminded of my professor's quip when the senator's postcard arrived.

I confess I do worry that we might be a nation of idiots. There's a lot of evidence of this, and Hatch's postcard is but one small example. We can't bear to hear another thing about the war but for heaven's sake, keep the TV coming. We can't bother with caring about how many soldiers have died, how many more have been left hopelessly injured, and how many innocent civilians we've killed; just do something about those dang gas prices.

A few Hillary Clinton fans who can't accept Barack Obama as the Democrats' nominee for president have said they'll vote for John McCain, even though Obama and Hillary were very similar in their platforms. Even though McCain's an anti-choice, pro-war Republican who voted

# The Salt Lake Tribune

with George Bush 95 percent of the time last year. Why don't those Hillary fans just cut off their own noses? It would make as much sense.

All around us there is evidence of our national stupidity. For me, the most damning of all is in the White House. Probably watching TV.

---

*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to these pages. © Salt Lake Tribune.*