

New proposals make sense

A couple of proposals ready to hit the Kansas Legislature make a lot of sense.

One, by Rep. Brenda Landwehr of Wichita, would require a public vote on any proposal to increase taxes or government fees.

Tagged as the “Kansas Taxpayers Bill of Rights,” it also would attempt to limit growth in government spending.

Meanwhile, Rep. Patricia Lightner of Overland Park has submitted a proposal requiring a two-thirds majority in the Legislature to approve a tax increase rather than the 50 percent plus one now needed.

Both women are conservative Republicans, and their measures are proposed as constitutional amendments which require a two-thirds majority in the Legislature, then a vote of the people, to become law.

Presented that way, it’s not too likely that either will be passed this year. Many in government are loath to give up the power to tax and spend.

But limiting state and local spending does make sense. Rep. Landwehr says she’s worried that government spending continues to outpace inflation, wages and salaries. In other words, state government is growing faster than our paychecks.

Over the past 10 years, the state budget has grown 42 percent, from \$7.2 billion in 1995 to \$10.2 billion this year. That is a huge jump during a time that included a recession, drought and high unemployment.

“Kansans have a right for government to live within its means,” Rep. Landwehr says.

Imagine that.

Over the last three years, though, as the recession has squeezed state revenues, spending has continued to grow, eating up all the state’s reserves. Schools, welfare and other state programs cry for more money, though there isn’t any, and pressure has been great for a tax increase.

While taxpayers are looking for jobs and businesses are cutting back, apparently, there are many who see no need for state and local government to do likewise.

The fact is, right now, neither the state nor its taxpayers can afford more spending. As the rest of us cut back, so should the state.

That makes both of these proposals appealing. For the “Bill of Rights,” we have no details yet, but requiring a vote on tax increase should put a cap on government. People usually are willing to tax themselves when they see a real need, but they don’t often get the choice.

And requiring a “super majority” for tax increases in the Legislature should ensure that only the most necessary ever get through.

There will be no tax increase this year — it’s an election year, after all — but next year the pressure will mount as schools, special interests and the courts put pressure on the Legislature.

That’s when these measure might look real good.

— Steve Haynes

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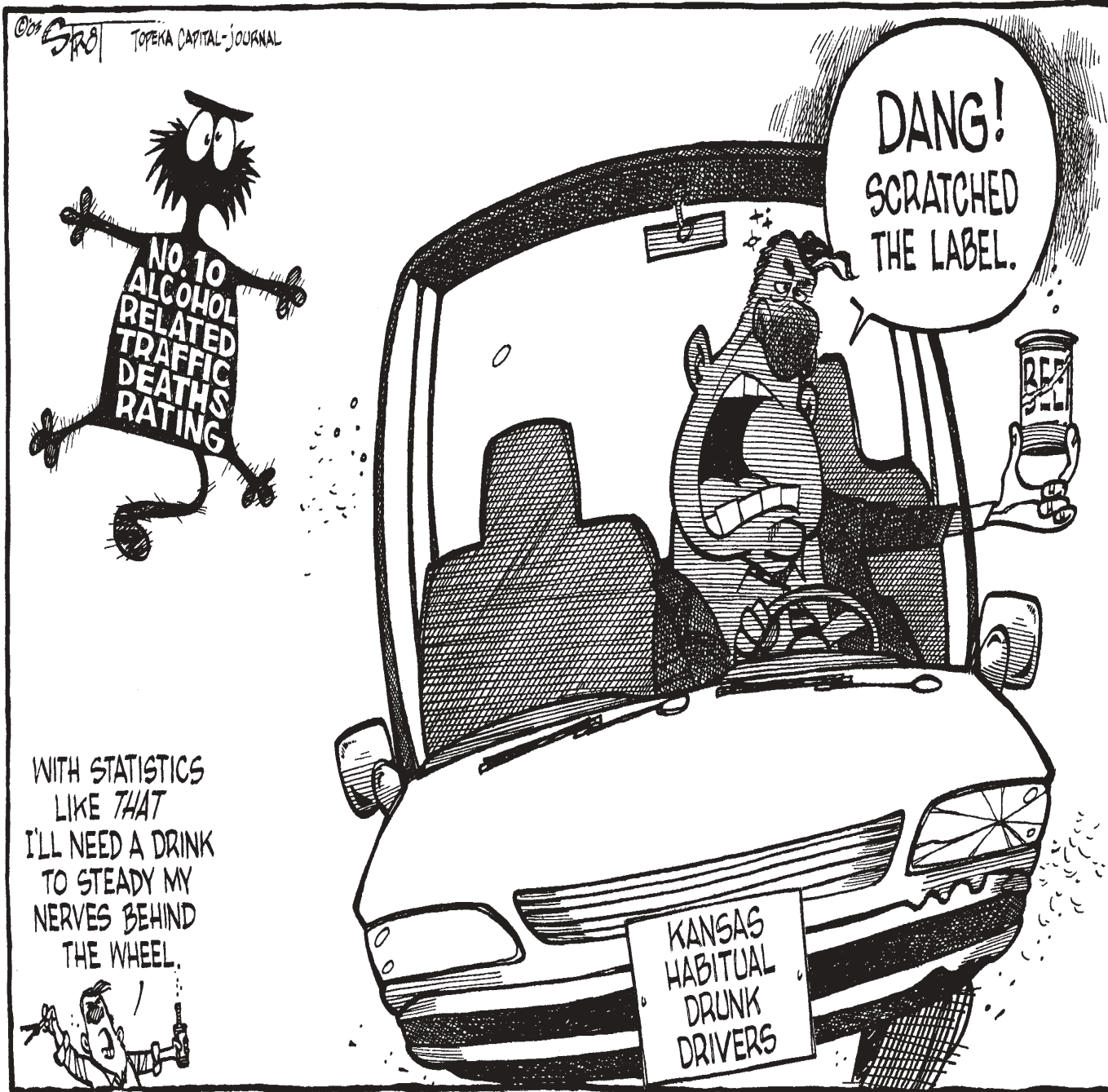


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Her love of books has lasted a lifetime

I love to read. I have dozens of paper backs ready and waiting to be read that I will probably not get to this year or next.

In my younger days, I liked science fiction. I had a friend with a collection of Edgar Rice Burroughs Mars and Venus books. Now old Edgar is renowned for his Tarzan books, but he was also into science fiction. He wrote dozens of books about the people who live on Mars and Venus and their adventures.

I was probably 9 or 10 when I was borrowing these books. The boy I was getting them from was only a year or so older than me. Our fathers had been childhood buddies and our parents went to dinner and dances together. The boy, Rick, and I weren’t exactly pals, but we had a common bond, a love of reading and a taste for science fiction.

Rick was a large boy and eventually played lineman on his high school football team, but in grade school and junior high there was no football in those days, so he got a lot of teasing.

Someone teased him about liking girls and having a girlfriend because I was over at his house so much.

He replied that he didn’t like girls and that the person over at his house was just Cynthia. I liked that answer because he was just Rick, the guy with all the great

Open Season Cynthia Haynes



books.

After flings with romances and westerns, I went back to science fiction and read mostly that well into college. About the time I graduated and got married, I discovered fantasy. I collected a lot of “The Sword and the Sorceress” books and became a fan of Mercedes Lackey and other fantasy writers.

Then somewhere along the way, I started reading mysteries, specifically historical mysteries or mysteries set in interesting places, such as the Southwest.

Now I read tales of medieval England by Margaret Frazer, Kate Sedley and Ellis Peters, Peter Tremayne’s books of ancient Ireland, Laren Haney’s and Lynda Robinson’s books of ancient Egypt and, of course, Tony Hillerman’s Navajo novels.

But lately it has taken me forever to get through a book. I started reading “The Golden One” by Elizabeth Peters in August and just finished it last week. By the

time I was done with the book I had forgotten what the first part was all about.

My problem — commuting.

I love working in Norton. It’s a nice place full of great people, as are all the other towns I’ve worked in, including Oberlin, Colby, Goodland and St. Francis. Still, the 35-minute drive to work and another one home again eats into my spare time. By the time I get home and fix supper and Steve gets in from his 90-minute drive from Goodland, it’s usually after 10 p.m. We try to take a walk and then sort of collapse.

Since I don’t get much chance to read, I’ve been doing two things. First, I’m spending the time I have reading newspapers. This is my way of keeping up with what’s happening around here and in the world, since I don’t watch television.

The second thing is a marvelous invention called books on tape. I listen to a book while driving. The libraries have been expanding their audio books over the last few years, and I’m working my way through them.

If you pass my house about 9 p.m. some night and see me sitting motionless in my car in the driveway, there’s nothing wrong. I’m just trying to find out who-did-it because my drive ended before the story did.

Dryer woes make Christmas interesting

Back Home Nancy Hagman



Last year my clothes dryer broke the day after Christmas, this year it broke two days before. Next year I plan to have a repairman on standby or a new dryer.

I got home about 2:30 p.m. and received the happy news from my daughter who was trying to get her things ready for a week-long trip.

I called a repairman and decided to go to the clothesline. It was sunny, above freezing and there was a slight wind, so maybe it would work.

A bigger problem loomed, however. We had two chenille throws that needed to be finished for Christmas presents. A critical step is that of washing and drying the blankets to achieve soft fluffy rows.

Like Scarlett, I’d think about that tomorrow.

I put a big load of wet laundry into a basket of about the same vintage as my dryer. The rim cracked in about four places, making it sort of unstable. I don’t dry outdoors often, especially in the winter, because the line is on the northeast side of the house and in the shade.

Still, I found the clothes pins and was ready to go.

I plopped the basket on the ground, the pins beside it and almost had the line filled — with the help of my dog and assorted

cats — when I looked down.

How to put this delicately — it appeared I needed a pooper-scooper.

“Guess I better be careful where I step,” I thought.

So I surveyed the landscape, Hmmm better not step there, or there, I had found the dog’s loo. Yes there it was, nothing had escaped, not the laundry basket, the clothes pins or my shoes. You might think a lump of coal in your stocking is bad, but this was far worse.

Then I realized, I’m going to have to take the clothes off this line, too. Well at least I could throw the laundry basket away.

We did another load or two of laundry. We decked the halls with it, we hung it on the mantle by the stockings, trust me it’s not the same. But, it was mostly dry by morning.

My story does have a happy ending. When I came home for lunch on Christ-

mas Eve, I found my dryer was fixed. Never mind kissing Santa Claus, I was ready to kiss the repairman, my hero, Richard Rule.

The throws got washed and dried. They were beautiful.

The clothesline is going to be moved and we all had a wonderful Christmas. Hope you did, too.

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