

Summer update from your legislator

I thought the citizens of the 120th might find this mid-summer update interesting. Thursday, July 21 Governor Brownback will be in Colby to lead off an economic summit on the future of the Ogallala Aquifer. I plan to attend and will get to meet with the governor that day on some other issues pertaining to the 120th. One big issue is getting some assistance in making it easier for doctors to get qualified to be employed in our district.

News from your legislator
Ward Cassidy



The Kansas Department of Health and Welfare (KDHE) are using the social media to have a conversation with the four million online Kansans about health care items impacting their lives. We need the people in our district to use this resource to our advantage. Go to Kansas Department of Health and Welfare and talk with them.

The Kansas Board of Regents approved tuition and fee rates for the six state universities for the upcoming 2011 – 2012 academic year. The range of increase is from 3.6 percent (\$70.05 per semester) at Fort Hays State University to a 6.8 percent increase at Emporia State University (\$158 per semester).

Due to budget cuts and required expenditure increases in areas such as group health insurance and utilities, the six state universities face approximately \$24 million in overall reductions and required expenditures. The tuition and fee rates will raise \$26 million in additional revenue.

Twenty five years ago state funding made up about 50 percent of the state university budgets; it is now less than 25 per cent.

Someone without much else to do sent me these figures pertaining to the new 75 miles per hour speed limit on selected Kansas highways. If you drove the entire 807 miles at the 75 miles per hour speed limit versus the previous speed limit of 70, you would spend ten hours and forty five minutes driving time, instead of eleven hours and thirty one minutes, saving you forty six minutes of driving time. I have traveled interstate in the past few days and it does seem more crowded and most people are driving 80.

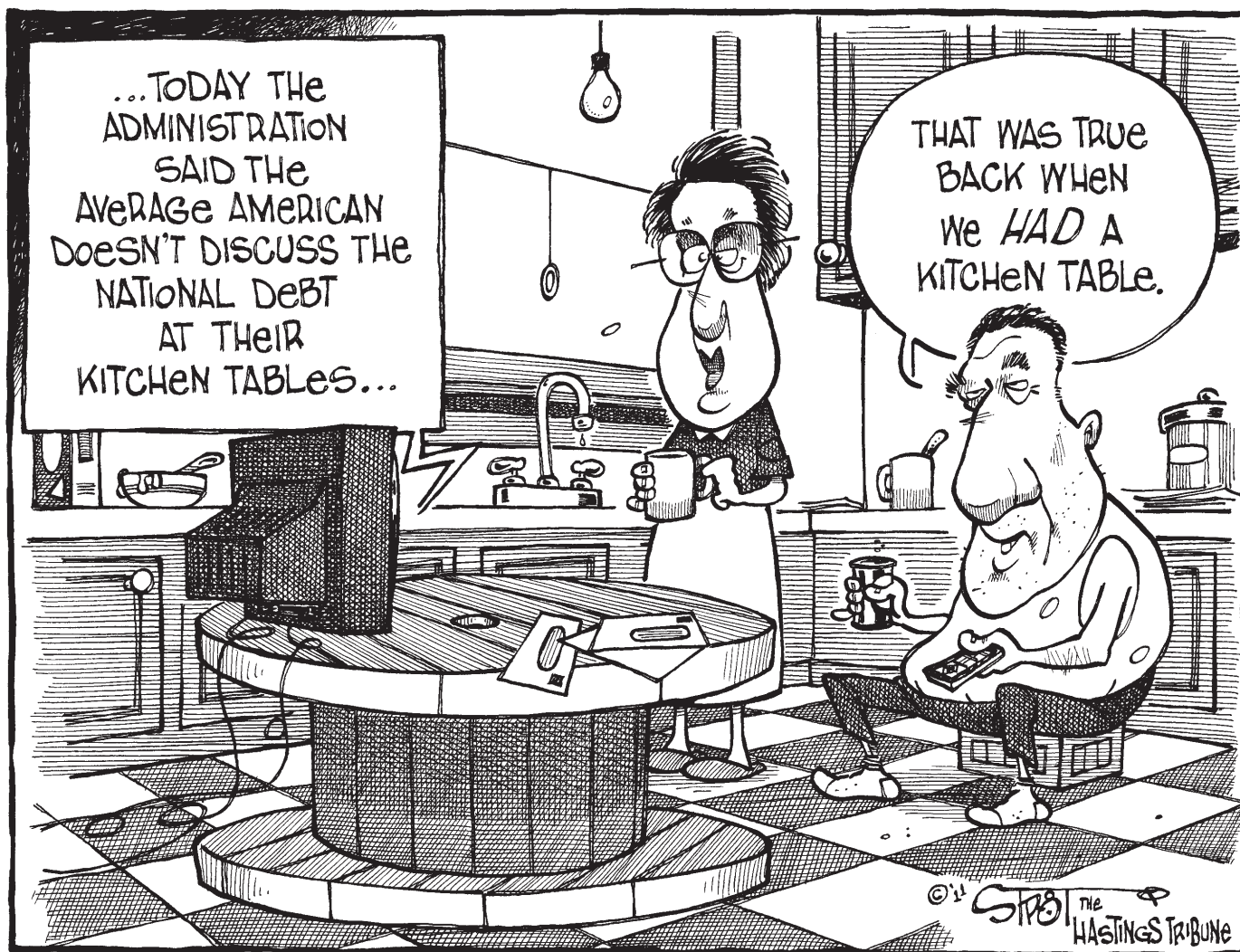
The June state tax revenues ended at \$5.543 billion, \$685 million more than Fiscal Year 2010. On the full year recap, it was individual income taxes which spurred the gains at \$2.709 billion, \$114.6 million or 4.4 percent more than predicted. Sales taxes for the fiscal year yielded \$24.6 million less than forecasted, at \$1.965 billion. That's 19 percent more than was received from sales tax in 2010 before the penny sales tax increase took effect a year ago.

The individual income tax receipts appear to show more people working, earning more money. That's good, but they aren't spending as freely as you would imagine, at least not on items that are sales taxable. Maybe it's paying bills, rent, and gas but this recession may have altered spending habits of Kansans.

I received my final voting record this week for my first session and saw that we voted 306 times on final action. That is a lot of information to be accountable for. In reviewing my record there are just a few votes I would like over, but I believe the majority of my votes were a good representation of my district.

We have been working on agenda items for the next session and there will be some easy laws to amend – such as changing the law to make parents report missing children in a very timely manner. There will be some very difficult concerns such as immigration and tax reform.

Last year when we went to Topeka we were a negative \$550 million dollars – we are now \$150 million to the good. The state of Kansas is still tied into the national economy and restrictions of the Environmental Protection Agency. Lots of work to still be done – I filed to run for my second term because I want to continue to promote North West Kansas.



Farmer asks for help from up above

Insight
John Schlageck

If you're a Kansas farmer you've probably jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. The fire in this case is the continuing scalding temperatures and lack of precipitation.

Here's what I'm talking about. Ben McClure, Stevens County, farms a few miles from the Oklahoma line and not far from the Colorado border. Here in far southwestern Kansas conditions are bone dry.

McClure has received one inch of moisture (including rain and snow) since he drilled his wheat crop back in mid-September. That's 10 months ago.

Ben told me he's looked at the Garden City K-State Research Station stats and the average precipitation from October through May is 8.93 inches. These records go back to 1921. That means he's nearly eight inches short.

"All I can say is it's dry," McClure says. "It's hard. It's not going to be a good year."

Temperatures have been topping the 100 degree mark and it's hurting the young producer's crop every day. While he can't say for certain, the Stevens County farmer believes corn yields will be down 100 bushels per acre in some fields, especially in southwestern Kansas. Some may even be abandoned.

As of mid-July he's still hopeful he'll harvest 200-bushel corn. But that may be a stretch, especially if no help in the form of moisture comes from Mother Nature.

The really bad thing about his fall crops of corn, sunflowers and cotton is their yields will be down on the heels of a disastrous wheat crop. McClure's dryland wheat was a complete bust as crop adjusters estimated it to yield one-third

of a bushel per acre. He did harvest 800 acres of pretty good irrigated wheat.

Still the fall crops suffer each day without moisture – even the irrigated crops. With temperatures as hot as Hades, the fall crops require a ton of water. By 9:30 in the morning, as McClure drives through his fields looking at the crops, his corn is already starting to stress and the temps are still only about 80 degrees.

"The leaves on the corn are already starting to curl up and trying to protect any moisture the crop has," McClure notes. "A half day after the sprinkler moves past the corn it's already suffering from lack of moisture. We can't keep enough moisture on our crops. We need help from above."

The Stevens County farmer is pouring as much water to the thirsty crop as he can. Standard operating procedure is for the pivot irrigation system to make a complete circle over a quarter (160 acres minus the four corners) in three and one half days. During this period, one inch or moisture is delivered to the corn crop.

That's under ideal conditions if each irrigation well can provide enough water. Some of McClure's wells don't pump enough water to put one inch of water on the crop in three and a half days.

Some of his systems take longer – up to five days. That's too long and the crop yields continue to decrease.

"When Mother Nature cooperates, you have an easier time farming," McClure says. "This heat is cooking our crops."

Just a little further north of McClure's

farm – between Sublette and Garden City – the corn plants have already flashed. There's no green pigment left, he says.

"These crops are scorched, scalded and burnt up," the Stevens County farmer says. "Corn fields are uneven. Some are tasseled while others are knee high."

McClure knows 2011 is going to be a difficult year income wise. He knows all too well that even though commodity prices are high, a farmer still has to grow the bushels to sell.

So how's the 38 year old grain producer doing facing such challenges?

"Oh, I guess good," McClure says. "There's still plenty to worry about when you put your head on the pillow at night. There's still tomorrow."

Absolutely there's another day. He's got sprinklers to keep running. McClure believes he has "a great group of guys" helping him. He knows they're doing all they can to keep the thirsty crops watered.

McClure realizes he's not in this dilemma by himself. He's concerned about his neighbors who farm, businesses in his community and other farmers and towns across western Kansas that will suffer because of the ongoing drought.

"If only we could get some rain, but even with rains, it'll take several years to heal," McClure says.

In spite of the current situation, McClure wouldn't trade his farming vocation for any other. He considers himself blessed to be a farmer and have the opportunity to grow crops and livestock for others.

"It's a real privilege and honor to be able to do that," McClure says.

Make no mistake about it. He will persevere.

Too hot for woman or beast while on vacation

After spending a few days in Texas we're beginning to think Kansas is in a "chill zone". One day the car thermometer registered 112 degrees. By anyone's standards that's hot.

How hot is it? It is so hot that Kara and Adam's swimming pool is more like a tepid bathtub. Wanting to take advantage of a pool outside the back door, I invited them to go for a swim with me and thought it strange they both replied, "No. That's okay. You go ahead."

I suited up and headed out to the pool. I slipped off my sandals and that's when it hit me. "Hot! Hot! Hot!" was all I could shout as the burning pavement scorched the soles of my feet. I made a mad dash for the water but little relief was waiting there. The water was hot too. I paddled around for a few minutes working up more of a sweat in the water than out.

It was too much for Kara's dog, Gracie. Her paws must have been burning because she made a flying leap into the pool beside me. The dog and I both had to work up the courage to get back onto the concrete and find some shade.

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Normally, I hate to go shopping. Unless, it's a really good second-hand store. Just so happens there is an excellent one close to Kara and Adam's home. I make it a point to stop in when we come.

Kara, my older daughter, Halley,

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



and I had just walked in the door when I spotted it. A tall, four-drawer, file cabinet. No dings, no dents and all the drawers worked.

Perfect for our new home office. However, there was no price tag.

I told Halley, "I'll stand guard. You go find out how much it is."

Halley disappeared to the front of the store and moments later the manager appeared with an \$8.99 price sticker. "I'm sorry," she said. "Another woman just bought it."

My offer to double the asking price had no effect. She repeated herself, "I'm sorry."

At that moment, Halley returned and the store manager said, "Here's the other woman, now." What a relief. Halley was the "other" woman. I had been bidding against myself.

With a little maneuvering, Jim should be able to fit the cabinet in the back of the van. Providing Taylor doesn't want to bring too much for her 10-day stay with

us. Guess we could pack some of her stuff in the cabinet drawers.

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It's official. Taylor is a certified, card-carryin', born again Christian. Her baptism was held Sunday afternoon at a local lake along with ten others, both adults and youth, from her congregation. About 100 gathered to witness the event. Cheers and clapping accompanied each baptism. It was a great event and Jim and I are so glad we got to be part of it and share the day with Taylor and her parents.

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When we have come to visit, we have shared the bathroom with Taylor ever since her family moved to their present home. Her bathroom is right across the hall from the guest bedroom. When Taylor learned we were coming for a few days she asked her mother, "Do I have to share my bathroom with G'ma and Pa-Pa this time?"

"Yes," her mother said, "And, it won't kill you."

After rolling her eyes (like pre-teens are wont to do) Taylor said, "Well, could you at least ask them to do something with their teeth. It really grosses me out when they leave them in a cup."

When she was little, she got a kick out of it when Pa-Pa would take out his teeth and act like they were going to "bite" her. Gee, guess she really is growing up.

Dear Editor,

I went to pick up my commodities this week and I was very unsatisfied when I saw one person pick up her own commodities and then present signed notes to pick up commodities for four other people. I know that this person had been told in the past that she would only be allowed to pick up her own and those of one other person and no more. And yet she turned around two weeks later and picked up for herself and four more and nothing was said. I feel that there needs to be a limit set and enforced. The same rule should apply for everyone all the time.

John Stielow



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