



Changed tax-cut plan may cause ills in future

There is much wailing and gnashing of teeth over the state budget, centered on a flawed tax-cut plan that no one expected to actually pass.

The result could be a \$2 billion hole in state revenues down the line if something isn't done.

This is not Gov. Sam Brownback's tax-cut plan, though the basic idea came from the governor and he did sign the bill. The governor presented a carefully crafted package of tax cuts and changes that would not have created such a big hole in the budget.

The governor's plan itself was pure in theory and practice. He proposed ending several popular tax breaks, starting with the one for home mortgages, that could have caused a rebellion among voters.

This plan stayed true to the theory of a low, flat, fair income tax that many conservative economists have touted for decades, but it wasn't about to fly that way.

The Legislature stripped most of the income-raising ideas out, leaving mostly the cuts. The House and Senate passed different versions, the House bill containing the most drastic cuts.

Late in the session, the Senate passed the House bill with changes senators thought would send it to a conference committee, where the issues could be worked out in a compromise between houses. Instead, the House passed the Senate-amended version as is.

Ideas differ on whether that was a double cross of the Senate or just good parliamentary maneuvering. Whatever you call it, though, the House slam-dunk left the state with budget issues. The carefully preserved 6.5 percent ending balance this year could disappear as quickly as it was created, leaving the state facing drastic cuts.

That's not likely to happen, though, since neither the Senate nor many House members, not even the governor, wanted such big cuts without any matching changes in to stabilize revenue.

Hard-core conservatives may actually want to force more cuts in state programs and agencies, and there probably is room in some areas. For all the cutting of recent years, few agencies actually have disappeared. Programs seem to have a life of their own; witness the resurrection of state money for an arts program.

But the truth is, there's already been a lot of cutting. This governor and this Legislature have taken control of the budget and actually turned it around. State spending will go down this year for the first time in decades; most "cuts" in previous years were from proposed budgets, not from actual spending.

And that is at the root of much of the wailing. The spenders, the big-government forces, are no longer in control in Topeka. Government is shrinking, and they don't like it.

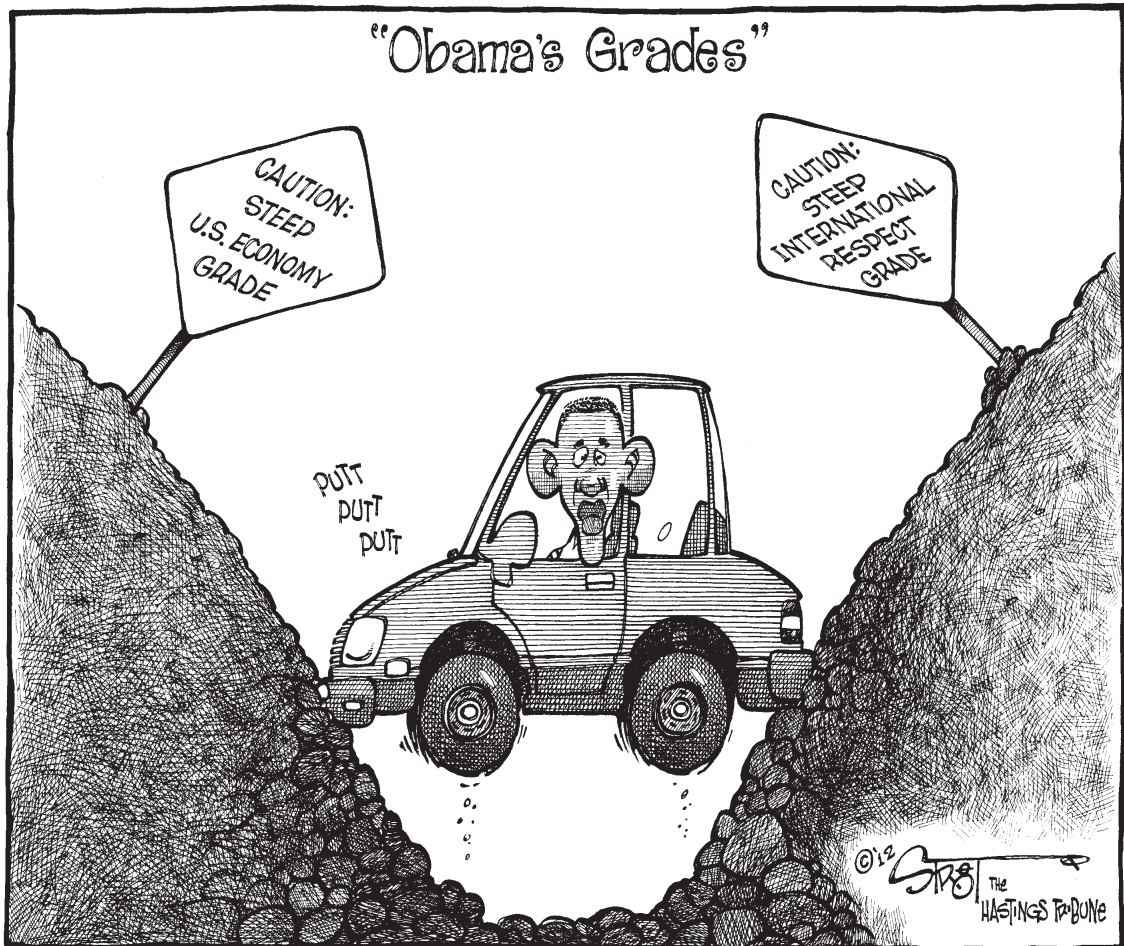
The tax law will have to be changed, yes, but it's unlikely the direction of state government will turn around any time soon. The die has been cast for a smaller budget, and most Kansans probably approve.

The forces behind higher spending - mostly those who benefit, state and school employees, patrons of state programs and "entitlements," people who believe that government can and should solve every problem - don't like that, but it's a done deal now.

The next Legislature has time to avert a budget disaster. And perhaps, though many don't believe, some of the economic growth the governor promises will come along in time to save the day.

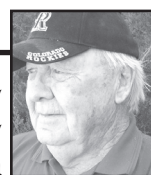
He just might be right, you know.

- Steve Haynes



The Gardener

By Kay Melia



Every gardener knows there are several critical timelines out there in the backyard that we must meet head-on if we expect to enjoy good production. There is a critical time for planting, for watering, for mulching, and of course for harvesting. Guess what time it is now?

Due to the unusually early advent of the spring season, we have all been given the extended opportunity to eradicate the influx of those miserable weeds! If you mulched well, then your job is much easier. If you haven't mulched, you are probably noticing a great deal of wear and tear on your hoe, and any other weeding devices that you may have in your arsenal. Those ugly amaranth type of pig weeds have been giving me early trouble again this spring. You know the ones. Three inches tall yesterday---six inches tall today.

But that's not the only weed problem I had out there before I mulched. Not by a long shot. There were Mexican sandburrs, spurge, hen bit, lambs quarter, (most of which I ate) eastern black nightshade, Russian thistle, marrow, oxalis, and goat heads. Others remain nameless. The worst ones are the delicate little grassy types that always seem to show up between the onion plants which of course is out of reach of the hoe. Therefore, the old "thumb and forefinger" method of weed control must be instigated, and once again this year, I have developed the dreaded affliction better known as Weed Puller's Finger. My doctor tells me I will fully recover by the time of the first frost in October.

And so, getting rid of the weeds is Job One right now, just like it was last year at this time. When the weather warms up, the weeds grow, usually faster than the beans and the beets. And if we don't get rid of them, we have what is generally referred to as "crop failure." If only we had added large handfuls of mulch between those rows of potatoes and tomatoes a few weeks ago, the weed population would have been greatly reduced. But even now, as you clean out the weeds, replace them with some dry grass clippings or straw, or old hay, or even shredded newspaper.

It goes without saying that most rapidly growing vegetables in our gardens are at a critical stage right now, and if we don't do something to reduce the weed population, then the competition

between the good and the bad could end up in defeat! As temperatures rise into the 90s now on a regular basis, the weeds will begin to take over if we are not extremely diligent. Weeds sap the moisture and the nutrients from the soil, and if not eliminated, crop production will be limited, at best.

But hang in there! Get out of bed an hour earlier for a few mornings and enjoy the best part of the day before the thermometer rises. The birds are singing; the air is delightfully cool, and the quietness is wonderful! The weeds await your visit, and so does all the GOOD things in your garden.

Photo Policy

The Saint Francis Herald and Bird City Times wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or new happening that we should attend, please call 332-3162.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event. Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser prints of photos which have run in The Herald or Times are available, first come, first served. Special-order laser prints of photos will be available at \$3 each.

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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It's hard not to admire any-thing consistent these days. I'm speaking of Queen Elizabeth II's 60 years on the throne. Not to many folks hold the same job for that long.

Part of me is pulled from giving it much notice. First, being an American, we colonists broke from "mother England" years ago. Also having Irish blood makes it hard to forget some of the history between the two countries.

But let's give credit where credit is due. While the British Empire has gone through incredible changes in the last six decades, the lady at the helm has kept the ship on a steady course.

The monarchy has an indirect influence on how the government of our English cousins is run. But having a king or queen leading the country is something the Brits have expected and desired for centuries.

It is hard for a non-subject

to grasp the relationship between Queen Elizabeth and her people. The love and respect they show sure is different from how we see our top dog. Obviously it has worked for them for a lot longer than our United States have existed.

I wouldn't swap our freedoms for what they have on the other side of the pond, but I admire their consistency.

Years ago I was wandering around the English city of Chester. Once a Roman outpost, the old wall still makes up the basic design of the town. At the east gate stands an enormous clock that celebrates Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, erected two years after in 1899. I imagine Liz-2 will get her own big time piece somewhere or another in the lands she rules over.

God save the Queen.

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GOD SAYS The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. Psalms 33:13, 14

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