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### Other **Viewpoints**

## Military spending not biggest priority

If the Air Force delays construction of a new refueling tanker, a potentially important project for the Wichita economy, then supporters essentially can blame the Iraq war.

For this nation has reached a point when it no longer can afford to spend to oblivion on its military when we have huge domestic problems to solve. For that reason, the Obama administration is perfectly logical to suggest that a contract to build the new tanker be delayed by up to five years.

Yet the threat of delay had members of the Kansas congressional delegation up in arms last week. Press release-dueling Reps. Todd Tiahrt and Jerry Moran — opponents for Senate in 2010 — and Sen. Pat Roberts fired off public statements saying the new tanker was critical for the Air Force.

Roberts and Tiahrt sent a letter to Peter Orzsag, director of the Office of Management and Budget, inviting him to Wichita to ride in one of the existing, aging tankers. Moran wrote to the president himself.

The current tanker was first built during the Eisenhower administration, they said, and delaying a new version further would put servicemen and women at great risk. ...

Funny how Roberts, Tiahrt and Moran weren't so worried about delays a year ago when they worked to scuttle a contract to build a new tanker because it wasn't awarded to Boeing and wouldn't have been built in part in Wichita.

Maybe a new refueling tanker is the nation's No. 1 military need, but it would be good to hear that from an objective source. We already know that a tanker contract to Boeing would be good for Kansas. ...

Come on. Let's make real priorities.

Obviously, we must protect our nation's defenses, and military contracts can mean jobs, too. But at some point, the military must take a back seat to critical domestic issues.

- The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press

### Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (7785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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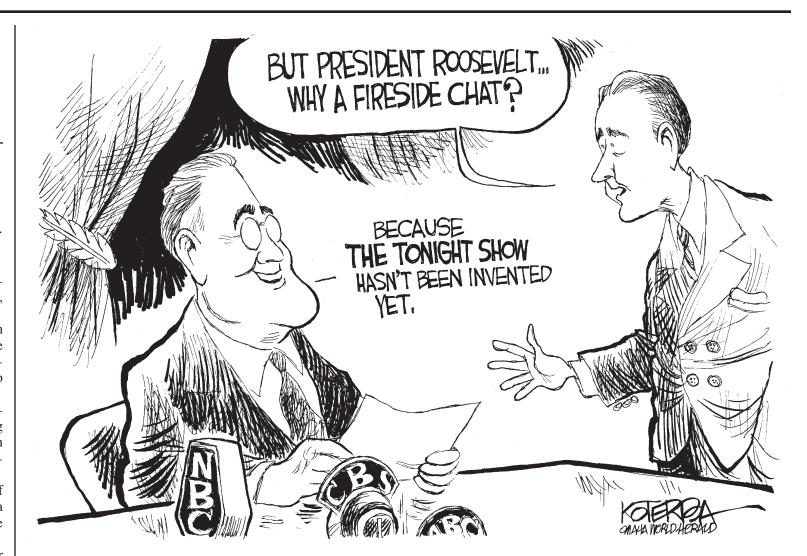
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# Death penalty argument isn't easy

How you feel about abolishing the death penalty is one of those personal choices that may depend as much on your experience as anything.

There are strong arguments on both sides. There is no easy, black-and-white answer.

A Wichita-area senator has a bill which would end the Kansas death penalty July 1 to save the state money. Opponents claim a death penalty case costs the state about \$1.26 million to prosecute, on the average, compared to \$740,000 for an "ordinary" murder trial.

As argument for the death penalty, you need look no further than the record of heinous crime left by the most depraved killers society has known. Their actions speak for them-

And it can be hard to come up with a reason to show them any more mercy than they have shown their victims.

Duane West of Garden City was the county attorney when Richard Hickock and Perry Smith came to trial in the infamous killing of the Herb Clutter family near Holcomb, father, mother, two children. In an interview this week he backed retention of Kansas' capital punishment law.

The Clutter killings shocked a nation in 1959. Hickock and Smith, recently released from the Kansas State Penitentiary, had heard rumors that the family kept large amounts of



#### Steve Haynes

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cash in a safe in the basement. They plotted the killings as they drove across the state, stopping to buy rope and other supplies.

Their plan from the beginning was to leave no witnesses. Their crime and flight was documented in the novel and movie, "In Cold Blood." It's a worthy study of murder and the arguments for capital punishment.

For his part, Mr. West said he had no trouble asking the judge to sentence the two to hanging. The current law is OK, he said, if a little

"They need to get busy and make it stronger," he said. "I think a lot more cases ought to qualify for capital murder than do."

He expressed no regrets over the fate of Hickock and Smith.

"It's not an easy thing ... to contemplate doing," he told the reporter. "Ultimately, I felt like asking the jury for the death penalty was the proper thing to do

"I felt we could do without these two people

walking around on the face of the earth anymore. I did not feel the decision was wrong, and they have not killed anyone else since the — that's the main thing.'

And there probably is the best argument for the death penalty.

On the other side, other than the huge responsibility of deciding who is to live and who is to die, is the nation's sorry record of false convictions in so many capital and other infamous crimes.

When defendant after defendant is being released because "new evidence" shows they did not do what a jury had found them guilty of, you have to ask yourself how any jury can be sure enough of a capital crime to recommend death. There is, after all, no appeal from execution.

What to do?

I'd say that the expense alone is not a good reason to change the law. If the death penalty is just and deserved, then hang the expense. But if it isn't?

I'm glad I don't have to vote. I'd be interested in hearing what other people out here think, and I'd expect our legislators would too.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

# Appropriations careful with stimulus bucks

Federal Stimulus money will play a vital role in Kansas, as it will be utilized for job growth and building the economy.

Last week, the members of the House Appropriations Committee were asked to vote on a motion to essentially give a block grant of stimulus dollars to the Kansas Board of Regents without oversight or direction.

The committee voted the motion down and then offered a motion asking the Board of Regents to return on Monday with a detailed plan as to how the stimulus dollars will be spent. This will ensure Kansas does not go on a spending spree. The adopted motion will also provide transparency in the spending of Federal assistance. It is important to me that Kansas remains eligible for every stimulus dollar available. The chairman of the Appropriations Committee is waiting for an answer from the White House on the amount and availability of funds. This should be clarified by the end the week. At that point, the committee and then the members of the House will be able to make an informed decision ensuring that Kansas receives the maximum benefit from these funds.

#### ANNEXATION

House Bill 2029 significantly strengthens our ability as property owners to determine the future of our land and the use of our taxes.

This bill is a compromise put together by a joint interim committee. However, it is a continued concern for cities to annex property without ever providing services promised. As taxpayers, we should have a voice in the annexation process, and have recourse if cities do not live up to their end of the bargain.

HB 2029 will not stop economic development. It will only ensure that the cities take a measured approach to planning. By allowing



#### Jim Morrison

Capitol Review

homes, and businesses, there will be extra pressure on the cities to provide the promised services in return for the increased tax dollars they will be receiving.

Specifically, the bill would:

• Reduce from five to three years the time that must elapse following annexation before the county commissioners are required to hold a hearing to consider whether the city has provided the services promised. If the commissioner refuses to hold the hearing, a landowner would be permitted to bring court action.

• Reduce from 2 1/2 years to 1 1/2 years following this hearing that a landowner may petition the commissioners to deannex the land if the city has not provided municipal services. If the commissioners refuse to hold a hearing, the landowner would be permitted to go to court.

• Prohibit the annexation, via approval by the commissioners, of any part of any unplatted agricultural land of 21 acres or more without the written consent of the owner.

Require an election for any annexation proposed in Johnson, Sedgwick or Shawnee counties on approval of county commissioners. Only those living in the proposed area will be eligible to vote. If the majority of those voting reject the annexation, the city would be prohibited from annexing the land and no proposal to annex the area could take place for at taxpayers to determine the fate of their land, least four years. None of the counties in my discuss any of your ideas or concerns.

district are affected by this legislation now. **RAINY DAY FUND** 

The House passed, 89-33, HB 2320, the Budget Stabilization Fund. To recap from last week's newsletter, Sub. for HB 2320 is a key piece to fix policies surrounding the structural imbalance in the budget.

The bill would establish the Budget Stabilization Reserve Fund (stabilization fund) in the state treasury. Revenue sent to the state general fund in excess of the amount expected during a fiscal year, based on the April consensus revenue estimate, would be transferred to the stabilization fund.

Money in the stabilization fund could only be spent to make up for shortfalls when compared to the previous year's budget. This bill will take effect in fiscal year 2011.

#### ZERO BASED BUDGET

The House Governmental Budget Committee is working on House Bill 2273.

This bill will require state government agencies to submit a zero-based budget on a six-year cycle beginning in fiscal year 2012. This budget would include a description of the activity requested, a legal basis for the action and an itemized justification for the amount requested per activity.

The bill allows for each agency to plot out a six-year plan and creates a reasonable estimated state budget for up to six years in the future, helping to prevent budget shortfalls. It will give the legislature a fair and logical way to cut unnecessary spending should a shortfall happen. By waiting until 2012, the legislature is giving state agencies time to get their budgets in order and develop a reporting system.

It is an honor to serve as your representative. My door is always open if would like to

### Mallard **Fillmore**

Bruce Tinsley



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