



Other Viewpoints

Cost of meth outlives program

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s decision to shut down its Meth Lab Cleanup Program could prove to be an expensive one for some city and county governments. Cleaning up methamphetamine labs after the drug manufacturers move to another location — or to jail — can be expensive, and that cost likely will fall to local law enforcement officials across the state. The health department cited the state’s budget problems as the reason in its decision to discontinue the cleanup program and a tracking program that ensured properties used as labs were properly cleaned before the next inhabitants moved in.... The programs provided services that still are needed. The real change will be the government entity providing the money. That burden will fall heaviest on local officials in Sedgwick, Cowley and Shawnee counties, which state records show were the favorite haunts of Kansas meth producers in 2009....

Shawnee County Sheriff Richard Barta has indicated he will ask the federal Drug Enforcement Agency for help, which was the routine before Kansas began offering the services. The agency so far appears willing, although some area law enforcement officers think that may change if the agency is inundated with calls for help cleaning up meth labs across the state. Whatever help the feds can offer will be welcomed by local governments already dealing with budget problems brought on by declining property values and cuts in state funding. The federal agency’s help in the cleanup area, however, won’t solve problems that may be caused by the loss of the state’s tracking program. A Topeka landlord who has been involved with the program says the agency’s recommendations for contaminated properties include cleaning and painting the walls, removing the carpet and cleaning the ductwork. Kansas health department officials say if such measures aren’t taken, meth residue can cause nose and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting and breathing problems. Chronic exposure may affect the central nervous system and cause respiratory problems. While we’d like to think most landlords are conscious enough to eliminate any health hazards before allowing someone to move into a former meth-lab site, there needs to be some method of serving the public safety. Hopefully, city and county officials can create a tracking program that will ensure contaminated property isn’t occupied without unduly stressing their budgets.

— The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press

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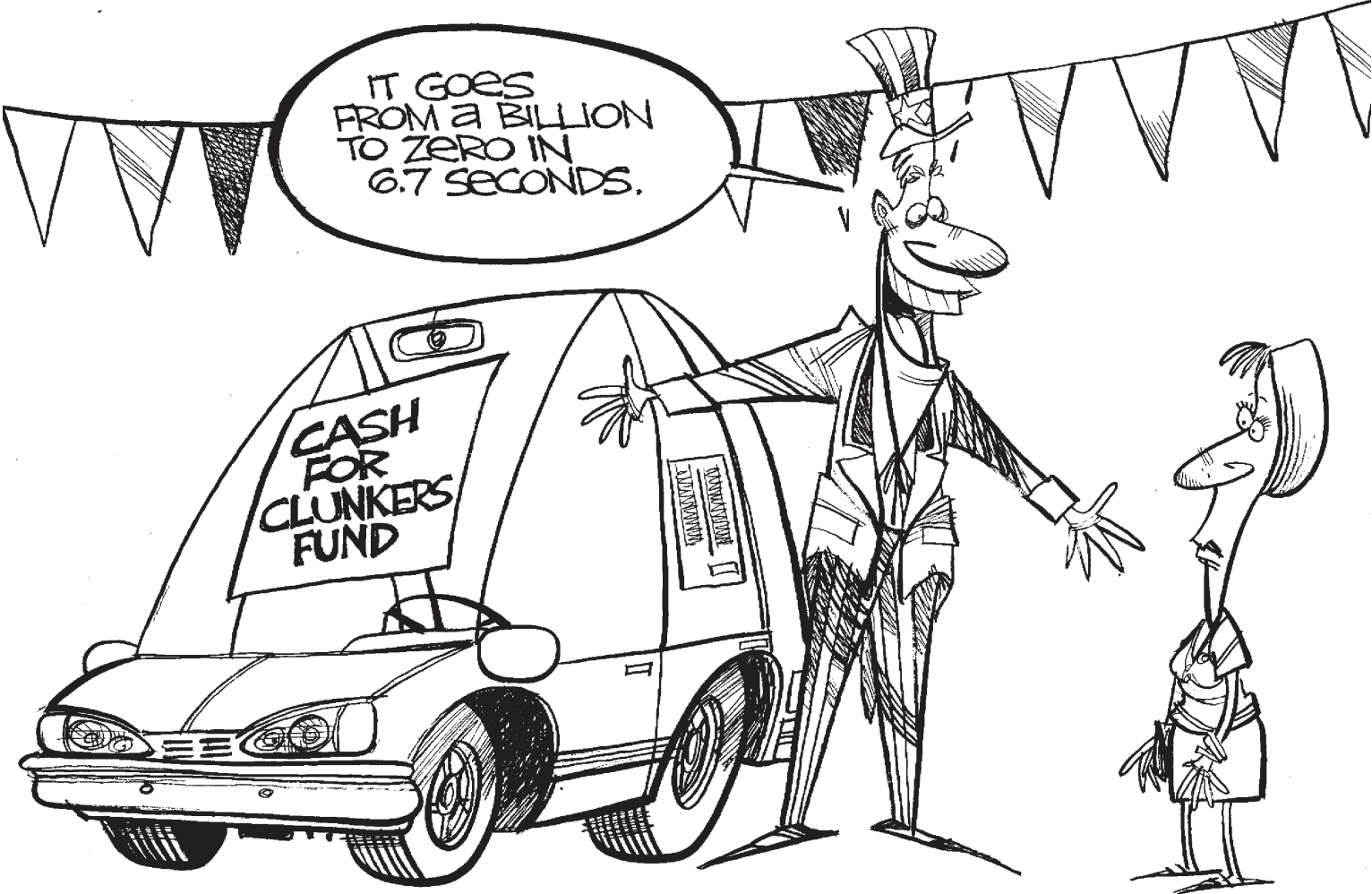
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They got away, but fish were jumping

I hadn’t been fishing with Lindsay in years, but really, she’s a pretty good fly caster.

We were spending the week in Colorado with Lindsay and her husband Brad. She wanted to go fly fishing, which is an invitation I’d never turn down — especially with a daughter.

Both she and her sister are outdoors women, though they didn’t necessarily marry outdoors men. Her sister has led me into some wild and inaccessible canyons to chase fish, and when she moved to Georgia, she was about the only one in town with a ski rack on the top of her car and a fly rod in the trunk. Made the car easier to find in parking lots.

Lindsay spent several summers in Colorado after graduation — she was a teacher then, and had time off — but she was working as a waitress and said she had trouble finding time to fish.

It seemed to me that she’d gotten pretty good at fly casting, though. Last week, I sent her on down to the river to take the first hole, and she pulled out a fish. It was, oh, maybe two inches long, but really hungry judging by the way it lunged at her fly.

They got bigger after that, and I think she may have caught more fish than I did. We sort



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

of alternated holes, and I tried to explain that if she fished behind me, there wouldn’t be too many bites.

It was tough fishing, a small, flat, open stream with beaver ponds and meanders. The high sun meant that even your rod’s shadow could spook the fish ahead of you, so you really had to sneak up on them.

We were having a good time, though Brad and Cynthia were ready to go back to town any time we’d decide to quit. But, hey, we don’t get to fish together all that often.

Toward the end, we worked our way up to a beaver pond that, I swear, was full of incompetent trout.

Lindsay had to duck-walk up to the dam to stay low, and practically lay on the logs to cast without being seen. She kept dropping her fly

right in the feeding zone, and the trout would jump and miss it.

Now, I know a fish that size has a brain the size of a pea, maybe, but usually they’re better than that. Finally I told her to let me try, and I did catch one, but only after several misses.

Like I said, incompetent trout. Or maybe overeager; they were jumping hard and fast.

By that time, the spouses were tapping their feet on the bank and we knew it was time to go down to the house. You’d think we hadn’t fed them.

We vowed to go back out the next day, but by then, after doing other stuff all morning, with theater tickets that night, we wound up taking a nap.

That’s another invitation I find hard to turn down.

Basically, in nine days in the mountains, we managed to wear ourselves out pretty well. It was fun. I’d do it again in a minute — with more time to fish, of course.

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.

Business, worker prosperity under fire

Never before in American history have your job and your personal prosperity been under attack as they are today.

The problem is that our own president is leading the charge with several pieces of legislation that would tax and burden employers to the point where they need to pass the cost on to their employees — eliminating benefits or even some jobs to keep the doors open.

More than 108,000 Kansans are unemployed, and the number continues to escalate. Kansas’ unemployment rate is now 7 percent — the highest in 26 years. Yet, the blitz on American families and job creators is coming from government at an alarming pace.

The most recent assault is in the form of health care reform. Solving the health care crisis by creating more government is not the answer.

The average Kansan would see an increase of at least \$460 in private health insurance costs under the proposed Obama plan. The plan is projected to cost more than \$1 trillion dollars over the next 10 years and will be paid for by you. Many will pay for it with their jobs, while all will see increased medical costs and decreased access and quality.

A few weeks ago, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the largest tax increase in our country’s history under the guise of the so-called “cap and trade” (a.k.a. “cap and tax”)



Amy Blankenbiller

- Kansas Chamber of Commerce

pollution emissions trading program. Energy costs are estimated to increase 40 percent under the plan.

Look at your energy bill and add 40 percent. Can you afford it? Can your employer afford it? The National Black Chamber of Commerce estimates 3 million jobs will be lost if cap and tax becomes law.

Earlier this year, union bosses convinced Congressional leaders to introduce the Employee “Forced” Choice Act, also known as the “card check.” This would eliminate the use of secret ballots to form unions.

The secret ballot has been a cornerstone of American democracy since its inception. Nine of 10 voters believe a vote to join a union should remain private, and 74 percent of union households oppose card check because workers don’t want to be harassed by union bosses.

This bill threatens to hurt not only big employers such as manufacturing plants but also many small businesses, where margins be-

tween success and failure are already razor thin. Another likely consequence will be the further exportation of American jobs.

The rise in government intrusion and spending isn’t just at the federal level. Kansas government has grown significantly over the past several years, and the state deficit is expected to soar beyond \$600 million next year.

Unfortunately, some in Topeka are proposing to increase your taxes and threaten your job by further taxing your employer instead of harnessing government growth and running the state like you run your family budget.

Fortunately, pro-jobs lawmakers did not take the shortsighted route of tax increases in the past legislative session. Let’s hope they reduce spending next year and not drive even more Kansas jobs to other states.

Without assigning blame to the economic troubles, we need government at all levels to stop attacking our employers and our jobs. Misguided government “remedies” of intrusion and spending need to stop so businesses can bring the economy back by creating new jobs.

Join us in protecting your jobs and moving us toward economic recovery. Urge your senators and representatives to fight back against the anti-business, anti-worker assault.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

