



Other Viewpoints

Budget dance goes on in Topeka

These are strange times in Topeka. The governor is a lame duck and one of five state officeholders who weren't elected to their jobs.

The speaker of the House is fighting an ethics probe because he's the lead attorney in a lawsuit against the state over funding.

Perhaps eight state senators are juggling legislative work with their campaigns for Congress or statewide office.

The session is two-thirds over and has been most notable for — other than the surprising passage of a statewide indoor smoking ban — outlawing fake pot and arguing over an official state grass.

And the size of the budget hole is at about \$470 million and counting, with everyone holding his breath until the next official revenue forecast in April. Lengthy floor debates are expected this week, as lawmakers consider different remedies. It's still hard to see how Kansas gets through this fiscal disaster in one piece.

Gov. Mark Parkinson has said the budget demands a tax increase — a point of view Senate GOP leaders reluctantly have begun to embrace and House GOP leaders have refused to accept.

The Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee's extensive consideration of increasing alcohol, tobacco and sales taxes, and perhaps taxing sugary pop, ended last week with no agreement.

On Thursday the House Appropriations Committee advanced its so-called answer. True to its word, the panel would avoid tax increases, but only by cutting another \$172 million from public education ... shifting some of the burden of property taxes onto local school districts, and aggravating inequities in school funding across the state....

It also would rely on the federal government providing \$131 million in extended stimulus Medicaid funding ... and, more curiously, \$10 million for passage of a primary seat-belt law — which House Republicans have long fought.

Plus, it would freeze state contributions to the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System at their current level for two years ... and it includes millions of dollars in other cuts that aren't explained. Some of the ideas will strike many Kansans as reasonable during this downturn, including reducing most state agency budgets by 1 percent and cutting most state salaries by 5 percent, though it should be noted that state agencies have already experienced repeated budget cuts. And the plan tries to spare prisons and even help social services and local governments.

In short, there may be some material to work with. But the House GOP plan is not a serious solution and, even if it managed to pass, wouldn't have enough support to override an all-but-certain veto by the governor.

Still, this is all part of the big dance of balancing a \$5 billion-plus state budget during a historic recession. In the tough days to come, Kansans should let legislators know both their priorities and their expectations, including that good sense and foresight will prevail.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press*

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansan.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.
Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansan.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell @ nwkansan.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz @ nwkansan.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansan.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors
colby.society @ nwkansan.com

ADVERTISING

Heather Woofert - Advertising Representative
hwoofert @ nwkansan.com

Andrea Miller - Advertising Representative
a.miller @ nwkansan.com

Shaly Niemeyer - Advertising Representative
sniermeyer @ nwkansan.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design
kballard @ nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs @ nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support @ nwkansan.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Barbara Ornelas, Kris McCool

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Monolithic capitalism an illusion

There is a widespread belief among certain sectors of the American public that our country's greatness can be measured by our embrace of free market capitalism.

Adhering to free market principles is often seen as the patriotic duty of freedom-loving Americans. Believers in free-market austerity are highly influenced by Adam Smith. In his highly influential book, "The Wealth of Nations," first published in 1776, Smith famously wrote, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."

Smith's comments about the positive, unintended consequences for others that stem from people pursuing their own self-interests is often used by people in favor of a non-ethics-based economic system. This belief plays a large role in shaping the views of most of today's economists. Today, dominant economic theories are based on seeing human beings as creatures that are completely motivated by material interests. This theory is true to a point, but is overly simplistic.

While most economists seem to think ethics and economics are separate categories that shouldn't be intertwined, this ignores the fact that Smith, the alleged father of modern economics, was the professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

Many who utilize Smith's quotes ignore other aspects of Smith's world view that deviate from their own agenda. Smith was certainly a critic of pre-capitalist restraints, but he also supported providing public education by the state and advocated imposing legal restrictions on interest rates by the state.

"If the legal rate of interest in Great Britain,



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

for example, was fixed so high as eight or ten percent, the greater part of the money which was to be lent would be lent to prodigals and projectors, who alone would be willing to give this high interest," said Smith.

Smith went on to argue that if interest rates were fixed at eight or ten percent, a large part of our country's capital would be kept out of the hands of people who would make the most profitable use of it, and would be in the hands of those most likely to waste it. Whether you agree with Smith or not, his comments reflect a man who is much more complex than free market fundamentalists make him out to be.

Smith's view of people also differs from economic theories influenced by the idea that humans are self-interested individuals solely concerned with acquiring vast amounts of wealth.

In his book, "Development as Freedom," Nobel-prize-winning economist Amartya Sen writes about an argument Smith had with fellow Scottish philosopher David Hume. In the arguments Smith stresses how seeing people solely in terms of their productive use is a slight to the nature of humanity.

"It seems impossible that the approbation of virtue should be of the same kind with that by which we approve of a convenient or well-contrived building, or that we should have

no other reason for praising a man than that for which we commend a chest of drawers," Smith said.

Another model often used to legitimize arguments by advocates of economic Darwinism is former president Thomas Jefferson, who distrusted big government. But they also ignore statements by Jefferson that deviate from their own ideologies.

In the book, "The Unsettling of America — Culture and Agriculture," by Wendell Berry, the author cites a letter Jefferson wrote to former president James Madison on Oct. 28, 1785, to strengthen his argument that the great have to be restrained in order for the small to survive.

In the letter Jefferson writes, "Another means of silently lessening the inequality of property is to exempt all from taxation below a certain point, and to tax the higher portions of property in geometric progression as they rise."

This statement certainly undercuts those who use Jefferson's name to advocate erasing programs for the poor that are paid for by taxing the rich.

Free-market capitalism is certainly an effective way to grow an economy, but even some of big government's most famous critics acknowledged that governments occasionally have to step in to make sure ordinary citizens have a chance to live emotionally and materially satisfying lives.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Resolution honors all-around leader

It was my honor and pleasure to officially recognize Sonny Weinhardt with Senate Resolution 1845 before the full Senate on Thursday, March 18. As many of our home folks know, Sonny spent 56 years officiating for Kansas state high school athletics. Of those years, he officiated regular season 26 years in football games, seven volleyball and all 56 chasing high schoolers down the basketball court. In addition, Sonny worked the post-season tournament games at all levels — regional, sub-state and state — 36 years of basketball, seven years of football and three years of volleyball. The basketball years also included officiating at the one and only Grand State Boys Basketball Tournament in 1975-76. He also officiated 20 years at Special Olympic basketball events.

Sonny is just as dedicated to his community as he was to officiating on the courts. He played baseball in his younger years, when the local communities had town teams, Sonny was an impressive pitcher. He helped the Grinnell Town Team qualify in the middle 1950's to play in the American Baseball Conference Tournament in Wichita, as well as his being an all-star pitcher that played on numerous all-star teams. He was later drafted by a minor league team in El Paso, Texas.

Sonny has served the community in numerous capacities. He served terms as mayor, and on the City Council. He was a member of the volunteer fire department and served as fire chief for a number of years. He was the maintenance engineer and coach for Grinnell public



Ralph Ostmeyer

• State Senator

schools, coached little league baseball, served as a member of the Grinnell After Harvest Committee, and was a founding member of the Cow Paddy Golf Course in Grinnell. The Grinnell Credit Union benefited by Sonny's serving as a board member. He was also one of the original members of the Grinnell Pride program.

As you can see, Sonny Weinhardt has been a valuable piece of the fabric we call community. I am proud to have called Sonny my friend through the years. Thoughts of Sonny recall to mind a very appropriate quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson; "The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship."

It is always a pleasure to present our home town people to the senators in the chambers, but this was a very special event for me. Sonny's achievement in professionalism and durability will leave a lasting impression. There may be someone else in the United States who

can top his years of officiating service, but no one can think of who it might be. Sonny certainly holds the official record according to the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

During the past week, we have had four Pages from Oberlin Community High School, three Pages — my grandchildren — from Grinnell, and all 33 members of the Quinter Football Champions as guests in Topeka. With the addition of numerous drop-ins from the 40th District and the multitude of phone calls, it has made me feel a little closer to the home folks. I very much appreciate that.

As we wind down the session before the break, few things have changed regarding budgets and tax increases. There is a lot of anxiety about where tax rates will be increased and even if taxes alone will fill the voids. I feel there will be a decisive mode during the veto session, toward the end when we have received the most current budget projections. Through the process, many votes will be made and until the final budget with funding is developed, there will be many highs and lows. I ask for your patience and prayers.

I can be reached by writing to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 225-E, Topeka, Kan., 66612, or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

