



Other Viewpoints

Not just budget; data safety needed

Hammer out a budget. Go home.

It's impossible to say how many for sure, but the feeling here is you'd find a lot of Kansans who'd want nothing more from the Legislature right now than a budget and an adjournment.

But for a variety of reasons, the lack of progress on the budget could lead you to think it's late January instead of early May.

The amount of the deficit has been a moving target. Hard-right conservatives are deeply at odds with Democrats and moderate Republicans over how to tackle the deficit.

So when the Senate Judiciary Committee tabled a bill aimed at keeping state prison inmates from obtaining access to sensitive computer data, it was hard to take exception.

After all, the committee had been assured that Kansas Department of Corrections officials would rewrite the department's regulations to address the issue. And considering the Legislature is burning through about \$80,000 in operation costs per day, it was a reasonable and responsible move to put the bill on hold.

That said, here's hoping lawmakers revisit the issue next year.

Policy changes are well and good, and there's no reason to believe the department won't follow through on its pledge to make them.

But people and administrations change, and new leadership can bring different ideas about regulations. There's no guarantee that future administrators would keep the proposed changes in their rules and regulations.

Putting a law on the books would take the issue out of the hands of administrators, which is one reason the bill should be kept in the hopper for next session.

Another reason is that the issue being addressed by the bill is a very serious matter.

Through a program that offers state prison labor to provide data entry services to city, county and state governmental organizations, inmates have been able to access personal information about Kansans for several years. Kansas is among only eight states that provide the access to inmates.

The state's program is well-intentioned, both in terms of helping inmates obtain job skills and reducing cost of services for governments.

But the access to private information, which could be used to commit identity theft, must end.

Corrections Secretary Roger Werholtz said the department would do just that by changing administrative rules for the program.

That's a step in the right direction, and it was also good to hear Gov. Mark Parkinson say state agencies involved in providing personal information through contracts with the corrections department were taking steps to improve security precautions.

The next step would be to cement the precautions into place by passing a law. While it can wait for a year, it's a measure that should be taken.

— The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press



Mississippi views inspire sense of history

We left Memphis after strolling down Beale Street, taking in the sounds of jazz and rockabilly from every other club down the strip. We crossed the Mississippi in the dark and slipped into Arkansas, heading north toward St. Louis on I-55.

We stopped for the night in Blytheville, in the flat northeast corner of the state, where rice and cotton share the crown. It didn't look like many were getting rich in Blytheville. We had trouble finding a cafe for breakfast, and had to settle for fast food.

We started up the broad, flat valley, through the rest of Arkansas and into the Missouri Bootheel, with nary a hill in sight mile after mile.

We got off the freeway and took the Old Kings Highway, named for a Spanish colonial trail, into New Madrid, the town which gave its name to a legendary fault and the largest earthquake ever to hit North America.

While the Mississippi valley was lightly settled in 1812, it's said that the river ran backward into the rift created by the quake. An entire new lake was created on the Tennessee side.

There's nothing to see from the great quake, of course, just some historical markers. But the river itself is an attraction, bank-full and miles across, with huge barge tows making their way ever so slowly upriver against the current.

Trees big as a house floated in the torrent. It's an awesome thing to just stand there and take in the mighty flow, to appreciate its power and try to understand what a flood must be



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

like.

New Madrid (it's Mad-rid, not Mah-drid) turned out to be the site of decisive Civil War battles, where the federals seized control of the northern Mississippi and effectively cut the South in two. By digging a canal bypassing fortifications on Island No. 10, then eventually running the blockade with ironclads during a stormy night, Union forces took effective control of the river with few losses. They went on to cut through Tennessee to Georgia and, as they say, the rest is history.

Then we headed back to the four-lane to head north. We stopped in Cape Girardeau (birthplace of radio commentator Rush Limbaugh) for lunch, then pushed on north into the Missouri hills. The rolling country, crossing small streams and rivers, was a relief from the flats of Arkansas.

We shot through St. Louis, pushing north and west to U.S. 36, which we knew was the quickest route home, even though the four-lane pavement still has a 50-some mile gap in Missouri. (It should be done by the end of the year, however, with all the work under contract.)

We stopped in Marceline, where the town's

most notable product, a rather more likable alumnus named Walt Disney, is enshrined in a museum which occupies the old Santa Fe depot and offices. Once a railroad town with shops, yards, a division headquarters and hundreds of workers, the town now is bypassed by dozens of speeding freight trains each day. Only an empty concrete coal chute remains. Still, the place looked fairly prosperous.

Cynthia wanted more barbecue — we'd had barbecue all trip, in Kansas City, Nashville, Chattanooga, Georgia, wherever she could find it. But there was none to be found in central Missouri that evening, so we settled for Mexican and pushed on to St. Joseph for the night.

Next day, we spent our time taking photos along U.S. 36 for the route guide we publish every year. We snapped courthouses and squares and tourist attractions, pieces of road, old and new, and stopped in Hiawatha to mail some contest entries that had to go in.

We cruised on home that day, tired but happy, having seen a lot of interesting country, more sights than we had time to stop for or to take in.

We agreed, we'd do it again some day. But not this year.

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.

European system shouldn't be copied

Much has been said about President Obama's commitment to make the U.S. mirror European nations' spending, health care and environmental policies. It takes only a quick review of history to be reminded of how well this does not work.

In the 1970s, Great Britain was a weak socialist nation with many of its industries nationalized and taxation rates topping out at 98-percent. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher cleaned up a number of economic problems in the 1980s, but sadly, Britain has bounced back to a government deficit today which equates to 11.4 percent of gross domestic product. This is largely because of high pension and health care costs.

Sound familiar? Our President has passed a health-care bill that seeks to emulate the British system of high spending, and ultimately, care rationing.

The U.S is not in much better shape, either. Under the Obama-Reid-Pelosi regime, we will soon post the largest deficit since World War II at 10.6 percent of GDP. As Obama's Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has said in recent weeks, this leaves us with tough options: raise taxes, cut entitlement spending or cut discretionary spending.

Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson is operating in

Other Opinions

- Amanda Adkins
Kansas Republican Party

lock step with Obama's European-style agenda, which includes a priority to tax individuals and families more as the answer to balance the state's budget. Parkinson's plan is to be paid for with the largest tax increase in state history — a combination of a one-cent sales tax increase and a 70 percent increase on cigarettes and other tobacco products.

How far will Obama, Reid, Pelosi and Parkinson go?

We know what Lady Margaret Thatcher would say: "Let me give you my vision. A man's right to work as he will. To spend what he earns. To have the state as servant and not as master."

She was right, and this is America's inheritance, too.

For people who thought Democrats could sell European-style socialism to Americans,

the April 30 daily presidential tracking poll by Rasmussen Reports should prove alarming. Fifty-three percent of voters disapprove of Obama's performance as president. Kansans, being a people who look to community and family before government for answers, will take a hard look at the leadership on the ballot in November.

The question is simple: Do you want an America that rewards individual promise, entrepreneurship and centers on family, or do you want European-style socialism that penalizes hard work, stifles prosperity and celebrates government?

Kansas Republicans are presenting a united front with sound plans to meet the challenges of a 21st Century economy. Our philosophy centers on liberating the promise of the individual and family as the answer, not more government growth, to set us on a path to prosperity.

The choice is yours.

Amanda Adkins is chair of the Kansas Republican Party. She also is a business executive in the health-care industry and is raising her children with husband Jason in Overland Park.

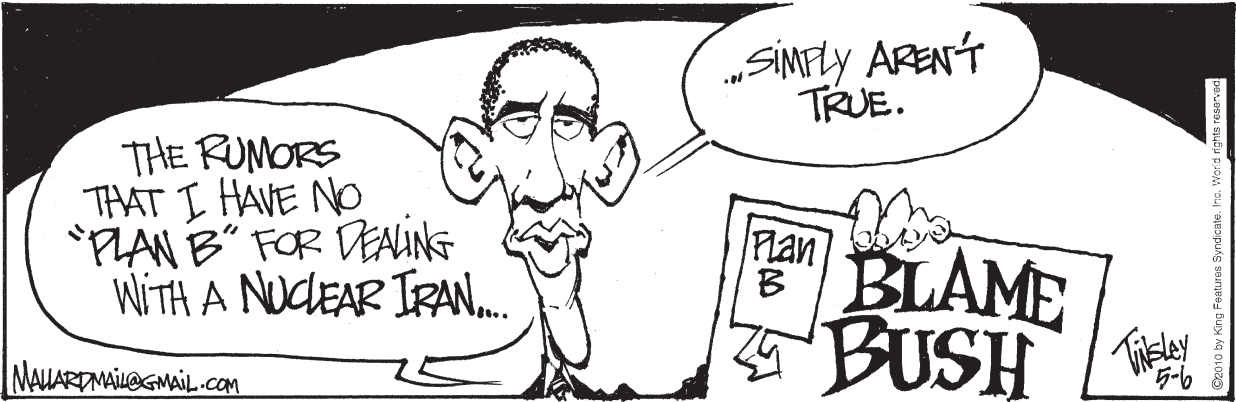
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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



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