

## Other Viewpoints

### Tax collections offer hopeful sign

One month does not an economic recovery make. Still, it was encouraging that the state collected significantly more tax revenue in August than expected. That also may be an indication that raising the statewide sales-tax rate isn't causing the economic damage some predicted.

The state collected nearly \$38 million more in taxes than anticipated in August, according to a preliminary report ... by the Kansas Department of Revenue. The biggest share of that increase was \$26 million more in retail sales-tax collections than expected.

Higher than expected revenues this month is another clear sign that Kansas is on the road to recovery, Gov. Mark Parkinson said in a statement. "August is the first month where we can adequately gauge the impact of the bipartisan budget passed this last session, and it appears that the modest sales-tax increase has not depressed the spending habits of Kansans, as some opponents suggested."

Parkinson may be reading too much into the August numbers. The accuracy of tax estimates tends to fluctuate from month to month. July tax collections, for example, were slightly below the estimate. Also, August is a relatively low tax-collection month. September will be a better gauge of how the state's economy is doing.

But the revenue results are promising. And at least so far, the sales-tax increase doesn't seem to be dampening consumer spending.

That may be partly because even after the statewide sales tax increased from 5.3 to 6.3 percent in July, the Kansas sales-tax rate is comparatively low.

A new study by the Tax Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., found that Wichita's combined state and local sales-tax rate of 7.3 percent is the 77th highest of 107 U.S. cities with populations greater than 200,000. Birmingham and Montgomery, Ala., have the highest combined sales-tax rate of 10 percent. Anchorage, Alaska, and Portland, Ore., are the only large cities that have no sales taxes.

Kansas certainly isn't out of the budget woods. A couple of bad collection months could send its budget out of balance, perhaps forcing Parkinson to make more allotment cuts.

Kansas also faces a significant budget challenge next fiscal year in that it will lose about \$400 million in federal stimulus money that has helped fund Medicaid and K-12 education. So just to keep funding flat, the state would need significant tax revenue growth.

Other states are facing similar challenges, if not much worse. According to a July 2010 report from the National Conference of State Legislatures, 33 states project budget gaps for fiscal year 2012 and 23 states for fiscal 2013.

But after two years of bad revenue news, the August numbers are a big relief. And it is understandable if Kansas officials are breathing a bit easier.

- The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press

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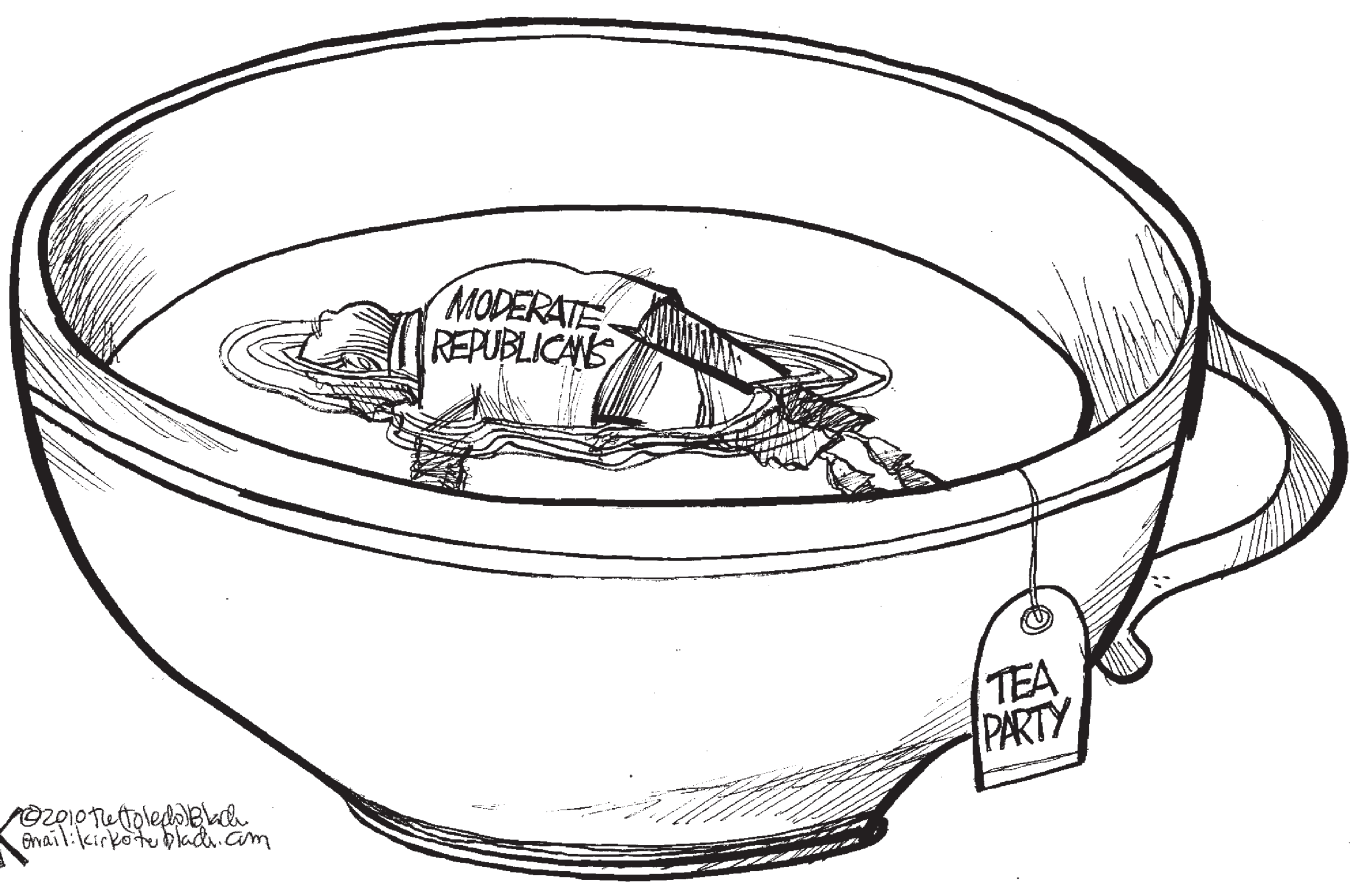
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### Great hit adds to great career

It was a touching moment.

A crowd of more than 37,000 fans at Denver's Coors Field stood and applauded, made noise and waved for two to three minutes Friday as veteran first baseman Todd Helton stood at third.

Helton had to wave his cap twice before the fans would sit down.

The announcer had just told them the Helton's seventh-inning double was No. 525 in his long career, putting him in a tie for 35th all-time among major league players. That brought him even with some guy named Ted Williams, who used to play in Boston.

After the game, Helton was typically humble, though reporters said he was grinning from ear to ear.

"Ted Williams? Come on. That's crazy. I don't comprehend it. It's hard to believe, but it's true."

At 38, Helton is no longer the everyday player who led the Rockies to so many memorable triumphs. He has platooned all year with 39-year-old Jason Giambi at first base and spent weeks on the disabled list with back problems.

Though Helton already has put up Hall-of-Fame numbers, he may have another good season or two in him. He certainly wants to



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

help push the Rocks to yet another September playoff run this year.

But for an aging superstar, and 37,265 of his friends, Friday night was pretty special.

And Sunday, when Giambi came off the bench to win the game with a two-run "walkoff" homer, wasn't bad either. The team had come from behind to tie the game, leaving a 2-2 score in the bottom of the ninth.

Giambi, as he has all year, was Manager Jim Tracey's choice to pinch hit "in the clutch."

It was his 39th birthday. Later, he seemed to think that it had been a good one.

As for the Rockies, it seems as though they can always find a way to win in September. The rest of the season, they get behind, forget it.

To understand this one, you have to know that in baseball, a game is "a save situation" when a team is leading by three or fewer runs

in the ninth inning. The team usually calls on its "closer," a relief pitcher who specializes in ending games, to pitch the ninth then.

It's not just that the pitcher, if successful, records a "save" in the record books, but closers are not to be wasted on big leads.

And out front, at 20th and Blake Street, there is a street preacher who tries to talk to the crowd after most every game. An associate holds up a big hand-lettered sign that says "Jesus Saves."

The guy talks and talks as the crowd sweeps by, headed home or perhaps intent on the dozens of bars and sin-holes down the street in the area they call LoDo. You have to admire his dedication.

Anyway, we were sweeping by, headed for our favorite bar, when the guy behind me asked his buddy, "What does that mean, Jesus Saves? That wasn't a save situation." (The Rocks had won 13-4.)

I suppose Jesus plays a different game, had souls to save that night, not a baseball game. The "save" would have gone to Rockies closer Huston Street - if there had been one. I think.

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.

### Fanning bigotry flames hurts everyone

I am reluctant to call someone ignorant. But those folks who are promoting the extravaganza of burning the Quran just might deserve to be labeled ignorant.

This quote is lifted from "Positive Quote of the Day" (johnfgroom@positivepress.com):

The sign of intelligent people is their ability to control emotions by the application of reason. - Marya Mannes (1904-1990), American journalist

There doesn't seem to be any application of reason to this promotion. It fans the flames of religious bigotry amongst both Christians and Muslims, as well as all other religious groups around the world.

The burning of the Quran will most likely spur the radical Muslims to retaliate with an equally inspiring bonfire of Christian Bibles. Then we can heighten the excitement with witch burnings and KKK bonfires. If this kind of freedom of actions and expression are left unchecked, the meanest extremists will prevail and our society will revert back to the Dark Ages.

Is government decree the only way to address these actions? Or, do we, as responsible, everyday citizens, have a Christian and/or civic duty to speak out against irresponsible actions?



Ken Poland

- Ken's World

Does speaking out against the Quran burnings indicate you are Muslim? That ridiculous accusation has been leveled at our President and any other prominent public spokesman who doesn't join the gleeful party.

Do our opinions regarding a Muslim group's building complex near the destroyed World Trade Center make us Muslim or religious bigots?

Religious and antireligious bigotry is strangling our nation's ability to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience. Your right to burn the Quran or any other book (even a copy of the Constitution or our national flag) is guaranteed by our Constitution. But, that doesn't make it a responsible, moral or ethical thing to do.

Respect for others is not a sign of weakness. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is the guiding principle for uncivilized society.

In the animal world, survival of the fittest

is generally a reflection of superior physical power or overwhelming numbers.

Are we humans no better than the animal species? Can we not use our intellectual faculties to settle our territorial and economic differences? Is the axiom "Live and Let Live" outdated?

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at [rwinc@cheerful.com](mailto:rwinc@cheerful.com).

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### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

