



Free Press
Viewpoint

Tax rebate offer
win-win for region

You have to hand it to Gov. Sam Brownback. He’s not only talking about doing something to help reverse the population decline in rural Kansas; he’s got a real plan.

The governor proposes a five-year rebate of income taxes for anyone who moves to a Kansas county suffering double-digit population declines. That includes most of northwest Kansas excepting Colby and Thomas County, but Colby would benefit greatly if the surrounding counties stopped bleeding people.

While many politicians have talked about stopping the population drain in rural areas, Brownback’s is among a handful of actual plans.

No one can say for sure how many people might be influenced to move to rural counties, of course. But the state can hardly lose.

The rural population drain is hurting the entire economy. While our population as a whole is up, rural losses kept the state’s growth down below that of others. That threatens the loss of one of our four remaining congressional seats, not this time, but perhaps 10 years down the road.

So the entire state has a stake in our plight. We’re all in this together.

The state can’t lose on the money end, either.

If few people move to rural areas and claim the rebate, then it won’t cost the state much. If a lot of people take the state up on this offer, then rural Kansas will prosper and people will be paying more taxes and the state will benefit in the long run.

From our perspective out in rural Kansas, this program cannot hurt. If it’s a winner, the state will be paying. Cities and counties and school districts will reap the rewards.

And let’s face it, folks. Something is better than nothing. We’re losing our way of life. We need some help.

It’s hard to imagine any program that could help rural counties any more than this one. We’ve seen the standard economic development efforts, and they have not accomplished much.

Bringing new jobs to rural areas is tough. The basic problem is the decline in farm numbers, a trend that’s been rolling along for more than a century. It’s finally gotten to the point that there’s almost no one left in many rural areas. A lot of farmers live in town, and many plan to retire soon.

With our cities becoming more and more crowded, rural America offers a way of life that includes room to breathe, contact with nature, unpolluted skies and low crime. It’s an ideal place to raise a family, but few want to try. Economic challenges, finding a job, are a big part of that.

So we hope the Legislature will pass this part of the governor’s program, and quickly. Even if the cost starts to mount, the state will win. We’ll be able to afford it.

And there’s nothing else on the horizon that might help much. — *Steve Haynes*

Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

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Electronic checks have drawbacks too

Banking by computer saves time and money – usually.

My husband keeps telling me that I should put the business banking on the computer and issue electronic checks for my accounts payable.

That sounds like a good idea. If I could buy fewer checks, fewer stamps and fewer envelopes, I should save time. Not having to take said checks to the post office will save more time, and not having to worry about whether the payments get there on time would relieve stress.

Getting there on time is my biggest stress with check writing.

How long will it take to get the gas payment to Hays? Will a week do for the AT&T bills? What about credit card payments? Those are the trickiest. If your gas or telephone payment is late, you get a note warning you that it is late and a late payment fee. If your credit card payment is late or for the wrong amount – less than the minimum – they send you a nasty note



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

and raise your interest rate to something that would make a loan shark blush.

So I tried. However, my bank and my computer software are not compatible.

Don’t you just hate that?

My only choice is to do everything to set up a bill-payment system on my personal computer and then transfer everything by hand over to my business computer.

Doing everything twice does not sound like a savings of time or money to me. However, I might think about it for the credit card companies.

Having a system that automatically pays

them a minimum amount might be worth the trouble. I could still send a hand check when I get their bill so that I pay more than minimum and that way I wouldn’t miss a payment either because their bill didn’t arrive, or ended up lost on my desk or in the mail.

Of course, electronic banking has its drawbacks, too.

Last Monday, Steve put one too many zeros at the end of his check and overpaid a local business by \$2,200. Luckily it wasn’t to a credit card since we, like most people, can’t afford to pay and extra \$2,200 to anyone.

The bank covered the check. The business refunded the money. I was a supportive wife and didn’t give him any grief.

I never said I wouldn’t tell.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor’West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

Municipal elections belong at home

To the Editor:

A letter was sent to electors in the western part of the county Sept. 10 from Shelly A. Harms, Thomas County clerk and election officer, stating the reasons for her decision to continue the consolidation of polling locations in the county seat, Colby.

Since that time, several citizens have talked to her regarding that decision, especially as it regards municipal elections.

The consolidation of polling places forces the citizens of Brewster to vote at the polling location in Colby for a Brewster city election. How would the citizens of Colby feel if they had to travel to Brewster to vote for their Colby mayor and council members?

Should Brewster citizens feel any less put out by not being able to vote for their mayor and council members in Brewster?

Her letter stated in part:

- That there is ample parking at the Colby Community Building.
- It is fully accessible for individuals with disabilities.
- Voting machines and trained operators are available to assist voters.
- There is room to accommodate new voters....
- Better supervision of the polling place to prevent problems such as electioneering or voter harassment.
- Recruiting a sufficient number of qualified election judges has become increasingly difficult.
- More and more voters are choosing to either vote early at the Courthouse or request



Free Press
Letter Drop

- Our readers sound off

ballots to be mailed.

- Everyone would know which polling place to vote at because there is only the one.
- Calls into the office from election judges are reduced on election day.
- Ballots are still organized by precincts.
- Ten ... AutoMark voting machines, two ... tabulator machines, EA Pool Books, ballots, voting booths ... all must be set up prior to election day and torn down after the polls close. All required to be under the supervision of the county election officer and staff.

We respond:

- There is ample parking for a polling location in Brewster.
- The Brewster City Building is fully accessible and doesn’t need an elevator.
- If operators can be trained to work in Colby, they can be trained to work in Brewster.
- There is room to accommodate new voters at the Brewster City Building.
- We have never had any electioneering or voter harassment that we know of, and if supervision can be accomplished in Colby, it can be in Brewster.
- Verle Crumrine, David Mayer, Bonnie

Reid, Joyce Crabtree, Juanita Aschenbrenner, Paula Fox, Clifford Fox, Rae Stewart, Donna Coleen Crumrine and Mike Baughn are willing to be qualified as election judges in Brewster. Several would volunteer if asked.

- What has more and more voters choosing to either vote early at the courthouse or request ballots to be mailed have to do with taking away our polling location?
- There would be only one polling location in Brewster, at the Brewster City Building and people here are smart enough to know where it is. After all, they have voted there before.
- Ballots for a Brewster city election would not have to be “organized by precincts.”
- In a republic, government serves the people; in a dictatorship, the people serve the government. People aren’t elected to public office to not put forth any effort to serve the electorate.

Common sense should prevail, but obviously the Legislature didn’t take that into account when it gave county election officers dictatorial power.

Maybe Rexford, Gem and Menlo don’t mind going to Colby to vote in their municipal elections. We do!

The Brewster Governing Body:

Mike Baughn, mayor
Rex Jamison,
Dwayne Randolph,
John Horney,
Bill Selby,
Craig Fulwider,
council members



Where to write, call

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roberts.senate.gov/public/
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Mallard
Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

