

Other Viewpoints

Improve efficiency before outsourcing

Facing a \$492 million revenue shortfall in the next fiscal year, Kansas lawmakers are looking for dollars just about everywhere.

So it's no wonder that statehouse discussions have turned to whether it makes financial sense to privatize some governmental functions. Some legislators are pushing proposals that would require the state to undertake two yearlong studies focused on outsourcing government functions.

One proposal calls for setting up an 11-member council on privatization that would look at the issue and report to the 2012 session of the Legislature. The House has approved establishment of such a committee; the Senate has taken no action. Legislators who support the move say it has the backing of Gov. Sam Brownback. Creation of the council has drawn criticism in some circles from folks worried about actually growing government.

The privatization idea also is stretching to higher education. Rep. Joe McLeland, R-Wichita, wants the Kansas Board of Regents to look at everything from selling or leasing residence halls to contracting with private companies to provide janitorial services on campuses. McLeland believes the Regents institutions should focus their energies and their dollars on their primary mission: educating students.

On its face, outsourcing government functions to the private sector appears to be a logical move. It's often said that business can do things more efficiently – faster and for less money – than government can. Outsourcing sometimes works well, as it did a number of years ago when Kansas University achieved significant savings by privatizing its printing service.

However, the move to privatization could bring some unintended consequences, including the possibility of increased cronyism, as the state gets into the business of awarding huge contracts. It would require significant oversight to ensure that lawmakers and others in state government were not repaying political favors as they awarded governmental contracts.

A move to privatization would have a significant impact on a large portion of the work forces in Lawrence, Topeka and other Kansas communities where government jobs are plentiful. There's also the question of how the state would ensure that private contractors provide an acceptable level of service for jobs currently performed by state employees over whom the state has direct responsibility.

If the prime motivation for privatizing government duties is money, why can't state government show some self-discipline and save money by tightening its own belt and finding efficiencies? Rather than just turning the job over to private companies in the hope of saving money, maybe the state would be better off taking direct action to save taxpayers money by making its own operations more efficient.

– The Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

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. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this

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@nwkansas.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@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Sports

colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor

Shelby Pulkrabek - Society Reporter
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Andrea Bowers, Kathryn Ballard
Advertising Representatives
abowers@nwkansas.com kb Ballard@nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

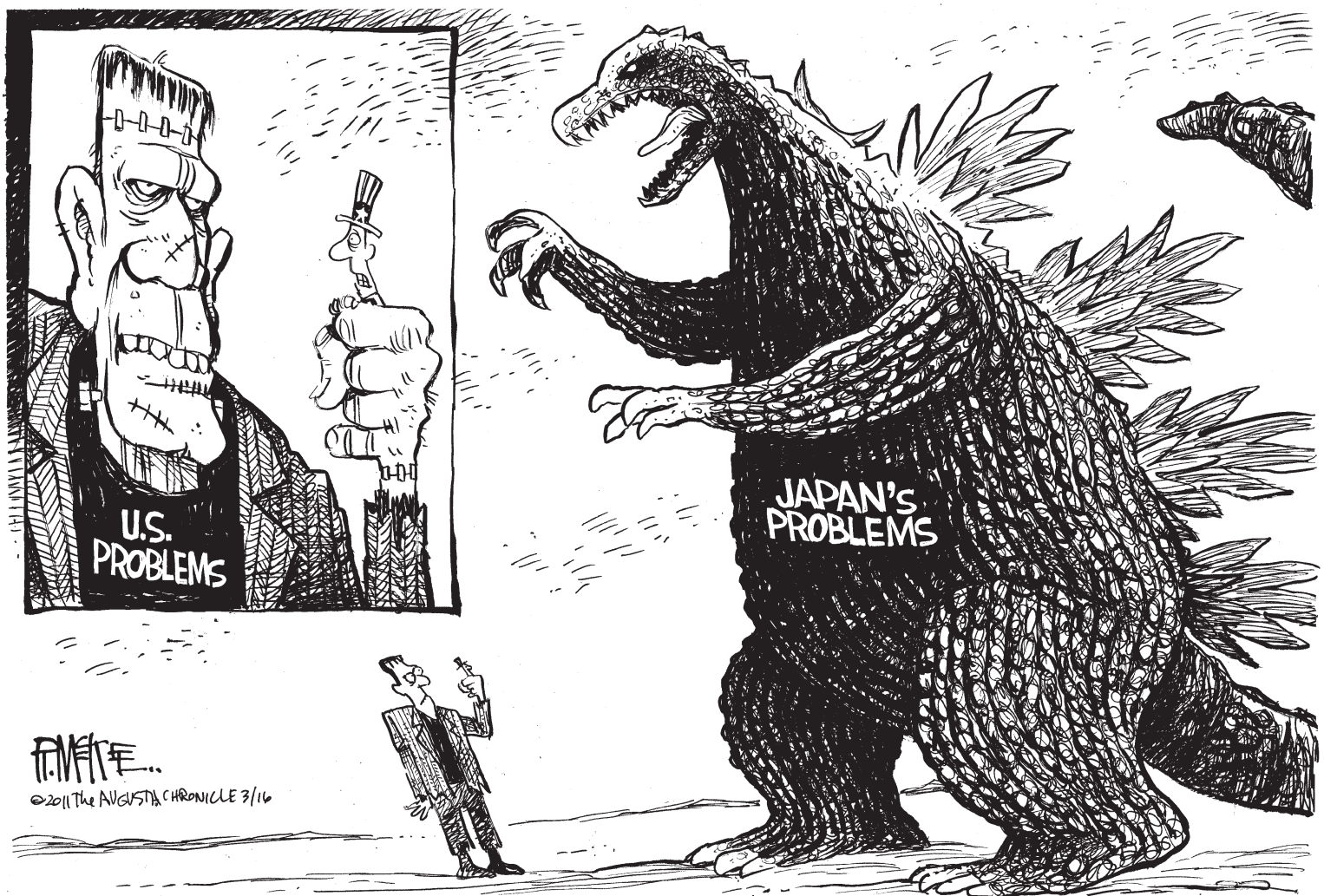
Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker,
Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

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



First meetings make great stories

Late in the evening last week, we were in the bar at a South Carolina hotel, talking with friends and sipping beer or coffee – some of us had to drive home – when the topic of how we'd met our mates came up.

Everyone had a pretty good story. Leslie said she'd actually met Ned before, on a college double date with a friend she knew was two-timing him. Then later, another girlfriend had a date but no ride, and Ned had a car. So she promised to find him a date.

The friend ran into Leslie in the hall and told her she had to go out on a date with this guy, "but you'll never have to see him again in your whole entire life."

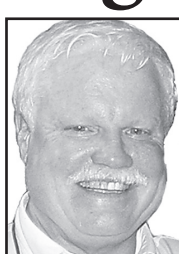
The two couples were so broke, she said, they went looking for free entertainment. For dinner, they went to McDonalds and had enough to buy two hamburgers and two bags of fries, which they split.

And while she might not have been required to see Ned again, the rest is, as they say, history.

Cynthia told the table about how we'd been introduced because she needed a date for her sorority formal. We met at a Young Republicans party a week or two before the dance. I guess I passed inspection, at least as an emergency date.

I took her to the Savoy Grill in downtown Kansas City before the dance, and I think she was a little impressed that the waiter knew me by name. (My dad has been eating there since he was a teen.)

When I admitted that I'd won the money I used to buy her corsage and the bubbly in a



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

poker game that afternoon, though, she said she thought I might have been the kind of guy her mother had warned her about.

(And to this day, I'm not sure if that was a good point or a bad.)

I got to tell about how she got cold feet and dumped me the year before her graduation, and how the guys in the back of the newsroom conspired with me to get her back.

Since she'd made me promise not to call her, we settled on Bob Dye's suggestion that I send her a single red rose with an unsigned card that said simply, "I miss you."

She called right away. I thought Mark and Liz had the best story, though. Reporters for competing newspapers in New Jersey, both single and 20-something, they met, Liz said, at a murder scene. For months, though, she refused to date him. They went out with a friend of his, but never on a "date."

Only when he got a job offer in Saudi Arabia did they face the issue. Late into the night they talked, and Mark said, he launched into a long speech. Liz said she cut him off, told him to "just go to Arabia," went into the next room, where she realized that he was trying to pro-

pose. (Mark admits he's a little long-winded.) "And here I'd cut him off. I went back in there and just told him to start over," she said. More history.

All those were long-lived romances, 30, 35 and 40 years. The next is more a tale of late-blooming young love.

A week later, we were having dinner with Jennifer and heard how she'd met John. She does public relations and projects for the Alabama Sport Hall of Fame in Birmingham; he runs a small-town newspaper. They met at the state press convention, where else?

She'd been married, but it had not gone well. She said she really wasn't looking to do that again. He was married, but unbeknownst to him, not for long.

John invited her to come down and talk to his Rotary Club. Both are painters, and she took her latest work to show him. He wanted her to meet his goats.

The painting fell on him, she had to walk through mud in her heels and then he managed to tell her he'd gotten divorced and his dog had died over Thanksgiving.

"I was so outta there," she said, adding that later, she noticed what a good sense of humor he had. What a nice guy he was. And when he called and asked her to go to lunch, she said yes, even though they live 90 miles apart.

The smile on her face when she tells that story is something to see.

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.

Budget negotiations break down

It is hard to believe we have already completed nine weeks of the legislative session. This week will be the last to work bills in committees. Come Friday, no more bills will be able to come to the floor.

Freeze Bill Negotiations

The political maneuvering has begun – Senate and House continue to meet trying to agree on the rescission bill to balance the budget. Governor Brownback announced Thursday he would begin to cut money from the budget.

Late Thursday the conference committee members from the House and Senate met and the House accepted the Senate's compromise offer on the budget. It would save \$20 million instead of the \$36 million that the House wanted. The House was surprised when the Senate refused to sign their own offer.

Early Friday morning a conference committee meeting was called, at noon, in hope of an agreement on the rescission bill. Unfortunately the Senate conferees did not appear, forcing the Governor to continue with his allotment authority to reduce the fiscal year 2011 budget by \$56.5 million.

The House conferees believe that, although the Governor has made allotments to get the state to a zero balance, it is still prudent for the legislature to capture additional dollars to give Governor Brownback's budget a positive ending balance for fiscal year 2011. We want to continue meeting with the conferees from the Senate when they come back to the table for negotiations.

Gubernatorial Inaugural Funds

When Governor Brownback was elected last year many of us were surprised to find out



Rick Billinger

• This week in Topeka

under current law he would not be able to donate the proceeds of his inauguration ball to charity, as he had planned. This was a worthy way to use these extra funds. SB67 allows unused funds to be donated to a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Final action is expected next week.

Equal Benefits for Agent Orange Treatment

Thousands of Vietnam veterans suffer from the effects of exposure to Agent Orange. Although, commonly associated with Vietnam, the chemical was also used in surrounding areas and many veterans who served outside of Vietnam are struggling with the same health issues and side affects from Agent Orange. This week the House passed HCR 5016 unanimously, urging Congress to extend equal benefits and compensation for the treatment of Agent Orange exposure to Vietnam era veterans who served outside of Vietnam.

Monday the entire House was to work the unemployment insurance bill that passed out of committee Thursday. Next week I will comment on the particulars of the bill.

So far this session we have spent a lot of time on social issues, but committees have also been working on the budget, economic

issues and tax concerns. Leadership has said budget, more tax and economic issues will start appearing this week on the floor.

I have requested a resolution for the late Jim Morrison today. Karen Morrison and her family will be in Topeka to receive this award. Next week's newsletter will have more information about this resolution.

I am working on a survey to mail to voters later in the session. It is my honor to represent the people of the 121st District. If you have input on issues which will come before the Legislature this year, please contact me at rick.billinger@house.ks.gov or call me at (785) 899-4700.

Rick Billinger is the state representative from the 121st District. He currently serves on the Commerce and Economic Development, Education Funding, Insurance and Local Government committees, along with the Rural Policy Commission.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774
roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

