

Other Viewpoints

Arts checkoff deserves support

Response to a proposed income tax "checkoff" that would allow Kansans to contribute some of their money to the arts could best be described as less than enthusiastic.

That is a shame. Leaders of the arts community were distraught last year when Gov. Sam Brownback vetoed a \$689,000 allocation to the Kansas Arts Commission in favor of formation of a private, nonprofit foundation to administer arts funding and grants....

However, private funding didn't come through in an amount sufficient to compensate for the loss of the Arts Commission funding and matching grants the public funding would have garnered from the National Endowment for the Arts and a regional arts alliance.

This year, Brownback proposes merging arts and film in a Creative Industries Commission under the Kansas Department of Commerce and allocating \$200,000 to the commission. He hopes the new alignment will make the state eligible again for matching funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and regional arts alliance.

Several legislators also proposed the arts checkoff to raise money for the arts from the private sector when citizens file their annual state income tax returns.

The House approved the checkoff bill last Thursday on a 95-29 vote and sent it on to the Senate.

Sarah Fizell, a spokeswoman for Kansas Citizens for the Arts, allowed as how the money it might raise would be a good thing but noted it wasn't the type of funding that would draw the matching money. Fizell said her group ... was focusing on restoring the grant money lost last year....

Focusing on restoring sufficient public funding to ensure the receipt of matching grants is understandable. But failing to take a position on the checkoff and the private money it could produce - regardless of how great or small the amount - sends the wrong message to Kansans, particularly those who were less than distraught when the state funding was cut off.

Some of the people whose tax dollars - public money - would be used to fund the arts and attract the matching funds might feel better if the arts community was also raising as much private money as possible. Given the amount of support for the arts, there should be people out there willing to donate some of their own dollars to the cause through a checkoff.

One legislator who opposed the checkoff noted the lack of support for it among the arts community, and also said another checkoff option might reduce the amount of money raised through those already on the state's income tax forms.

When Kansans file their income tax returns now, they can contribute to Meals on Wheels, the Chickadee Checkoff, military emergency relief or breast cancer research. If adding another option is a bad idea, how did four checkoffs get on the income tax forms?

Legislators should let the taxpayers decide what causes they want to support. And members of the arts community who are asking legislators for more public money shouldn't be so nonchalant when those legislators offer to help them raise some private money.

The arts checkoff now is in the Senate, where there apparently is some support for allocating more public money to the arts than the \$200,000 recommended by Brownback. It might be a good time for the arts community to show some support for legislators' attempts to generate some private money, too.

- The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press

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.

Sharon Friedlander - Publisher sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

News Editor colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor mballard @ nwkansas.com

Christina Beringer - Society Reporter colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard

Advertising Representative kballard @ nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Kylie Freeman - Office Manager kfreeman @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator support @ nwkansas.com

NOR/WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Gary Meyer, Pressmen

Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel, Mailing

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.

The dismal deed his pain had made him sincere. He was one of those who had been... DISTURBING: A STORY PUBLISHED ON FACEBOOK BY THE ALLEGED CHARDON HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTER.

REALLY DISTURBING: FOUR PEOPLE CLICKED "LIKE" RATHER THAN REPORT IT TO AN ADULT. 4 people like this.

Let's start to bring young people home

The speaker at the recent Farmer and Rancher Appreciation Banquet in Oberlin had an important message for all of us, both farmers and ranchers and the business people who supported the banquet.

If we want to preserve our small-town, rural way of life, said Dr. Welden Sleight, dean of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, we need to act now before it's too late. He talked about his hometown in Idaho, where no one acted, and today, it's nearly too late to save a business community.

He asked Ryan May to come up and represent our youth. Rural America needs to bring its young people back home to take over or start businesses, he said. If no one does that, soon there will be no businesses and no farmers and ranchers to support them.

"We've got to keep Oberlin alive," Dr. Sleight said, "and the best way to do that is to bring Ryan (now a high school junior) back."

Every business owner and professional, he said, should ask a young person they know and feel is capable to consider coming back to take over their business. And while a graduate just out of college might not be able to buy out a large farming operation, he or she could start with, say, 100 cows, and build up a ranch.

The key, he said, pointing to population trends in both Kansas and Nebraska, is we've got to start asking, or pretty soon, everyone will be living in Johnson County, Omaha and Lincoln.

Interestingly, state Rep. Ward Cassidy echoed these thoughts just a few days later. At



Steve Haynes

Along the Sappa

a "town hall" meeting in Oberlin, he stressed that rural towns need to find ways to bring their young people back.

Those who aren't in business can do their part by supporting businesses here, Dr. Sleight said, and not spending their money in other towns. He was especially critical of Walmart, which he said contributes nothing to towns like Oberlin, Atwood and St. Francis.

"A hundred dollars spent at Walmart brings \$15 back to McCook," he said, "and nothing back to Oberlin. A hundred dollars spent in Oberlin puts \$45 back into Oberlin."

"Is it worth saving a few dollars for that?" (And we might add, the benefits of shopping in locally owned stores in Colby and Goodland are similar.)

People shop out of town mostly for clothes, groceries and household products, Dr. Sleight said, even when those products may be available at home.

"Why?" he asked. One of the big reasons people give is "the store at home isn't open."

"I'll bet we could go to the Walmart parking lot right now and find Kansas cars with Decatur County plates," he said. "We've got to

change that."

He said his college is pushing programs to allow graduates to get into business or start farm operations, because only those with experience and some capital built up will be able to take over larger operations later.

But the rest of us, farmers, ranchers, business owners, government workers and educators, the whole town, need to pull together for each other and the future of rural America.

Instead of just sending our kids off to college, he said, we need to ask them to plan on coming home, and then help make that possible.

Today, too often, rural people think it's enough to raise money to send our kids off to college. Before World War II, that might have worked. Since 1950, though, the shift to the city has become more pronounced with each census. While most of us value our rural lifestyle - low crime, no traffic, clean air, lots of countryside and outdoor opportunities - we're not doing much to save it except wringing our hands.

But if each of us would make an effort to ask just one student to come back, to buy just a few more things in town, to do a little more business here, things might change. If every business did just a little to encourage more shopping here - not just complain that people go to other towns - we might just make it.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

America needs a victory for middle class

Proponents of extending the Social Security tax holiday warned of dire consequences if Congress and the president failed to extend the two-percent reduction.

The loudest voices argued that the average worker missing \$40 in a biweekly paycheck would cause our economy to come to a grinding halt.

Amid the hullabaloo, few talked about what will happen when this extension expires at the end of this year. In addition to this tax break disappearing, every tax-paying American will be subject to higher taxes as a result of the expiration of the Bush-Obama tax cuts.

When President Obama extended the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts 14 months ago, he declared it a "substantial victory for middle class families." Considering that few middle class families have prospered or even improved their finances over the past few years, it is probably safe to say that failure to renew this tax relief would be a defeat.

But better than another extension with another deadline would be a permanent tax reduction. Last month I introduced the "American Freedom and Opportunity Act" which will create permanent income tax brackets of 10, 25, 28, 33 and 35 percent (as opposed to 15, 28, 31, 36 and 39.6 percent, as scheduled). This will allow more money to remain in the hands of consumers rather than at the disposal of a wasteful federal government. More economic activity often means more government revenue.

In addition, this legislation will create a permanent capital gains tax rate of 15 percent. For those in the 10 and 15 percent income tax brackets, they will only have to pay a 10 percent tax rate on their capital gains. "Capital



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

Capitol Notes

gains" may conjure up images of Wall Street, but it should evoke thoughts of Main Street. Small business is the backbone of the American economy, and punishing investment with higher capital gains tax harms entrepreneurs.

I was reminded of the impact of increased capital gains taxes when I had a town hall meeting in Junction City earlier this month. "Joe" (not his real name) said that because of proposed tax increases, there are seven people in Junction City he will not hire. "Joe in Junction City" is not a Wall Street fat cat; he is a small business entrepreneur who lives an ordinary life in an ordinary town in Kansas.

Furthermore, this legislation has considerable benefits for American families. It will make permanent the child tax credit of \$1,000, and will continue to allow taxpayers to deduct post-secondary educational expenses.

To those who say we need more revenue to get deficits under control, one only need look at President Obama's latest budget proposal to know such logic is flawed. Washington's problem is overspending. Despite a \$1.9 trillion tax increase in the budget he recently proposed, the next ten years still results in nearly \$7 trillion more in American debt.

To those who say that we need to "tax the rich" more, I ask: How much is enough? Forty percent of all income taxes come from the top

1 percent; nearly 60 percent come from the top five percent of earners. Meanwhile, about half of all Americans pay nothing in income taxes. Is this what constitutes fairness?

In a recent nationwide poll conducted by The Hill, 75 percent of Americans said that those in the top bracket (those earning \$250,000 or more) should have a tax rate of 30 percent or less. In fact, 61 percent of those surveyed said the highest earners should have a tax rate of 25 percent or less. Polls should not necessarily drive public policy, but when this debate is fundamentally about "fairness," the American people must weigh in on what constitutes "fair."

Now more than ever, America needs the Bush-Obama tax cuts to be made permanent. Regardless of how the elections play out, American families and job creators need certainty now. We cannot afford to allow these scheduled tax increases to go forward and break the back of a fragile economy.

However, better than making these tax cuts permanent would be to throw out the whole tax code and start from scratch. Instead of being unnecessarily and excessively distracted by small items like the Social Security tax holiday, shifting brackets or temporary tax gimmicks for whatever special interest wins the day, we need to be focused on the bigger picture. Fewer loopholes, reduced rates for everyone and all corporations and a broader base would all go a long way in ensuring the most fairness for the most people - and create economic freedom and opportunity for America.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp of Fowler represents the First District of Kansas. He serves on the Veterans' Affairs, Budget, and Agriculture Committees.

Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

