



## Other Viewpoints

### Reckless budgeting closes vital courts

If Kansans find a court closed when they need it in the coming weeks, they can blame House GOP leaders for arrogantly and recklessly playing politics with the state's judicial system before the Legislature adjourned for spring break.

House Speaker Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, was warned by Chief Justice Lawton Nuss in February that without legislative approval of a \$1.4 million supplemental appropriation by March 31, the state court system's 1,500 employees would have to be furloughed for five days over several pay periods, causing courts to be closed statewide on those days.

What's more, the Legislature's two chambers had a deal regarding the money. But the House reneged in a last-minute dispute with the Senate over the source of \$26 million in supplemental school funds for the current fiscal year. And the Legislature adjourned March 30 without finalizing the legislation.

So it should have been no surprise to O'Neal when Nuss announced that the courts would be closed for five days between April 13 and June 8.

Worse, at least for taxpayers, the move to save \$1.2 million from the court budget could cost the state as much as \$750,000 in unemployment benefits. And that fund can ill afford it, having been so stressed by the recession that it still owes more than \$163 million borrowed from the federal government.

This is unlike the courts' four-day shutdown in 2010, amid the budget crisis. Through March, state revenue collections were \$72 million above expectations for fiscal year 2012, which ends June 30. So this time, the money is there. O'Neal and other House leaders, notably Appropriations Committee Chairman Marc Rhoades, R-Newton, just chose to ignore Nuss and gamble that the courts could get by. In an echo of their imprudent and ill-informed advice to school districts, O'Neal and Rhoades continue to insist that Nuss can dip into fee funds.

But as Nuss has said, the courts have been borrowing from those funds since the revenue problem was identified in early January, the result of an unexpected decline in filings of court cases. Nuss expects to need the fee funds for payroll as the new fiscal year begins in July.

Besides, as Nuss noted, the Legislature has mandated the use of those court fees, and House leaders have made it clear that they don't want the judicial branch trampling on legislative will when it comes to how money is spent.

It's possible the Legislature can act quickly when it reconvenes on April 25 and allow Nuss to rescind some of the furlough days. Let's hope so.

In any case, the responsibility for what O'Neal and Rhoades rightly called an "unnecessary" court shutdown falls on them.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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Send news to: [colby.editor@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansas.com)

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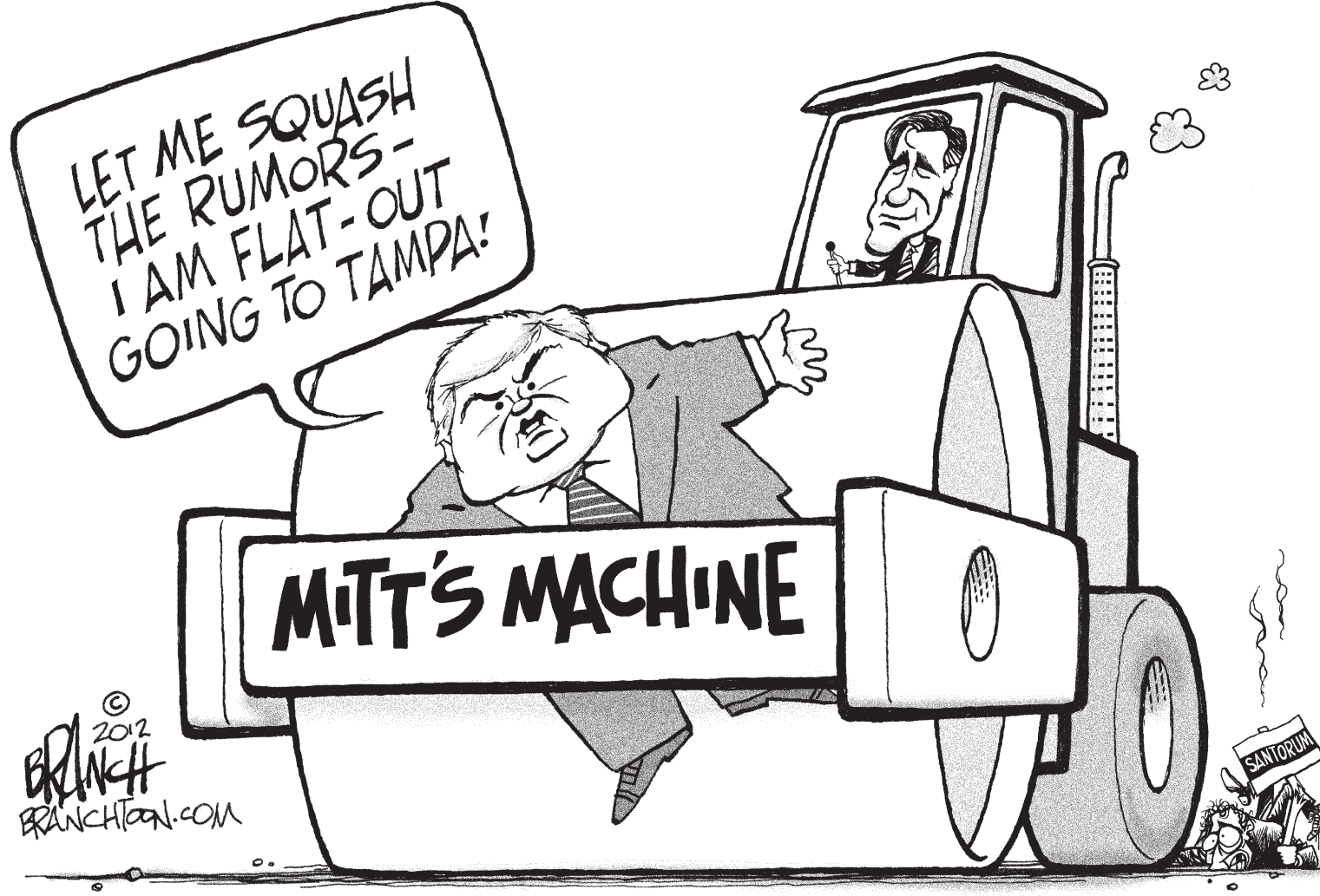
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. 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



### Hotel opened before first train arrived

*This is a continuation of the Cooper Hotel Story from my last column. The booklet by Bill James and Vern Dimmitt was used as a reference for this article with permission of Arlene James.*



**Marj Brown**

#### • Marj's Snippets

In the early spring of 1888, Warden's dream hotel was completed and Joe O'Pelt of Omaha came to Colby to manage it. The name was then changed to the O'Pelt Hotel.

On Tuesday, Nov. 13, 1888, the first passenger train linking Salina and Colby was to arrive in Colby on the Salina, Lincoln and Western Railroad, which would become part of the Union Pacific.

Many Union Pacific officials had announced that they would ride the train into Colby. All of them made reservations at the O'Pelt. A gala party was planned by the city with a band on hand to greet the 200 passengers. A story written in *The Thomas County Cat* said: "The

management of the O'Pelt Hotel deserves particular complements for the prompt and efficient exertions made to accommodate the great crowd that thronged the hotel."

However, the excitement was soon over. The next day, as soon as the train pulled out with its passengers, the hotel went back trying to make a living off of the few travelers who could afford to stay there.

Two years later, in 1891, P.J. Goss took over management of the hotel. A short time later, in 1892, J.B. Hale, receiver for the Bradford

Savings Bank and Trust Co., filed a lien on the hotel and sued the stockholders to recover the bank's money. Justice Charles Smith ordered the sheriff to hold a sale and sell the hotel for cash to the highest bidder. At the sale on Dec. 12, 1894, a sheriff's deed was issued to James B. Hale for the amount of \$5,000.

Goss continued to operate the hotel and dining room for Hale until 1898. Hale offered to sell the hotel to Goss for \$2,000, but Goss thought the price was too high. Goss finally agreed to rent the hotel for a period of five years for \$15 per month.

Goss continued to manage the hotel until 1899, when he sold his interest in the hotel and the two additional lots he had purchased to the north to Charles Scherer for \$100. Scherer continued to rent the hotel for \$15 per month until 1902 when he purchased it from the bank for \$2,000.

Scherer found it difficult to keep the hotel operating in the black and late in that same year he sold it to August Lauterbach for \$3,250 and moved to California.

J.L. Parrott was hired to operate the O'Pelt Hotel for Lauterbach. Parrott purchased the hotel from Lauterbach two years later, in 1904.

At that time, two other hotels in Colby, the Colby House and the Farmer's Hotel, had closed and the only competition was the Windsor Hotel, which burned down in 1907.

Parrott added a porch that ran along the south and west sides of the hotel. The porch became a favorite spot for salesmen to sit in the evenings to share stories. Parrott also did some remodeling on the inside. At that time the price of a room was \$2 per night and the coffee shop was noted for its food.

Because of space limits, I will complete the hotel story in my next column.

*Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.*



### Intervention can make a difference

The home that 9-year-old Raven lived in with her parents was filthy.

Alcohol had become her mother Christine's single-minded obsession. Neglect of Raven and their home was the collateral damage of Christine making sure she got to the liquor store when it opened in the morning. It's hard to prepare meals or run a vacuum when the rest of the day is spent sleeping or in a deep depression.

Alcohol also fueled terrible fights between Christine and her husband Paul. They were never physically abusive to Raven, but the family was spiraling into the depths of dysfunction and despair.

Their situation culminated in Christine being arrested for drunken driving. A judge ordered Raven removed from the family home. The Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services placed her in foster care.

Five months later, Christine and Paul are sober. They have a good relationship with Raven's foster parents. Raven will rejoin her family at home in May.

It's like a before and after picture from a makeover show. But what happened to bring this family back from the brink is the result of months of hard work and introspection on the part of Christine and Paul, as well as the dedication of social workers at the department



### Other Opinions

• Phyllis Gilmore  
Secretary SRS

and TFI Family Services.

"They never pointed a finger; they held our hand and showed us the proper outlook," Christine said. "They always found something positive in me - even when I was at my worst."

We're so thankful we were able to help Christine and her family to overcome a tough situation. Her attitude and hope for the future is inspiring. And we are happy Raven will be able to return to a safe, caring home.

Truth of the matter is, the Department of Social Services would rather not have to step in at all. We'd rather all families stay healthy.

Even though that's not a realistic scenario, we do work to prevent child abuse through education. Increased awareness of the problem is the first step toward making it a rare occurrence. With that goal in mind, Gov. Sam Brownback proclaimed April Child Abuse Pre-

vention Month in Kansas. This month we're planting shiny blue pinwheels around the state as a reminder of the importance of child abuse prevention.

There have been almost 13,000 substantiated reports of abuse or neglect in Kansas since July 1. Many of those cases were reported by concerned neighbors, friends or family members.

Maybe they observed a malnourished child who never seemed to want to go home. Or saw bruises or other injuries that couldn't just be attributed to childhood clumsiness. Perhaps a child was overly passive, compliant and withdrawn, but always watchful, as if waiting for something to happen. Or maybe their alarm couldn't be put into words, but their instincts said something just wasn't right.

State law requires the department to guard the anonymity of individuals who report alleged cases of abuse or neglect. On our website you can find out more about signs to look for that may indicate child abuse: [www.srs.ks.gov](http://www.srs.ks.gov). If you know a child who could be the victim of abuse or neglect, call our 24-hour hotline, (800) 922-5330. A caseworker will follow up within 72 hours.

Please do your part. Every child in Kansas deserves to be safe at home.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

