

Other Viewpoints

State of Kansas — try state of takers

Statewide, Kansas receives about \$1.12 in federal spending for every tax dollar paid.

Though many Kansans like to complain about federal spending, they may not realize, or won't admit, how much our state depends on that spending. If they are serious about wanting smaller government, they will have to share the pain of spending cuts.

A *Kansas City Star* investigation highlighted Sumner County, just south of Wichita. It noted how the direct federal benefits that the county's 24,000 residents received in 2010 were 40 to 50 percent more, on average, than what they paid in federal taxes.

The largest spending was on Social Security and Medicare, but federal money also went for farm subsidies, Medicaid, food stamps, school lunches, economic development, aviation improvements and many other programs and projects that support the county's citizens and economy. And this doesn't include noncash federal benefits, such as tax breaks for health insurance or mortgage interest.

Sumner County is not unique. In fact, the *Star* chose it because it was typical of most of rural America, and federal expenditures there fell within expected ranges. Sedgwick County actually topped the state in receiving the most federal spending — \$4.6 billion in 2010. Statewide, Kansas receives about \$1.12 in federal spending for every tax dollar paid.

Yet many Kansans don't think of their state or themselves as "takers."

"People don't connect the dots," Shelley Hansel-Williams, executive director of the Wellington Area Chamber of Commerce, told the *Star*.

This is particularly the case with Social Security. Many senior citizens resent the term "entitlement," arguing that they are merely getting back what they paid in during a lifetime of working. But Social Security taxes don't go into an account that is saved for when you retire. Rather, the taxes you pay now help pay for people who are already retired. And most senior citizens receive far more in benefits than they contributed in taxes.

Even modest changes to Social Security, such as President Obama's proposal to slow the inflation rate on benefits, are met with fierce opposition.

The nation's budget problem is serious and will require spending cuts, entitlement reforms and more tax revenue. A first step to meeting this challenge is recognizing how much we benefit from federal spending, and how we all need to be part of the solution

— *The Wichita Eagle, 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 area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited.

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ABORTING PRO-LIFE STORIES SINCE ROE V. WADE

Mail delivery problems smooth out

Judging from the lack of a hue and cry, the Postal Service may have addressed some of its issues and we may have taken care of the worst delivery problems we had any control over.

At least the phones have quieted down, the buzz gone from our Facebook page — those are back to announcements and comments on news stories — and most readers are getting their papers, even those a state or two away.

It's hard to summarize this for everyone, because each paper faces different problems with the Postal Service's new mailing scheme, but in general, things seem to be settling down.

This all goes back nearly two months now, to Feb. 26, when the service shut down the postal "plants," or mail-sorting operations, in Colby and McCook (and Alliance, Neb.) and shifted all the work to the post office North Platte. A week or so later, the plant in Hays consolidated into Wichita.

This change disrupted nearly everything about the way our mail moves, from truck routes to the direction it goes. Mail in Kansas traditionally flowed east to either Wichita or Topeka, but not anymore. Now our mail goes north. The effect was to cut us off from eastern Kansas, with letters and newspapers taking up to a week to wander back to places like Emporia or Salina — or Norcatur.

Not just the main route changed. Here in the Colby zone, we lost not only our trucks to the east, but also one west to Denver and one south to Dodge City. And while North Platte



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

appears to have good connections to the west — papers to California started going through in two or three days, rather than a week to 10 days — those to eastern Kansas apparently took the long way around.

The worst service gap was to nearby readers of *The Oberlin Herald* who happened to get their papers through the former Hays plant. Via North Platte, Omaha and Kansas City, it was taking a full week for those copies to come back to places only 15 to 20 miles from the newspaper's office.

But a lot has changed in those two months, and we at least think we're starting to see the light of day.

Some of the things we've done include:

- Leaving papers for Dresden, Jennings, Norcatur and Norton at those post offices every Tuesday so those readers will be sure to get their paper on time (or in the case of Norcatur, half a day earlier, since the postmaster just puts them out right after lunch.)
- Reorganizing our mailing list to optimize deliveries to a single town. These are handled direct at the former sorting hubs, skipping the

trip to North Platte or Wichita (for the Norton and Hays areas).

• Mailing all copies of the Oberlin paper for places east of here in Norton, where they go right into the Kansas mail system and skip Nebraska entirely.

• Adjusting all lists to take advantage of the fastest route to a given location, whether that's through North Platte or east.

The Postal Service has made some changes, too. It was routing papers to states in the South and Southwest through North Platte, Omaha and Kansas City, then back to Wichita for sorting. Now they go directly to Des Moines and get sorted there, which should be faster.

And postal workers are doing a great job of sorting our "mixed" area bundles. Those papers come overnight every week after sorting in North Platte. The service has been super.

We know there are still a few problems here and there. A reader in Smith Center said Monday his paper still takes a week. We'll have to check that one out; not sure how it's routed.

We still need to hear from anyone who's not getting a paper or is getting a big delay every week. There may be some change we can make if you let us know. But for now, things look a lot better than they did a few weeks ago!

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.

Medal of Honor long overdue

The Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military award, is bestowed on the bravest of the brave.

There is no question that U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun of Pilsen more than deserved this honor for his service and ultimate sacrifice during the Korean War. On Thursday, April 11, on a perfect spring day in our nation's capital, his nephew, Ray Kapaun, accepted the posthumous Medal of Honor from a grateful nation.

The setting for the ceremony at the White House, with cherry blossoms trees in full bloom, the president, the Kapaun family and veterans who served alongside the priest was in stark contrast to the circumstances facing our soldiers in Korea in 1950.

Father Kapaun was born in Pilsen in 1916 and served as a Catholic priest before volunteering for the Army. He served during World War II and then again for the Korean War, where he was chaplain of the 8th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Division.

He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the Battle of Unsan, where he was taken prisoner. Fellow soldiers say he saved hundreds if not thousands of lives on the battlefield and in prison camps. He escaped to steal food from nearby farms to bring back to starving prisoners, and cared for the sick and injured. He died as a prisoner in May 1951 after enduring illness, torture and terrible conditions.

It is hard to share the many, many accounts of Father Kapaun's valor, grace, kindness, courage and devotion under these most difficult conditions. Many of the prisoners who served with him refer to him as the most extraordinary man they will ever know.



U.S. Senator Pat Roberts

• From the Senate

Thankfully, due to Father Kapaun's protection and through his actions and inspiration, his story lives on in the hearts and minds of these soldiers, his "boys," who survived three years of that prison camp all those years ago.

April 11, 2013, was a day for them. As the president said, "Many are now in their 80s, but make no mistake, they are among the strongest men that America has ever produced."

Their recollections are incredibly moving:

There was Mike Dowe, who spoke of Father Kapaun's fearlessness in the face of enemy fire, and his devotion to the mental and physical well-being of his soldiers.

There was Herbert Miller, a soldier whom Father Kapaun saved by pushing a Chinese soldier's weapon aside and whom the priest carried for several miles on his back.

There was Robert Wood, who spoke of Father Kapaun's faith, civility and principled stance in the face of brainwashing. He would hold Mass and openly pray despite the torture he would receive from his captors.

And these recollections are just a very, very few of the reams of data compiled by three men who deserve our thanks: Father John Hotze of the Diocese of Wichita, who is working on the investigation of the case for Father Kapaun's sainthood; Lt. Col. (retired) William Latham, who collected the stories of fellow prisoners

to make the case for the Medal of Honor; and finally, Roy Wenzl of the *Wichita Eagle*, for bringing all of this work and the story to light.

And finally, thanks to Congressman Mike Pompeo and Sen. Jerry Moran for being part of the team with me that made the award possible by getting legislation passed to waive the time limit on a posthumous Medal of Honor award for Father Kapaun. This action ensured that Father Kapaun's bravery and inspiration lives on in Kansas, and now will forever have a place of honor in the history of our nation.

Sixty-three years was far too long to wait to properly honor Father Kapaun. If you aren't familiar with the story of his life, don't wait. Look him up. Learn about the so-called "forgotten war," and maybe, we can honor these veterans by removing that unfortunate description of their service and sacrifice in the mountains of Korea.

Pat Roberts has been a U.S. Senator from Kansas since 1997. He serves on four Senate committees, including finance, ethics and agriculture.

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