



Free Press Viewpoint

Tax abatement good for counties

The proposed Neighborhood Revitalization tax-incentive plan being considered by Decatur County has been in effect in several area counties for a while, and most say it's just too good an opportunity to pass up.

Not only might it be just the push needed to get a proposed new motel project off dead center in Oberlin, but it could open up a whole new realm of possibilities for development and growth in Decatur County.

Norton officials, in particular, credit the plan with prompting some major developments. In Thomas County, the system is fairly new, but more than a dozen applications have been filed.

The plan is as complex as it is simple. A property owner can get a rebate on taxes paid on new development over 10 years, based on the actual increase in the tax valuation before, after construction or renovation. Decatur officials are talking about a \$10,000 minimum increase to qualify and have discussed setting a maximum.

Frankly, it makes no sense to put the minimum that high; any renovation of property, homes or businesses, that improves the town and will bring in more tax revenue would be a boost in our declining economy. Nor would it make sense to confine the rebates just to business property. We should encourage homeowners to fix up their property, too.

A cap on rebates would just limit the benefit the city and county might see from the program. Norton County started out with a cap, but removed it when a bigger project appeared. Why do that?

The city, county, school district and other taxing agencies have little to lose. If something gets built, a new motel or a new building for an existing business, all will share in the increased revenue as the rebates fade away.

Property owners and developers would have an incentive to spend more. Any increase in construction would create some jobs and help area suppliers. The rebate would be 100 percent of any tax increase the first year, but that goes down by 10 percent a year, so governments would benefit by the second year.

Someone will say, why give tax incentives when people might build a motel or a house without one? But why not encourage more?

This program already is working in Norton and Sherman counties and it's starting to work in Thomas. Other Kansas counties have had good experiences with it. In Norton, it gets credit for both commercial and housing development, things other counties could use.

The question isn't should we give tax incentives. To compete and to attract development, counties must give tax incentives.

The question for counties that doesn't have these incentives is whether to let their economy continue to be stagnant and decline, or whether they want to push it the other way.

And that should not be a difficult decision. — Steve Haynes

Write us

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters.

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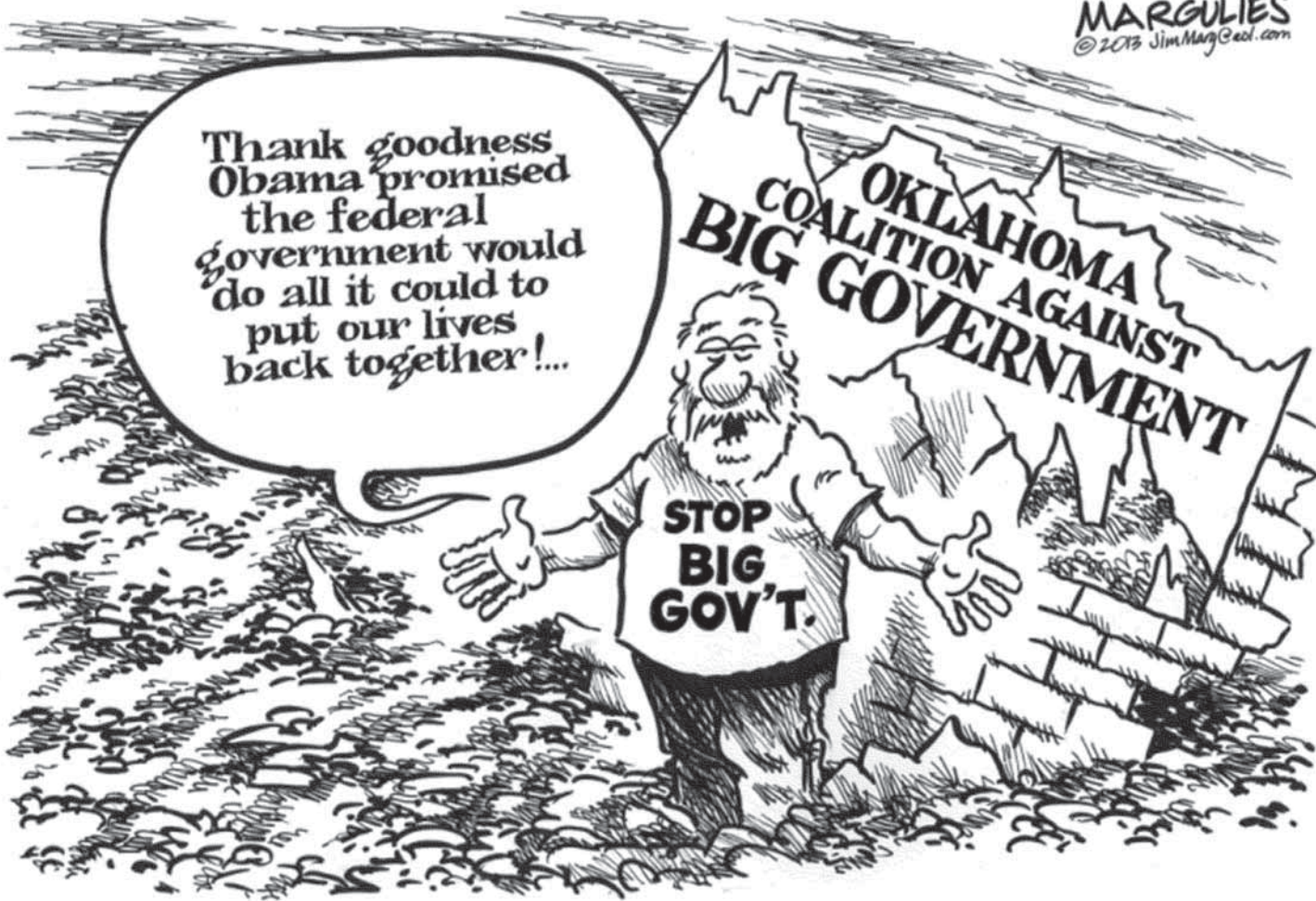
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Handle food with care

While most people don't acknowledge, reflect or dwell on it, they value tremendously the joy and pleasure that results from eating — especially with family and close friends. Food remains deeply entrenched in our family values.

Without question, emotions are also tied to what we're eating for lunch or dinner. Emotional connections to our food sometimes make potential risks within our food supply appear frightening.

How people look at risks provides a clear understanding of why consumers react so strongly to food safety issues. People often perceive unfamiliar things as risky if they can't control the outcome, if their exposure is involuntary, if the effects are irreversible and if it's caused by human actions or failures.

Food-borne illnesses are a hot food safety topic. According to the Centers for Disease Control, about 5 million illnesses each year can be attributable to mishandled meat and poultry products.

Like the food industry and our government, we have an obligation to keep food safe. The way we handle, store and cook food can mean the difference between a satisfying meal or a bout with E. coli or salmonella.

Purchasing, storing and preparing can pres-



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

ent challenges for consumers. As wise and safety-conscious shoppers, it is our responsibility to keep food safe once it leaves our local grocery store or meat market.

Always buy food from a reputable dealer, with a known record for safe handling. If you don't know if the meat is fresh, ask a neighbor or friend who's shopped there before.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture advises to buy dated products only if the "sell by" or "use by" date has not expired. While these dates are helpful, they are reliable only if the food has been kept at the proper temperature during storage and handling. Although many products bear "sell by" and "use by" dates, product dating is not a federal requirement.

When we purchase products labeled "keep refrigerated," do so only if they are stored in a refrigerated case and cold to the touch, the Department of Agriculture advises. Buy frozen

products only if they are frozen solid. Never buy something that feels mushy.

Buy packaged precooked foods only if the package is sound — not damaged or torn.

Avoid cross contamination. To prevent raw meat and poultry from contaminating foods that will be eaten without further cooking, enclose individual packages of raw meat or poultry in plastic bags. Position packages of raw meat or poultry in your shopping cart so their juices cannot drip on other food.

Always shop for perishables last. Keep refrigerated and frozen items together so they will remain cold. Place perishables in the coolest part of your car during the trip home. Pack them in an ice chest if the time from store to home refrigerator will be more than one hour.

While most of these tips sound simple, a common-sense approach the next time you shop could ensure a safer food product for your family.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Courage keeps going in adversity

Courage is often talked about but seldom witnessed. On Memorial Day each year, America comes together to remember those courageous souls who inspire us all — those who answered the call to serve our country and laid down their lives for our freedom.

One such soldier, Father Emil Kapaun, was born in Pilsen, Kansas, in 1916 and served our country on the battlefields of the Korean War as a chaplain for the 8th Calvary Regiment of the First Army Division. Father Kapaun's courageous actions in Korea saved countless lives as he risked his own to drag the wounded to safety while dodging explosions and enemy gunfire. When he was taken prisoner in 1950, he continued to live out the Army Chaplain motto — "for God and Country."

In the bitter cold of winter, Father Kapaun carried injured comrades on his back as Chinese captors led them on forced marches through the snow and ice, gave away his meager food rations, and cared for the sick who were suffering alongside him in the prison camp. He also provided spiritual aid and comfort; on Easter, he defied his communist captors by conducting Mass with a makeshift crucifix. When all else looked hopeless, Father Kapaun rallied his comrades to persevere — until his own death as a prisoner in 1951.

Since 2009, my colleagues in the United States Congress and I worked together to make certain his countless acts of heroism would be recognized. In 2011, Sen. Roberts and I introduced legislation to award Father Kapaun the Congressional Medal of Honor. On April 11, 2013 — more than 60 years after laying down his life for the sake of others — Father Kapaun finally received our nation's highest award of valor. I was honored to attend the Congressional Medal of Honor Ceremony at the White House, where his nephew, Ray Kapaun, accepted the medal on his uncle's behalf.

Father Kapaun has inspired many with his unshakable faith and relentless courage. His



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

story of self-sacrifice demonstrates that the strength of our nation lies within its people. Only when each citizen feels the duty to do his or her part will our nation be strengthened. This won't come as a result of our individual successes, but in what we accomplish together.

Often in Washington, it can be easy to forget what's important in the midst of all the partisan politics, the next election or the latest poll. When I need a reminder, I take a walk — from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial. Between these two points, I pass the World War II Memorial, Vietnam Wall and Korean War Memorial.

These memorials to our service members help put everything in perspective. Our freedoms are so important that our nation's sons and daughters put their lives at risk to defend and protect them. Like Father Kapaun, these men and women didn't sacrifice for Republicans or Democrats; they gave their lives for the greater good of our country and to make certain their children and grandchildren would also experience freedom and liberty.

One of the memorials that has special meaning for me is the World War II Memorial. In 2004, I visited this memorial a few days before the official dedication ceremony. As I walked among the many pillars, I came across the pillar representing the many Kansans who served, and I thought of my dad. He served in northern Africa and up the boot heel of Italy during World War II.

As I turned to leave, I called my dad and said: "I'm at the World War II Memorial and I

thought of you. I respect you, I thank you for your service and I love you." It was something that sons don't often say to their fathers, but there is something about memorials that makes us stop and reflect on all those who sacrificed so much to make certain we can continue to live in the strongest, freest and greatest nation in the world.

On Memorial Day, we honor the courageous souls who laid down their lives for our country and we thank God for giving us these heroes. Let us commit our lives to preserving this nation for the sake of the next generation — so they too can pursue the American dream with freedom and liberty.

Jerry Moran of Hays is the junior U.S. senator from Kansas. His committee appointments include Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Veterans Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Committee on Aging. To sign up for his weekly newsletter, go to moran.senate.gov.

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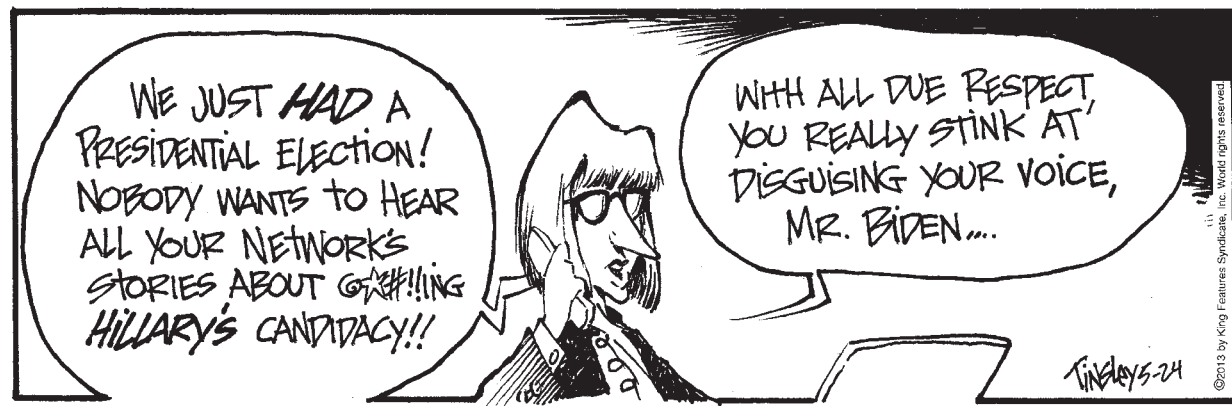
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