

from our viewpoint...

School bond issue separate from cuts

Red budget figures get people in red state of Kansas seeing sea of red as Governor Sam Brownback sliced \$50 million out of state education to bring balance to state finances.

The move by Gov. Brownback is the latest in the current legislative session, and it designed to get the state's finances into balance because the house and senate were unable to reach an agreement on the money for special education.

The budget problems at the national level and state level have effects being felt on the local level and causing problems in the operation of the Goodland School District.

The timing is tough with the continuing words out of Topeka cutting the school district operating budget and the resulting unenviable task of finding ways to shift the money and decide where the cuts are made in the district budget.

Tangled up in the budget is the action by the school board to ask the voters in the district to pass a \$14.9 million bond issue to renovate the buildings of the district and reduce the number of school buildings to two and sell off a couple of other buildings and consolidate the administration, technology and the learning center into a single building.

Unfortunately for school district's the options for raising money for capital projects is limited. The district can put away a small portion every year to try to handle the upkeep and minor upgrades, but a bond issue and raising the property tax is the major way to get the capital to make major improvements or build new schools.

Cities and counties have a few more options with user fees for income producing programs such as for water, sewer, trash and electrical services. The city and counties used their other option to pass a countywide sales tax to help operate the government and an additional sales tax for health services. A few years ago the county and city put together a plan to spend \$12 million to repair streets and county paved roads.

People feel the sales tax is the fairest way to pay because everyone who uses the roads and streets including those who visit and spend money in town.

The school board plan has a lot of people looking at what it will cost them as the property tax levy would go up by 12.6 mills.

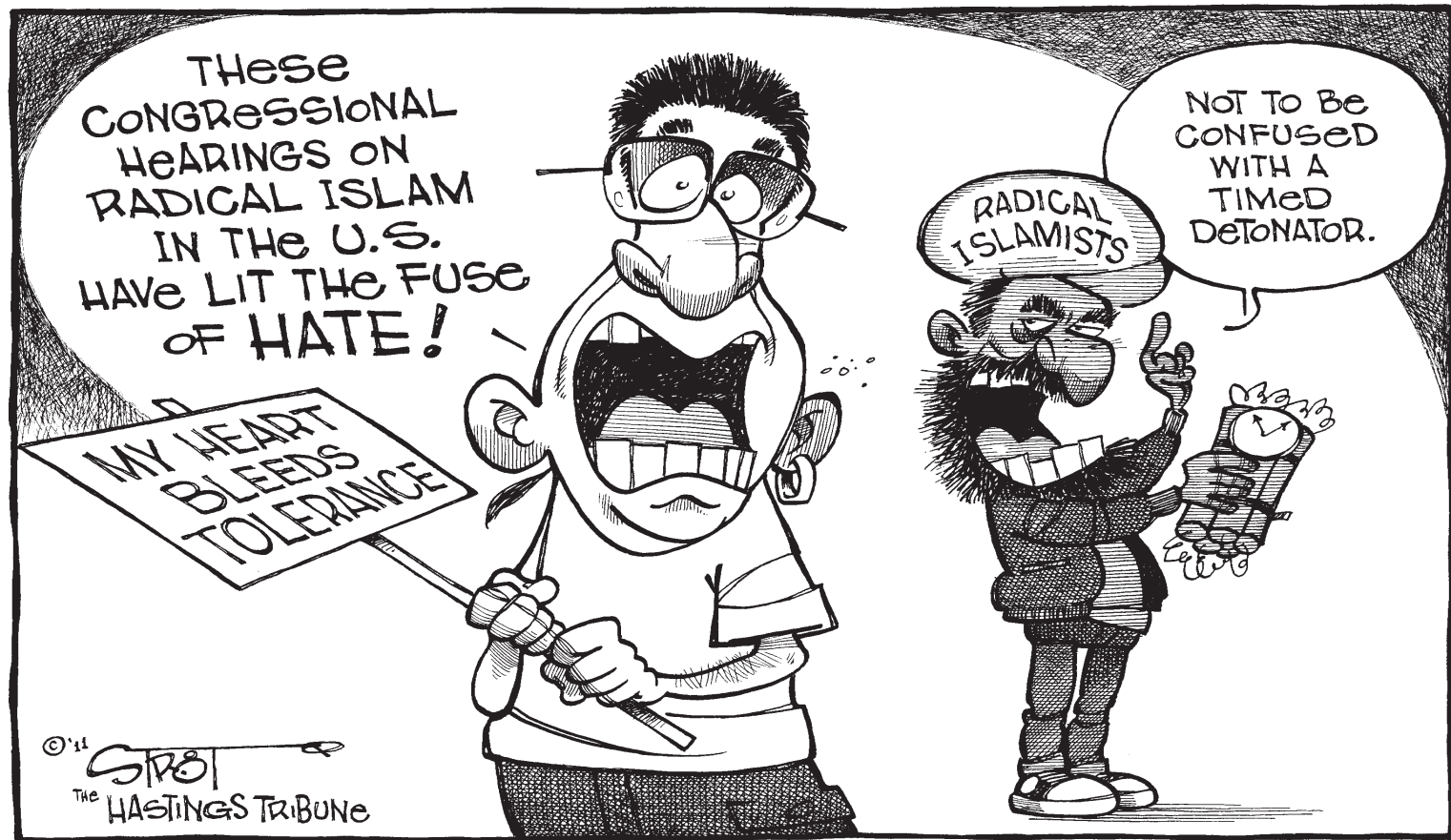
Timing is everything and for the Goodland School District this appears to be the best time to ask voters to approve a bond issue based on the savings on interest and state aid reducing the total cost of the 20 years of payments by about \$5 million. The district can receive up to \$5.4 million in interest free construction bonds to reduce the interest cost by about \$2 million, and state aid would reduce the district cost by \$3 million. With the savings on interest and state aid the total cost of the bond issue that would be \$23 million will actually cost \$17.7 million in total repayment.

The district plan has been at least five years in the discussion process, and we salute the school board members who looked at the options and felt it was time to take it to the voters.

Future budget cuts will continue to cause the operating budget of the district problems, but with approval of the bond issue the district will have the best facilities to handle whatever is coming in the future.

As things keep improving and we see some economic development projects moving ahead – a grocery store, the reopening of motels and a proposed manufacturing expansion – the increased assessed valuation will help spread the cost and could reduce the total impact on the property tax levy.

Ask questions, make up your own mind and vote on Tuesday, April 5. – Tom Betz



I feel better after getting rid of an addiction

Addictions are no fun. I know. I'm coming off the second one in my lifetime.

The first one, you will recall I discussed in an earlier column had to do with smoking. I gave it up the evening before Ash Wednesday in 1969. It took months, many months of agony, crying for just one more, walking the floors at night, getting sick. But I did it! And so can you. I point to that decision in February 1969 as the reason I am still around!

I didn't know about my current addiction until it was pointed out to me. And I'd bet a dollar many of you reading this column are in the same boat I am finally departing.

I quit watching FOX News, MSNBC and CNN. I think both FOX News and MSNBC, and to some extent CNN, have to shoulder some of the blame for a lot of the hate talk coming from the mouths of otherwise good Americans citizens.

FOX News and MSNBC are in an ongoing ratings war and I think the 'FOXes' are out front. And, for what it's worth, the FOX audience is primarily Republican, while the MSNBC viewers are Democrat. And there's only one way to rally your viewers (with hopes of sucking in more), and that's by exaggerating the truth. Dressing it up a little. Slanting it in favor of what you want your viewing public to believe. The commentators on those channels are experts in this regard.

Maybe the old program, "Truth or Consequences" should fit in here somewhere, because allegiance to those networks seems almost sacred. And the way those addicted viewers interpret what they hear, often pits family member against family member, friend against friend, neighbor against neighbor, etc.

I used to watch both FOX News and MSNBC and could never quite figure out who was telling me the truth, or perhaps stretching the truth. I found myself, however, believing the MSNBC creatures more than the FOX News' foxes. And in so doing, I found myself engaging in hateful conversation more than I ever thought I could or would do.



tom dreiling

• time out with td

Sooooo, several months ago I quit watching the three 24/7 channels. And I followed that up by having my television provider delete those three channels, and more, from my television set.

I am at a point where I don't miss them at all. And I am a happier camper. You can survive the news cycle without subjecting yourself to those who seemingly practice the art of tilting the news in favor of their political baptism.

Caution: Excessive viewing of those channels is a form of addiction.

In my home I have a counter on which are displayed numerous items given me by friends and family over the years. Among those items, I placed an old unopened pack of Camel cigarettes. It stands as a reminder of my successful drive to eliminate that addiction from my lifestyle forever. And as I look at it each morning, I repeat these two words to that smartly positioned camel on the front of the pack, "You lost!"

And as I check my channels each morning to make sure FOX News, MSNBC and CNN have not mistakenly returned, I say to my television set, "Ahhh, another happy day!"

I glanced at a headline atop a paper online the other morning, and it screamed: 60 of the sexiest women in the world! Another assured its readers with this headline: Sexiest men are in the 35- to 45-age range. Is it just me or are the words 'sex,' 'sexy,' 'sexist,' 'sexier' kicking all other descriptions out the door? And what does that say for us as a society?

I remember when decency was the byword. When I was in high school we had an all girls school to which those students had to wear a uniform. It was a long, black dress with long black sleeves, and the hemline was

approximately 4 yards below the knees (or so it seemed).

We boys at the all boys school looked forward to summer so we could check out their legs. "Not bad," you would hear repeated often. But you never heard the word 'sexy'. I liked the decency of my upbringing more than I like the transparency of today's society. The little screen and the big screen all yell 'sex'! Parents of babies born in my time wanted to know if it is a boy or girl; today they are anxious to know its sex. And that is the first word the baby hears – sex.

When Adam and Eve's first born arrived, they just looked at it and then looked at one another and smiled. You see language had not as yet been sorted out. Listening to the trash talk so prevalent in today's society maybe we'd be better off if it was still being sorted out.

While watching a news show a few days ago (no, not the three 24/7'ers), the two female reporters were talking about a guy who broke into a home and then called 911 to turn himself in. He took a shower while in the house. One reporter thought he was the "stupidest" criminal she'd ever heard of, and the other chimed in with a comment to the effect, "how dumb can you get!" Both were way off base. They apparently forgot what he did while in the house. That action would cause me to speculate he was just trying to "come clean!"

I'm going to brag for just a second. The Kansas Press Association named me a second place winner in its "Editorial Writing for Non-Daily Newspapers Division 1" category. I was surprised and humbled because I had no idea any of my writings were being considered. Not bad for an old guy, huh?!

Tom Dreiling is a retired journalist, now living in Aurora, Colo. He edited and published newspapers in Kansas and Wyoming during his 44-year career. E-mail me at milehitom@hotmail.com

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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President
Tom Betz, Editor
Pat Schiefen, Society Editor



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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

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Brewster protests polling consolidation

Brewster city officials have protested the conundrum of the polling place for their city election being in another city, thanks to penny pinching by county officials:

To be eligible to vote in the election, you have to live in Brewster, but to vote, you must drive to Colby. The same logic applies to Rexford, Menlo and outlying towns in many other counties.

That's because Thomas County is one of several in the state to consolidate all voting at one site after federal law required better access for handicapped voters and use of machines to help them vote.

Thomas and Sherman county officials, among others, decided apparently that voters in the smaller cities didn't count for much. They claim it's not much of a hardship for them to drive to the county seat to vote.

And mind you, this is in a city election where they are choosing city officials for their own independent towns. Not a state or federal election.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

It's undoubtedly true that the counties will save a little money, perhaps a few thousand dollars per election. We'd be the last to suggest that counties should spend taxpayers' money unwisely. But the amount to be saved here is nothing compared to the raises many counties routinely give their employees.

In Decatur County, by way of contrast, when city officials and residents in outlying cities protested a decision to close the polls in those towns, commissioners listened. They wisely decided that having polls in each city was part of the cost of democracy. They reversed themselves and kept the rural polls open in Jennings, Norcatour and Dresden.

So far, officials in Sherman and Thomas

counties have not been so thoughtful. They have flat refused to reconsider. And that just flies in the face of what democracy is all about.

There might be some legitimate way to save money on outlying polls. At one point, county clerks were offering to take "advance" ballots out to the small towns as a sort of compromise, but that's not really the same as having a polling station on election day, is it?

No, people deserve to be able to vote in their own elections in their own towns. And the county ought to find a way to allow it. The commissioners and county clerk ought to be committed to serving voters in the smaller towns as well as they serve those in the county seat.

The Brewster leaders have a point, a good one. Thomas County officials should listen. So should voters, because how this issue is handled will say a lot about the county's priorities. – Steve Haynes

Boeing contract win good for state, arts

To the Editor:
On behalf of the Kansas Arts Commission, I congratulate the Boeing Co. for receiving the United States Air Force contract to build the next generation of air refueling tankers.

Kansans are grateful for the success of Governor Brownback, Senator Roberts and Senator Moran in achieving this opportunity for Boeing and Kansas.

Boeing has long been innovative and strong supporter of the arts in the communities where they are located. A recent Psychology Today article quotes W. James McNernery, Jr., Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, the Boeing Company: "At Boeing,



from our readers

• to the editor

innovation is our lifeblood. The arts inspire innovation by leading us to open our minds and think in new ways about our lives - including the work we do, the way we work, and the customers we serve."

I hope the state of Kansas understands it plays the same role in community growth and attainment of educational excellence for all its

citizens, not simply those lucky enough to live in large communities with generous corporate and individual donors.

The Kansas Arts Commission hopes the state reconsiders the Governor's executive reorganization order eliminating the Kansas Arts Commission. The Kansas Arts Commission, with its small budget of only \$1.6 million, is essential to provide the seed money for the arts to thrive throughout our state, equalizing access and opportunity for all Kansans.

Sincerely
Henry Schwaller
Chairman of the Kansas Arts Commission