

Kansas Speaks: Survey finds ambivalence in tax views

By Dr. Gary Brinker

Director, Docking Institute of Public Affairs

Kansans in 2011 generally prefer keeping income, sales and property taxes at current levels, and by percentages about the same as in 2010.

However, the percentage favoring tax increases for corporations and high income earners has been on the increase since 2009, according to results from the third annual Kansas Speaks survey by Fort Hays State University's Docking Institute of Public Affairs.

"Kansas has three primary revenue sources: income tax, sales tax and property tax," said the introduction to the question on tax policy. Respondents were then asked, "Thinking of the current Kansas economy, do you believe that each of the following taxes should be significantly increased, somewhat increased, remain the same, somewhat decreased, or significantly decreased?"

Respondents indicated a strong preference for keeping all three revenue sources at current rates, with percentages of 45 for sales and property taxes and 49 for income tax. The exception was a strong preference to decrease property taxes, which 45 percent of respondents want somewhat or significantly cut (51 percent favored cuts in 2010). On income taxes, 32 percent favor cuts; 30 percent want sales tax cuts. Among those who favor raising taxes, most favor increasing sales tax (25 percent), followed by income tax (19 percent in 2011). Only 10 percent favor increasing property taxes.

When asked about preferences for changes on taxation policy for vari-

ous earner categories, respondents were most likely to favor increasing taxes on large corporations and top income earners, but a majority favor keeping current tax policies for the middle class and small businesses.

Tax increases for large corporations were favored by 63 percent of respondents (up from 54 percent in 2010 and 52 percent in 2009), and 58 percent favored tax increases for top income earners, which was up from 47 percent in 2010 and 41 percent in 2009.

The Docking Institute's Kansas Speaks findings are the result of a survey of 1,039 Kansas adults over the age of 18 who completed the survey by mail and by phone between June 21 and Sept. 2. The survey has a 3.04-percent margin of error.

The full report, Kansas Speaks 2011, is available in pdf form through a tab on the Docking Institute home page, www.fhsu.edu/docking/. It includes appendices with breakdowns of results by political preference and education, among other factors.

"This is the third edition of Kansas Speaks and includes historical trend lines for our key indicators," said Dr. Gary Brinker, director of the Docking Institute. "We believe Kansas Speaks provides citizens and policymakers with scientifically valuable information about what Kansans want from their government leaders."

The survey asked about three recent hot-button issues: proof of citizenship for voting, elimination of the Kansas Arts Commission and repeal of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010.

When asked if they support or oppose Kansas House Bill 2067,

which requires persons to provide documented proof of citizenship when registering to vote and a photo ID when voting in 2013, 55.4 percent said that they "strongly support" the law, while another 13.3 percent said they "somewhat support" it. Only one-seventh (13.6 percent) said that they "strongly oppose" it. The very youngest and very oldest respondents are least likely to support the law.

When asked if they support or oppose the elimination of the Kansas Arts Commission, 27.4 percent of respondents supported the elimination, 32.1 percent were neutral, and 40.5 percent opposed the elimination. Republican respondents and those who considered themselves politically conservative are more likely to support eliminating the Kansas Arts Commission.

Repeal of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 is supported by 46.9 percent of respondents, while 39 percent oppose repeal.

Other results from the 2011 Kansas Speaks survey:

– More than half of the respondents (54.8 percent) in 2011 said they felt Kansas was either an "excellent" or "very good" place to live. That percentage was 58.5 in 2010 and 64.2 in 2009, the first year the Kansas Speaks survey was conducted. The percentage of people in 2011 who think Kansas is a "poor" or "very poor" place to live is 3 percent, a percentage that is essentially unchanged from both previous years.

– On economic matters, 40.2 percent of respondents thought the Kansas economy was at least "good" while 24 percent said Kansas had a

"poor" or "very poor" economy. Opinion in 2011 was not significantly different from that in 2010, but those who rate the economy as "very poor" went from 3 percent in 2010 to 7 percent in 2011.

– Kansans are still concerned economic conditions pose a threat to them or their families' welfare. In 2011, 71 percent of respondents are either "very concerned" or "moderately concerned" that the Kansas economy will seriously threaten their or their families' welfare, slightly increasing from 68 percent in 2010. Overall, only 10 percent are "not concerned" about an economic threat, about 1 percentage point less than last year.

– About 38 percent of respondents in 2011 are "moderately" or "very satisfied" with the efforts of the Kansas Democratic Party and the Kansas Republican Party to improve the state economy. These results are similar to those in 2010.

– Respondents' ratings of Kansas state government in 2011 are not significantly different from those in 2010. In 2011, 8 percent (same as in 2010) rate state government as "very good" or "excellent," while 29 percent rate it as "poor" or "very poor." In 2010, the poor-very poor rating was 27 percent, up from 17 in 2009.

– In 2011, respondents' satisfaction with the Kansas Legislature, as well as their own state senators and representatives, increased slightly from 2010 (to 39 percent from 37 moderately or very satisfied), while satisfaction with the governor and their U.S. Congressmen decreased (to 47 moderately-very satisfied from 53 for governor and to 47 from 49 for congressmen).

– Respondents' satisfaction with the performance of U.S. Sens. Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts is about the same. A little over half of respondents are "very" or "moderately satisfied" with each.

– In 2011, over half of respondents (51.6 percent) favor decreasing state spending, while only 16.4 percent favor increasing spending. Respondents' opinions in 2011 are very similar to those in 2010. Republican respondents and those who are politically conservative are less likely to say that Kansas government spending should be increased in 2011.

– As in 2009 and 2010, the energy source that respondents in 2011 are most likely to feel is "extremely important" for Kansas to devote resources to is wind energy, followed by oil and coal, both of which increased significantly from 2010. Support for the development of nuclear energy is the lowest of the various energy sources. Respondents with higher levels of education are more likely to think it is not important to develop coal and oil.

– Republican respondents and those who considered themselves politically conservative are more likely to say it is "extremely important" or "important" for Kansas to devote resources to the development of coal, oil and nuclear energy in 2011. Democratic respondents and those who considered themselves politically liberal are more likely to say it is "extremely important" or "important" for Kansas to devote resources to the development of wind energy.

– The percentages of respondents who "strongly agree" or "agree" that the economic benefits of coal and

oil production outweigh concerns about the impact on the environment have been increasing since 2009, moving from the low 50s in 2009 to the 60s in 2011.

– When asked about the current levels of state funding for education, a majority of respondents supported increased funding for K-12 (58 percent) and favored keeping funding for higher education at current levels (51.4 percent). Increased funding for state colleges and universities is supported by 35 percent.

– When asked if they support or oppose a state law that requires women to purchase additional coverage for abortion procedures, 43.5 percent of respondents supported the law, while 36.6 percent opposed it. As might be expected, support for this measure was highly divided along lines of political party and ideology.

– When asked about their levels of pride as a citizen, pride in being a citizen of the United States is, by far, the strongest, with almost 79 percent of respondents saying they are "very proud." Only 40 percent are "very proud" to be a citizen of the global society. About 80 percent of respondents are either "proud" or "very proud" to be a citizen of Kansas, which is similar to levels of pride in being citizens of their local communities.

– FOX News was picked as the most trusted (19 percent) and least trusted (20 percent) television news source. Among non-TV media sources, local newspaper (19 percent) is the most trusted media source, while internet websites are the least trusted.

Office of Repealer schedules open meeting in Colby to hear citizens on outdated laws

Audubon of Kansas is encouraging Kansas residents to take advantage of an opportunity presented by the Office of the Repealer to attend the public meeting scheduled for 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Mountain Time on Tuesday, Nov. 8, at the Pioneer Memorial Library basement, 375 W. Fourth in Colby, or to log on to the website and post a recommendation the 1901 prairie dog statutes (K.S.A. 80-1201 thru 80-1208) be repealed.

These statutes can be read on line at: http://kansasstatutes.lesterama.org/Chapter_80/Article_12/

The statutes have been used by the Logan County Commission to force landowners to poison all of the prairie dogs on their land, and they have repeatedly attempted to force landowners who are hosting the reintroduction of endangered black-footed ferrets to poison their land as well.

As part of the county's mandate, the Logan County purchased 46 tons of Rozol Prairie Dog Bait in 2008, the year after the first black-footed ferrets were returned to Kansas. The

county has used Phostoxin on lands without permission. Phostoxin gas kills all life in the treated burrows.

Black-tailed Prairie Dogs are a keystone species, important for conservation of many other wild-life species including Ferruginous Hawks, Golden Eagles, Swift Foxes and Black-footed Ferrets. Kansas is the only state with eradication statutes that undermine conservation of imperiled species and undermine property rights of ranchers and other landowners.

In January, Governor Brownback signed Executive Order 11-01 establishing the Office of the Repealer within the Kansas Department of Administration. The Governor tasked the Office of the Repealer with investigating the system of governance of the state including its laws and regulations to determine instances in which those laws and regulations are unreasonable, unduly burdensome, duplicitous, or contradictory.

These statutes are certainly unreasonable, and unduly burdensome on landowners, and contradictory to

conservation of imperiled species. In fact, imposing eradication of prairie dogs may result in several species being pushed to the status of threatened or endangered, or make other species extinct in the foreseeable future in Kansas – or extinct again (in the case of the Black-footed Ferret) or as a resident species reproducing in the state (possibly Golden Eagles and Ferruginous Hawks).

Kansas Office of the Repealer Secretary Dennis Taylor announced on Sept. 30 he will tour the State of Kansas to discuss proposed repeals and collect input from Kansans on rules and regulations they believe should be repealed.

In the news release, Gov. Sam Brownback said, "With the help of Kansans, the Office of the Repealer is working to identify laws and regulations out of date, unreasonable, and burdensome. State laws and regulations shouldn't hinder opportunities for Kansans..."

As part of the investigative process, Executive Order 11-04 charged the Repealer with establishing a

system for receiving public recommendations suggesting various laws and regulations to be considered for repeal. It also called for the creation of an online portal for collecting public comments.

The website, which was established in March, can be found at <http://repealer.ks.gov/>

"The creation of the online portal has given our office many good recommendations for repeal," Secretary Taylor said.

Secretary Taylor said a tour with stops throughout the state is the next step in the public input process.

"We hope the tour will raise awareness of the voice Kansans have in this process. If you are unable to make it to one of the tour stops, I encourage you to get online to share your ideas," he said.

The Colby meeting is the final one on the list to be held from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Mountain Time at the Pioneer Memorial Library basement, 375 W. Fourth in Colby. For information on this meeting call Carol (785) 460-4470.

club news

Goodland Rotary Club met Friday at the Northwest Kansas Technical College Student Union meeting room with 19 members and one visiting Rotarian present.

Peggy Cabrinha, Assistant District Governor and a member of the Atwood Rotary club, paid an official visit to the Goodland club bringing greetings from District Governor, Keith Hooper, and provided the program for the day.

ADG Cabrinha showed pictures and told of her visit to Ghana as part of a Rotary humanitarian mission. In spite of Ghana's riches in natural resources including gold, petroleum, lumber and minerals, the population of Ghana lives in deep poverty. Cabrinha told the Goodland club members about a number of Rotary International sponsored projects designed to bring sanitary facilities and clean water to the communities of the West African nation. These projects are supported financially by the matching grants program of the Rotary Foundation.

Goodland Rotary initiated its newest member at Friday's meeting. Greg Ferguson, Activities Director at Goodland High School was welcomed as the club's newest member.

Goodland Rotary will participate in the upcoming Genesis food drive. Club president, Marty Melia, asked club members to bring non-perishable foods to club meetings on Nov. 11 and 18. The donated food items will be gathered and delivered to the Genesis collection point in time for the Christmas basket project.

Marvin Selby will be the Rotarian of the Day and will provide the program for next Friday's meeting. The Rotary board of directors will meet for their monthly meeting Wednesday, Nov. 2. Trevor Linton was the luck winner of the weekly drawing.

Goodland Rotary meets every Friday at noon in the meeting room of the Technical College Student Union. Prospective members and guests are always welcome.

Dick Liess

FREE class provided by Western Kansas Business Consulting

Hosted by the Goodland Public Library
Funded in part by USDA Rural Development and Sherman County

QuickBooks Fundamentals
Learn how to get around in QuickBooks and perform various tasks to effectively manage your financial records.

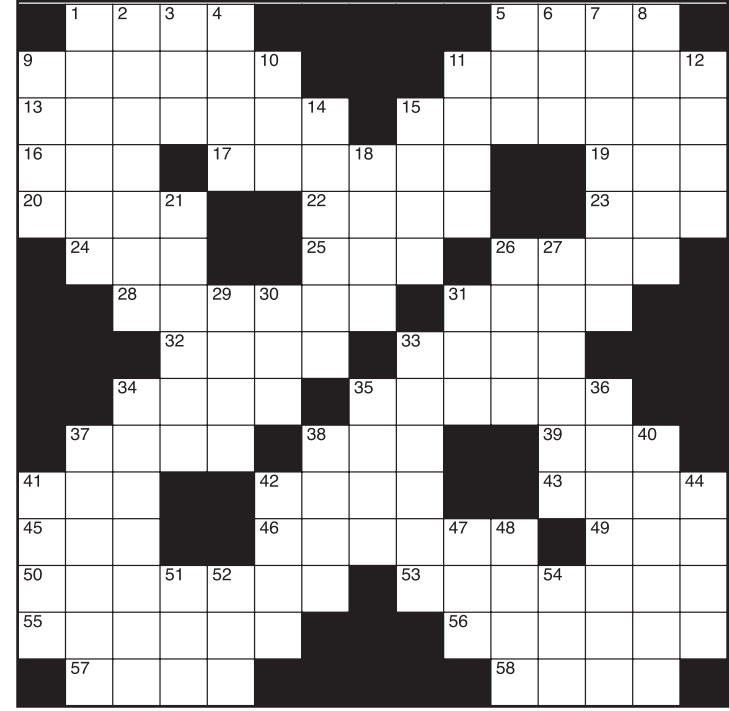
When: November 7, 2011
10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Where: Goodland Public Library
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Space is limited - register today!



Classifieds work!
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Crossword Puzzle



CLUES ACROSS

- Wooden strip
- Adolph S. _____, NY Times
- Divine Egyptian beetle
- Revolve
- Indelible skin marks
- President Lyndon
- Ethiopia
- Ice hockey equipment
- Possessed
- Ecclesiastical you
- Satiate
- Indium Tin Oxide
- Stray
- Belong to he
- Without (French)
- Satiny finished cotton fabric
- Tennis player Bjorn
- Impudence
- Segregating operation
- Scottish tax
- Progenies
- Face covering
- Superior grade wine
- Member of Congress (abbr.)
- Man-child
- Land frog
- A university in Connecticut
- Feline
- Montana herb used on bruises
- Shellac ingredient
- Seed of anise
- Day of rest and worship
- State of being rejected
- An island in the W Pacific
- Mother of the Celtic fairies

CLUES DOWN

- Criticize severely
- Soaps
- "Honeymooners" actor Carney
- High NM city
- Express delight
- Cardboard box (abbr.)
- Mixing corned beef & potatoes
- Summer ermines
- Remain as is
- ___ choy; cabbage
- Pasadena flower
- Inside
- Pane frameworks
- Aeroplanes
- Paper-thin tin plate
- Rubs out
- Plural of sorus
- Major blood vessel
- Chore
- The letter S
- Short haircut
- Citizens of Riyadh
- Spanish saloon
- Husk of wheat
- Used as a driveway coating
- Groaned
- A standard stack of wood
- Flat dishes
- Large number (usually pl.)
- Chinese silver weight
- Repeating sound
- Taxi
- Tribal Indian language
- Violate a law of God
- Cologne
- Woman's undergarment

The crossword puzzle brought to you by:

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