

from other viewpoints...

## Governor aims at efficient agencies

During the last decade, the cost of state government in Kansas grew at an alarming rate. From Fiscal Year 2003 to Fiscal Year 2008, the spending of state tax dollars in Kansas grew by almost \$2 billion. That's an increase of nearly 50 percent in state government spending in just six years.

This led to an inevitable crash that started shortly thereafter and a financial mess that needed sorting through. Kansas began Fiscal Year 2011 – just six months before I took office – with less than \$1,000 in the bank. In my first year as Governor, the state faced a \$500 million projected budget deficit. Instead of raising taxes to cover the deficit, we reduced spending. In fact, in Fiscal Year 2012, and for the first time in 40 years, the Kansas state government spent less money than it had the year before.

To reign in the era of ever-expanding government, my administration focused not only on the big issues, but also on fixing the small things that can add up to big problems.

I directed members of my cabinet and staff to examine every process in state government. A reorganization of agencies enabled consolidation of back office services like human resources and reduced duplicitous bureaucratic labor and red tape.

Immediately upon inauguration we froze state spending and within short order had eliminated more than 2,000 positions that had been open and unfilled for at least six months. We later initiated a voluntary buyout program that allowed more than a thousand state employees who met certain criteria to retire with extra benefits and saved the state millions of dollars in the long term.

The savings quickly mounted and helped turn the \$500 million projected budget deficit into an almost \$500 million ending balance in just a little more than a year.

We aren't done. I believe that government has much to learn from the private sector in cutting costs, creating efficiencies and improving services. Leading private sector firms cut waste, compensate employees based on performance, eliminate inefficiencies, streamline processes, and provide targeted funding to areas that help them meet their goals. This is how they survive. And although government is different, make no mistake, Kansas is in a competition with its surrounding states, and if we want people to invest and live here, we need these efficiencies too.

My administration is evaluating how we deliver the services Kansans require of its state government and targeting where we can improve that delivery while we cut costs. For the first time in decades, agencies are assessing utility rates for state buildings in hopes of negotiating lower rates. We are implementing Medicaid reforms that will reduce costs by more than \$1 billion – and improve and expand health care for our most needy Kansans.

American taxpayers expect their governments at all levels to use their hard earned tax dollars well and to live within their means. All governors and state legislatures in our country should insist that every state tax dollar is spent efficiently and effectively in the delivery of services to the citizens who need them.

In 2010, Missouri spent roughly \$2,300 in all state funding per resident and Oklahoma spent about \$2,800. In Kansas, we spent more than \$3,200 per resident. Kansas taxpayers want their elected leaders to be responsive to their needs and responsible with their tax dollars. I believe that becoming a more efficient and effective state government does not mean essential core services and programs such as K-12 Education or Medicaid should suffer.

Rather, with state agencies able to more readily identify and analyze their costs, state government will be able to better target the use of taxpayers' dollars, cut costs through process improvements, and streamline agency services and programs to better serve you and your family. And the best news is, the savings we generate will end up back in your pocket! –Gov. Sam Brownback



## Mysterious group launching attack ads

Republican voters in northwest Kansas got their first taste for the season of "attack" ads a week or two ago when a flier arrived in the mail denouncing state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer. There would be more to come.

The mysterious oversized postcard appeared in mailboxes with no explanation of where it came from. The required "credit" line says the mailing was paid for by the "Kansas Jobs PAC (political action committee), William Wilson, treasurer," nothing more.

No one had ever heard of the committee. State documents online show it was created and registered June 16 with the state Governmental Ethics Commission by Mr. Wilson. The form lists a post office box in Topeka for an address and a phone in the Tecumseh area east of the capital city, most likely someone's home.

The copy is pure political heat: Over a photo of a magician holding a wand above a top hat, the copy says: "State Senator Ralph Ostmeyer is trying to make his votes for higher taxes disappear. Don't be fooled by his cheap political tricks."

The senator did vote for a temporary increase in the state sales tax a couple of years ago when the state was in a real bind. He never tried to hide that vote, however. He says he thinks the more recent votes listed may have been on amendments to bills that might not have passed.

"Tax raisin' Ralph can't be trusted with our tax dollars," the flier says.

Turns out, however, that the groups paying



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

for the flier were among those pushing hardest for the same tax increase.

Sen. Ostmeyer said he was puzzled as to who or what group generated the mailing. He estimated it might cost \$7,000 to blanket a district like that. Though the flier sounded a conservative theme, he discounted the idea that one of the many conservative "PACs" had put out the flier.

"I've been endorsed by all the conservative groups," he said. "I'm the conservative in this race."

He speculated that Democrats might want to disrupt the Republican primary, setting up a possible victory in the fall for Sen. Allen Schmidt of Hays, an appointed legislator who has been thrown into Mr. Ostmeyer's 40th District. It turns out, he was not far from wrong; financial reports filed last week showed the "Jobs" group was financed by labor unions, including the Teamsters (\$15,000) and the teachers (\$50,000), and by a "PAC" organized to back liberal Republicans (\$120,000) who control the Senate leadership. At least two other front groups were created to spread the money around, records show.

The senator said he'd checked with Sen. Jay Emler, the majority leader, and he had heard

of only one other district where a senator had been the target of a similar anonymous attack. However, the Jobs PAC financial reports lists spending for attacks in at least one or two other Senate races. It gave money to many of the "moderate," or liberal, candidates for the Senate, spent more on support ads.

Sen. Ostmeyer's primary opponent, John Miller, a long-time Norton County commissioner, said he wasn't a whole lot happier about the attack.

"I knew about it when you knew about it," he said, noting that he'd received one in the mail and gotten a phone call the same day.

He said he was campaigning in Logan County when a voter called to say she'd gotten "a postcard from you" that day.

"I just wish people would stay out of this," he said. "Ralph said in the beginning he wanted to keep the primary fair and above board."

"I have no clue (who's behind it)." However, the "Jobs PAC" reported helping to pay for radio and newspaper ads for Mr. Miller's campaign.

Sen. Ostmeyer said he feared there might be radio attack ads from a similar source in the final days before Tuesday's primary election. A couple more fliers did appear.

Something is wrong when outside forces and outside money attempt to manipulate a legislative race way out here, covering their tracks and hiding their true identity. It'd be a shame to allow anonymous pols hiding behind a postoffice box somewhere in eastern Kansas to sway our decisions.

## Trying to set the record straight

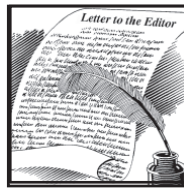
Dear Sherman County Citizens:

I would like to respond to a letter recently mailed to voters by a candidate for office of County Commissioner who feels that changes need to be made and minutes need to be more accurate and complete. I would wonder how he would know if the minutes were accurate and complete since he has never attended one Commissioner meeting since I have been a commissioner. He says he would not vote to approve them without additions or corrections. This is already being done before any minutes are approved and if additions or corrections need to be made, they are. Also, all three Commissioners approve the minutes. Our meetings are normally four hours long and it is impossible to have every word in the minutes.

We are not charging forward with the ambulance department, in fact we were very reluctant to take it back. When I first became a Commissioner in January of 2011, the hospital board approached us and requested that the county take over the ambulance service. Jim Precht informed us that the taxpayers were basically losing \$80,000 to \$100,000 because it was hospital based. We did not have the knowledge at that time, nor were we equipped to take it over at the end of their contract. We then signed another contract with the hospital where they would continue running the ambulance until Jan. 1, 2013, when we would then take it over.

Since that time we have been diligently calling, visiting other counties to view their facilities, and talking to other ambulance directors, as well as meeting with the State Executive Director of the Kansas Emergency Management Services.

Due to the changes in rural America, it is becoming harder and harder to maintain an all volunteer run service. Sometimes seconds and minutes can make a difference between life and death! With this in mind, we want the best protection and service for every person in this county, so we have decided to try to acquire a facility with sleeping and living quarters so that we can have some full-time personnel and by doing that, we can draw from a larger



**from our readers**

• to the editor

pool of people from outside of the City of Goodland. Our hopes and goals are to build this ambulance service to where we do not have to depend on other counties for transports or put large financial burdens on patients because they have to be flown to other hospitals because we do not have enough volunteers available to do a transfer.

We have hired an engineer to design a building to meet those needs. After hiring the engineer and getting the plans from him for a new building, the City of Goodland approached the Commission about the old IGA building being available and that they were willing to make it available for the use of an ambulance and fire department instead of having an empty building.

Currently we are working closely with the City Commission and the engineer to see what the financial possibility of this is. The engineer has produced some numbers on a new building and also numbers to renovate the old IGA building. He tells us his numbers will always be at the very top of the spectrum. Nothing has been let out for bids and until we do this, we will not know the exact numbers. We will not spend money foolishly or money that this county cannot afford. We have been carefully looking at our budget and trying to

do this without a raise in taxes. The Sherman County Rural Fire District 1 board has also been doing the same.

As to the last part of his letter regarding having department heads make monthly reports to the Commissioners, the Commissioners have had informal department head meetings to see if there are any problems or concerns that the department heads may have. We will continue to have informal department head meetings. These meetings have been beneficial because they let all department heads know what is going on each department and have resolved issues and formed new ideas to work together more efficiently. The department head's meetings are sometime difficult to arrange because of the department head's schedules, because of the multitude of tasks that the department heads perform.

I feel the Commission has tried to educate themselves on the many and variety of issue that we deal with on a regular basis.

We have received a lot of compliments on the improvements in the county since some changes have been made within several departments.

I would like to encourage everyone to attend our meetings. I know everyone is busy and should they need more information on anything in the county, they should free to contact me at (785) 821-3809, or Cynthia Strnad at (785) 821-1883, or Max Linin at (785) 899-8075 for more information. If we do not have an answer, we will get one for you.

Larry Enfield  
Sherman County Commissioner

## where to write

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; E-mail address — <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?P=EmailPat>

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966.

E-mail address — <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., 20575-1601. (202)-225-2715 E-mail address — <http://huelskamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me>

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1932-2003

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Founded by Thomas McCants

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THE SHERMAN COUNTY  
STAR

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