

Tobacco tax could raise needed revenue

In his State of the State address earlier this month, Gov. Mark Parkinson proposed both a 55 cent increase per pack in the cigarette and tobacco tax and a 1 percent increase in the sales tax.

Kansas has been facing a budget crisis for more than a year and we have cut and cut and cut, and now finally someone is saying we can't cut anymore and must raise more money.

Of course, it didn't take long for the more conservative members of our state Legislature to cry out that the sky was falling. One question repeated quite often was how the governor could come out for a cigarette tax increase while also proposing a smoking ban. Would it raise the revenue we need?

Putting aside civil liberties arguments inherent in any smoking-ban debate, we need to know if that combination will work. Do smoking bans lead to fewer smokers and therefore less tobacco tax revenue? It's a good question that deserves an answer, and the only one we can give right now is, "we don't know."

Smoking bans as they usually come about at the state level are restricted to just a few types of businesses, such as restaurants or bars. Some people might quit because of that, and some might just smoke elsewhere — or go outside.

One study by a university in Scotland found that Scots were buying 61,000 packets of cigarettes every week since a smoking ban was put in place. Two others in Ireland and England found that tax revenue fell after smoking bans in those countries. A Swedish study in 2005 found increases in chewing tobacco sales after a smoking ban.

A November 2007 study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that the overall number of adults in the U.S. who smoke has leveled off at 20 percent in the latter half of this decade. It had been declining since the 1960s. Since the study was published, the percentage has remained nearly the same, suggesting that the numbers of new smokers and those quitting have equalized and a good number of the people left are the "hard-core" smokers who can't or won't quit even if their favorite restaurant no longer allows smoking.

Of course, every community, state and country is different. The effect of a ban on smoking on a small town would be different from the effect on Topeka, which in turn would be different from the effect on New York.

In any case, these two proposed taxes aren't excessive and they won't get even close to getting the state back to a budget surplus. They do not give us back all the money we had before we started cutting, but they're not supposed to. What Parkinson is aiming for is a stopgap, a way to compensate for the continually falling revenue for this coming year while keeping the cuts that have already been made in place.

There's nothing wrong with asking state departments to spend less money. In a state with a multi-billion dollar budget, there are thousands of ways to make small cuts that add up to big savings, and we've done that. But at a certain point you have to stop cutting and start looking at alternatives if you want these departments to operate at all.

— Kevin Bottrell

A new decade is underway

Animal lovers are a breed unto themselves.

We are cat people. Many of my friends are dog people. One of my sisters-in-law is a horse nut. One of my nieces is a huge advocate for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). It seems there is something born into us that gives us an affinity for animals.

That's why I can hardly watch that television show about Animal Cops. The abuse they uncover is almost unbelievable. How could a person mistreat an animal so.

Don't get me wrong. I am no member of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). They carry animal rights to the extreme the other way. Humane treatment — yes. But, animal rights on the same level as human rights — no. Mankind was given dominion over animals. That means we are to provide and care for them. But, we are also to use them and perhaps, eat them. I can appreciate a vegetarian who chooses not to eat meat for health reasons. But, not because some animal died for my meal.

God gave us Angus cattle because He knew I had to have a thick, juicy steak

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



every now and then.

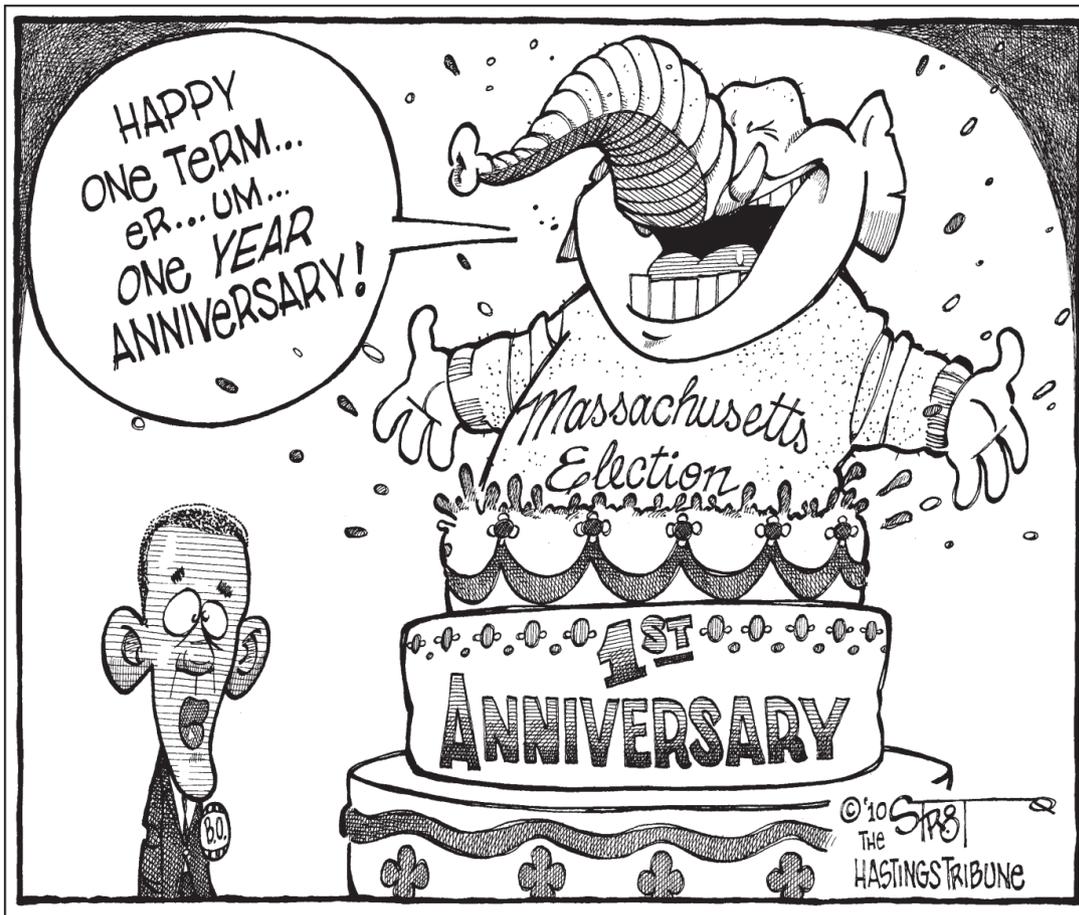
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Jim put a little ad in the paper about his antique car parts and bodies. Advertising pays because he receives calls almost every day from someone who is into restoration as much as he is. The problem is their idea of "antique" and his are not necessarily the same. Many callers want to know if he has a part for say a 1975 Chevy or an '82 Mazda. He just laughs and says he is more into the 1920s, '30s and '40s. Now that is antique.

— ob —

A new decade is under way. That means the census is taken this year. It's our chance to, literally, stand up and be counted.

I've noticed that the older I get, the more I become like the government. I count time in 10-year increments.



Another round of promises

Another New Year...another round of promises for many alcoholics and addicts to their families, friends, employers — anyone they interact with — to stop drinking and drugging. Why is it they believe that the coming of a new year will be the cure they have been looking for? This time, they mean it. They really are going to quit! Millions of alcoholics and addicts have said that...not just at the beginning of the year but about tomorrow, next week, after (your event here) is over, if he/she leaves (or comes back), if the jerk of a boss quits, and on and on.

One of the things that we try to teach alcoholics and addicts is that words are meaningless unless followed up by action. By the time addicts have come to the point that their friends and families are confronting them about their addictions, they have used up all their excuses and their words have no meaning. Often, alcoholics and addicts are angry that people don't believe their resolution to sober up and then use that as a reason to go back out into active addiction. They have, as the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous states, been "judging ourselves by our

Where There's Hope

Carla Moore

intentions while the world was judging us by our behavior." This is a difficult change of attitude for many addicted people to accept.

There is a difference between awareness and acceptance. We can be aware we have a problem for many years before we actually do something about it. This applies to people in general, not just addicted folks. While addicted people are in awareness, you may hear them say that they "probably need to do something" or "I'm thinking about quitting." Once they have crossed over into acceptance, they begin to make physical changes in their lives that affirm their stated belief that they have a problem. If I say I have a problem with alcohol then I will get rid of the alcohol in my house, stop going to the bar, stop allowing friends to bring alcohol into my home and probably begin attend-

ing AA meetings or some other form of support group. My behavior reflects my acceptance.

We call this "doing the next right thing." Recovery encourages us to work a day at a time — sometimes a moment at a time — and do what is best for our recovery first and the rest of life will fall into place. This always sounds so simple to non-addicted people. What you have to remember is the disease of addiction has warped the addicts' ability to make healthy judgments both physically and psychologically. That's why they need others in their lives to get feedback from, such as a sponsor or recovery group. They often do not realize how important the little things in life are and how subtly the disease begins to work in them to bring them to relapse.

So, what does all this mean? If you have an addict or alcoholic in your life who has once again decided it's time to "get their life together," look for behavioral changes rather than depending on what they are saying. I'm sure I'm not telling you anything you didn't already know.

Namaste - Carla

Long winter

Insight

John Schlageck

and at the least there were heat lamps in the pens.

Time slows to a crawl during these frigid periods. Feeding, watering and just looking after the stock takes more time.

"It takes all day to feed," Brunkow says. "First you have to clear your way to your stock. Then you have to feed them, make certain they're all right and if you have any mechanical problems with your feeding equipment they'll be sure to show up at this time."

This slower pace makes for long days, especially when Brunkow and his fellow livestock producers begin before daylight and last all day.

If there is a silver lining during these cold, winter days it has to be resiliency of the livestock. After hundreds of years, livestock in Kansas have adapted to the state's weather.

His cattle also receive hay and a "little bit of grain" at this time. This provides them with more energy and helps keep them warmer.

"They're a lot tougher than we are," Brunkow laughs. "As long as you can move them out of the elements and behind a windbreak, whether it's trees or even a draw in a pasture, they generally make it through the cold."

Old Man Winter came early this year. He arrived with a vengeance on Dec. 9, and wouldn't go away more than a month and a half later.

To date, Kansas has experienced three major winter storms packing up to two feet of snow in the northeastern part of the state. The last two storms included blowing and drifting snow and sub-zero temperatures.

This bitter cold — ice cold — even steel breaking cold has made this extended period miserable for livestock producers and more difficult to care, feed and water their cattle, hogs and sheep.

Pottawatomie farmer/rancher Glenn Brunkow and his father tend to 120 head of cows and 15 head of sheep. The sheep are his children's responsibility, however it remains shared.

Brunkow says the cold temperatures are the most difficult to deal with.

"After the temperature hits zero, I quit looking because it doesn't make a difference," Brunkow says. "It's just plain cold and it gets so diesel engines don't want to crank over — heck, gas engines are even hard to start."

The Brunkows exercise caution and dress warmly when they look after their stock. Glenn says they were extremely fortunate not to be calving during the sub-zero cold spell.

Two ewes did lamb during this bitter cold period. Brunkow went out every hour or so to check on the sheep.

When the lambs did come, he was there immediately and the babies were dried off, brought inside to make sure their core temperatures were elevated

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