

When we the people suffer the consequences

"The first lesson of economics is scarcity: there is never enough of anything to fully satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics." – Thomas Sowell, the Hoover Institution, Stanford University

Sowell's point about the scarcity of resources is essential to understanding economics, which may be as much about human behavior as supply, demand and other commonly-associated factors.

Taxpayers have finite resources, so the more they must pay in taxes, the less they have to spend on goods and services. Accordingly, raising taxes always has a negative impact, and especially so when taxes rise faster than the ability to pay.

Unfortunately, the last 10 years were defined by Sowell's first law of politics. State and local governments in Kansas ignored the implications of finite resources and significantly increased the tax burden. From 2000 to 2009, state and local taxes increased 59 percent but personal income available to pay taxes rose only 44 percent. (The 2010 figures aren't yet published but last year's increase in sales, unemployment and property taxes certainly didn't ease the burden.)

Predictably, we suffered the consequences.

Kansas had 18,800 fewer private-sector jobs in 2009 than in 2000, a reduction of 1.7 percent. There was job growth prior to the recession, but it was well below the national average.

From 1998 to 2008 (Kansas employment peaked in April 2008), private-sector jobs increased 7.9 percent nationwide but only 5.2 percent in Kansas. And comparing the performance of low-burden and high-burden states (as ranked by the nonpartisan Tax Foundation) makes the implications of defying Sowell's first law of economics even more clear. The 10 states with the highest combined state and local tax burden averaged 6.1 percent private sector job growth, whereas the 10 with the lowest burdens averaged a remarkable 16.5 percent gain.

Domestic migration (U.S. residents moving in and out of states) is another good measure. Between 2000 and 2009, the 10 states with the lowest tax burdens averaged a 3.8 percent population increase from domestic migration; the 10 with the highest burdens lost an average of 3.3 percent. Kansas lost 2.5 percent population from domestic migration.

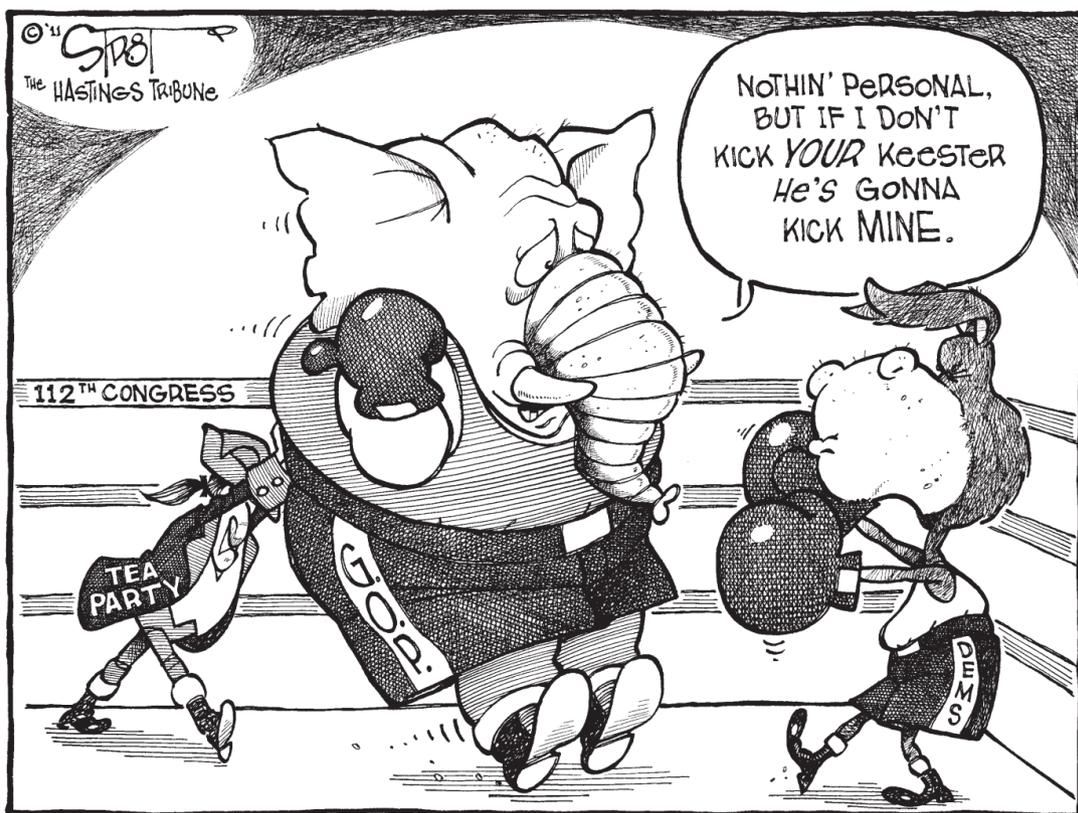
Jobs and people naturally gravitate toward low-burden states where they get to keep more of their hard-earned, finite resources.

The next 10 years must therefore be defined by Sowell's first law of economics or Kansas will continue to suffer the consequences. To compete for jobs and attract new residents, our state and local tax burden must be reduced – and that means government must spend less.

Fortunately, there are many ways to reduce spending and still provide essential services. Ineffective and unnecessary programs have to go, and government must operate much more efficiently.

Change won't be easy, but the choice is simple – reduce the tax burden and create an environment that attracts jobs and new taxpayers, or preserve big government and continue to suffer the consequences.

– Dave Trabert, Kansas Policy Institute



Joys found in jokes, new toys and sympathy

Our new daughter-in-law, Charlotte, is still getting used to Jim's "corny" sense of humor. He asked her if she knew why pinto beans had spots; why lima beans were big and flat; or why northern beans were white.

When Charlotte said she didn't, Jim delivered the punch line, "Well, then, you don't know beans."

All that was missing was the rim shot, ba-da-boom-ba. Poor Charlotte. Nothing I could do to help her. She will have to develop her own coping skills on how to deal with her father-in-law. Thank goodness she is so good-natured.

One of Jim's biggest pleasures in life is to make people laugh. And, even though I've heard most of his jokes and stories a dozen times, I try to laugh anew each time. I think there is a clause in the marriage contract that binds wives to

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



always laugh at their husband's jokes.

–ob–

After hitting a deer and totaling our ourred van we are driving a new vehicle. Well, new to us. I am still trying to learn the new set of "bells and whistles". Speed setting controls are located on the steering wheel instead of the signal lever on the steering column. I can't tell you how many times I have activated the window

washing feature when what I really wanted to do was set the cruise control.

Jim finally figured out how to change tracks on the CD player; we're trying to remember that the "unlock" button has to be pushed in order to open the side doors; and the headlights don't automatically turn on and off. Old habits die hard.

–ob–

Snow, of course, is the big news. And, we have a lot of it to talk about, with more coming. Since we're so thoroughly modern, we sent a picture of the snow, via cell phone texting, to one of our daughters in San Antonio. She hated winters in western Kansas and was not the least bit sympathetic to our plight.

According to Jennifer, the only way she will enjoy snow is to see a picture of it. Guess she won't be joining us on any ski trip.

Community vitality depends on people working together

As you travel through rural Kansas, it's apparent many small towns that once revolved around farm life are slowly fading away or have already died.

Remaining small towns wage a constant battle to stay alive. Farmers and ranchers once supported their communities and communities supported them. Although this continues today, it becomes more difficult to maintain with each passing year.

Today, many farm and ranch families work or go to school in larger towns. Many also shop in these places. The result: small-town businesses once supported by nearby farmers shut down and lock their doors because of a shrinking customer base.

Like the rest of us, farmers and ranchers may take their business to suburban malls because prices are more competitive. Smaller, surviving stores disappear because they have fewer customers.

This scenario is all too familiar in Kansas and other farm states. What can be done to bring farmers, ranchers and

Insight John Schlageck

communities together again?

While visiting with farm and ranch friends who live in the southwest part of our state – all fourth- and fifth-generation producers – I gathered some thoughts.

To bring farmers and communities together again, rural towns need institutions that bring farmers and ranchers to town every so often. No doubt this happens with some, but not with enough.

Strong communities survive when farmers and ranchers retire in their towns and become involved in civic and community affairs. Such endeavors might include operating a bed and breakfast, volunteering to operate the museum or taking on a leadership role in the county commission.

Farmers and ranchers dedicated to the health and well being of their communities remains the key to survival of small

rural towns in Kansas. When farmers and ranchers remain uninvolved in community challenges because they see no apparent personal gain, revitalization efforts cannot succeed because they lack broad support from all the people throughout that area.

Without a central town focus, inhabitants soon travel elsewhere for activity and communities wither away.

A rural community's vitality depends on townspeople and farmers and ranchers communicating and working together for their own little burg.

While rural life continues to afford independence and freedom, too much threatens the survival of the family farm or ranch, its way of life and the community where each has its roots.

Agricultural communities and the people who live in them have always lived in the best environment in this country. It's worth holding on to. And we cannot afford to lose it.

Will there really be any change in our government

Congress going into a new session reminds me a great deal of a child I once knew returning to school each fall. Each year was going to be THE year. School work would be done on time, grades would improve, rooms would be cleaned and then after about two months reality would set in; the knowledge that nothing has really changed. Homework is still a drag, grades require completing assignments and keeping the bedroom clean takes a lot of time plus there are always those students who bully or are just plain rude and arrogant.

The returning members are sure this will be the session which will uphold their beliefs, notice I didn't say their constituents' desires. The new members are full of the vigor and attitude to declare their values as the path to heal society, convinced they have only the country's well being in mind.

In a symbolic gesture, evidently meant to pacify the Tea party, John Boehner has arranged to have the Constitution

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



read, lest they forget what they have been challenged to accomplish. It is a bit reminiscent to me of those who read the Bible and are somehow made "right" because they have done it.

New and old members of both the House and Senate must come together to address the needs of the country and finance them. Bill Clinton managed to balance the budget with a budget surplus as well. Just as a student must prioritize so must our elected officials. Do we work to recall something simply because of our dislike of the sponsors of the bill or do we prioritize to strengthen our communities. We will lose some programs and

some are a waste of money, or perhaps the programs aren't but those who take advantage of them are.

Within this prioritizing plan, we will have to acknowledge the cost of war. Are wars more important than creating a healthy society? Can we fight our enemy more efficiently? Does Congress balk at health care simply because Congress already has it? If we want to build our economy we must realize small business is a cornerstone of our country, but many cannot achieve their dream because of lack of health insurance. New situations require innovative thinking.

Within two months, I fear it will be business as usual with Congressional leaders and members spending more time and ultimately more money on fighting. Reality will set in without any results; homework needs to be done, bills need to be completed, housecleaning isn't about the mop and as for the bullies...they will still be there.



To the Norton Telegram Staff,
Happy New Year! Thank you for thinking of me and this address suggesting we receive the Norton Telegram.

When my parents were alive we got it all the time
So, now I need to receive it in my old age. I still have family (Lawrence and Wilma Wiseman) and friends who used to live in or around Clayton living and retired in Norton. So you see, it is fun reading the news and my brother enjoys the ads.

Well, thank you once again for sending it my way.
Helen Wipf, Lincoln, Nebraska



Thumbs Up
A thumbs up to Main Street IGA for the delivery of groceries to a sick person in a snow storm. That is small town courtesy. Called in.

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Office hours:
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.
8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732
E-mail: nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF
Dana Paxton.....general manager
advertising director/
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com
Dick Boyd.....Blue Jay sports
Harriett Gill.....society editor
email: hgill@nwkansas.com
Sherry Hickman....bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Henderson.....computer production

