

The issue of school budgets

The 2012 legislative season is fast upon us. School budgets will be one of the big issues, what with the state's finances perennially tight and the Legislature having messed up the income tax system something fierce last year.

But before joining the fight, we'd urge the state's teachers, educators and school boards to take a deep breath and offer to work with the governor and Legislature to make some sense out of the tax situation.

Unless their purpose is simply politics – to make the governor and his Republican allies look bad – they have nothing to gain from picking a fight.

The governor has already said he wants the tax situation fixed. He's promised not to cut schools. As long as the Legislature will do something about the income tax, there's no reason to believe he isn't telling the truth.

In effect, he's offered an olive branch to the school interests, which consume about half the state's budget.

The tax situation became a mess near the end of last year's session when the Senate, under pressure to get something done on the income tax, a key plank in the governor's platform, passed a bill that included nearly all his proposed cuts but none of the "flattening" changes he'd proposed to eliminate "loopholes" such as the deductions for home mortgage interest and other popular tax breaks.

Everyone, especially the Senate, just assumed the two houses would negotiate differences on the tax bill and come up with something they could live with. That didn't happen, however. The House just slammed the Senate bill and sent it on to the governor, who signed it.

That left the state with a projected shortfall in coming years, as much as \$700 million a year, assuming there is no fix for the income tax, although that figure keeps dropping as the economy improves.

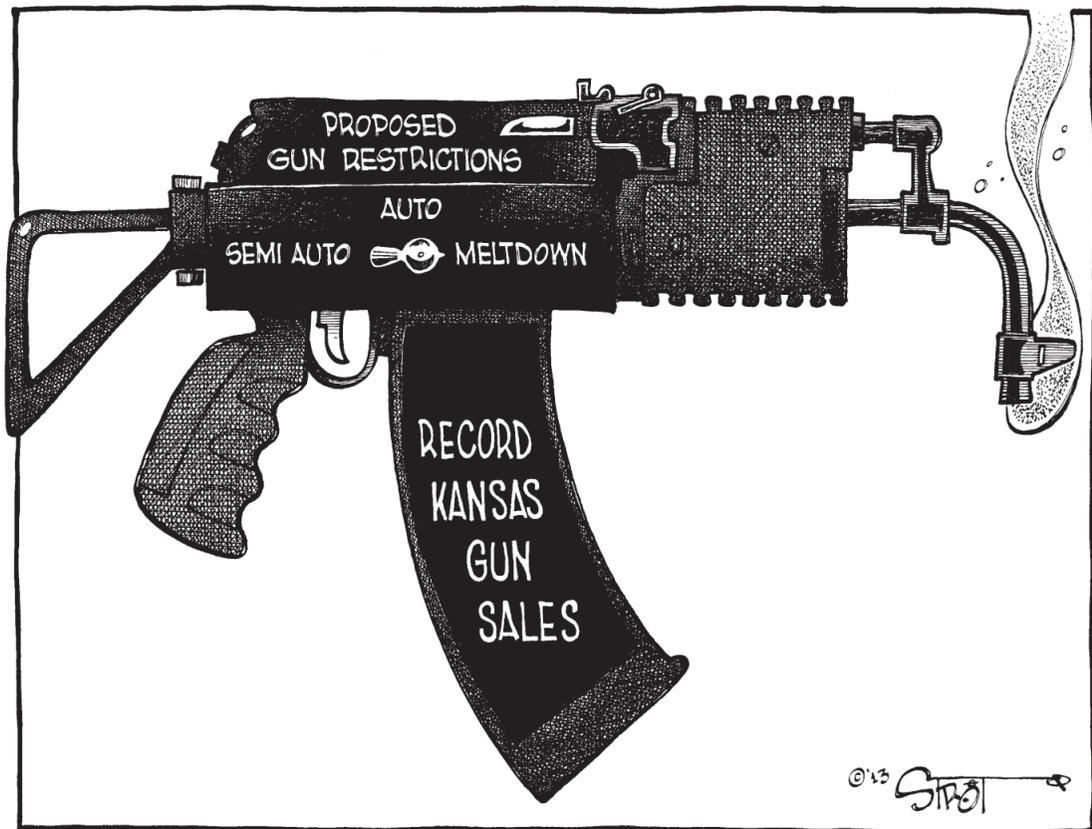
This clearly was not what the governor wanted, but as one veteran statehouse reporter likes to say, "He signed it, so he's got to share the blame."

So true. And the governor has said the revenue system needs to be fixed. It'll be the big issue this year.

How well it's fixed and how education fares may depend on how well everyone who sees the need can work together. The governor has signaled his intent. The state's school boards appear to be ready to work with him. The teachers? So far, they've not come around, but they should.

This administration says it's a friends of education, and they might just get farther by joining in than by howling. – Steve Haynes

On the Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



Private lives should be that, private

As a nation, we seem to always want a target. Currently, it is an individual's private life. Perhaps Former CIA Director and General David Petraeus, because of his position, was at least worth looking into, but we have spent millions of dollars, governments and institutions, investigating consensual affairs. The most recent being University of Texas track coach, Bev Kearney, for an affair which ended over ten years ago.

It amazes me in a country where one child is killed every three hours by a gun, that we would choose to concentrate on sex over violence. Eighty-seven percent of the gun deaths in children under 15, occur in the U.S. Do we not concentrate on violence over sex because those who make love don't shoot back, at least as often? Children are shielded from sexual themes, but allowed to gun down a figure, in life like accuracy, in their own living

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



with Congress trying to bring him down, and in the process spending millions of dollars and countless hours, she overcame a paralyzing automobile accident and walked again, but lost her job for a consensual affair which ended a decade ago. Petraeus had proven himself a valuable leader in the world of battle and diplomacy, but even that wasn't enough to save him. Whether it is 24/7 news or a self-righteous group dedicated to policing our morals, it needs to stop. If we are going to become inflamed about a subject it should be violence, not sex. Sex didn't wound Gabby Giffords, it wasn't sex that killed 20 children in Sandy Hook, or turned a movie theater into a war zone. Somehow our priorities have become skewed. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

room.

If we fear a child will be impacted by sex on the screen, why wouldn't they be by violence. Your answer is hormones? Well, hormones, basically testosterone, flow for violence as well. You can't say one counts and the other doesn't.

We have brought down too many people, not because of violence, but sex. Private lives should be just that, private. I may not want former President Bill Clinton as a husband, but as a President he reduced unemployment to 4 percent, left the office with a budget surplus, and increased our stature globally. Even

Should there be a gas tax and is it fair to all

Several states, including Kansas, are trying to figure out how to charge a gas tax on the fuel we are not burning in our high fuel efficient vehicles.

We heard a discussion of the problem on talk radio. In California they are considering placing a GPS in the vehicles and charging on the basis of that report. Of course, this opens up a can of worms about the potential for abuse of your driving information.

Many cars already have GPS. We love it when we are lost, or it tracks someone who has been abducted!

But it gets creepy when we think about being watched. I don't like it though it is interesting the most strenuous objections involve worries about how the information might be used in court proceedings. Hmmm--how about avoiding doing stuff that ends with court proceedings?

I got to thinking that it would also be grossly unfair to those who live in rural areas because you'd be paying taxes for maintenance on roads that aren't maintained by the fuel tax. Or in the case of the road I live on maintained at all, ever! Then I realized that I pay fuel tax for all the miles I drive on country roads and that's not fair either!

More toll roads are a possibility. Colorado has a pretty slick system. They take your picture when you enter

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



and leave toll roads and possibly in between. Creepy! The bill beats you home. You also get ticketed if the cameras catch you doing something you shouldn't! (Please note: I do not know this from personal experience!)

Oklahoma has a good system to avoid. There are signs saying you are on a toll road but there is no place to pick up a ticket. You drive for miles and miles, when you get off the signs say you must have the correct change. Since you had no idea what that might be until you arrive at the kiosk, you search through your purse, your pockets, every nook and cranny of your car, and your sister does the same!

You finally come up with 5 dimes, 7 nickels, 3 quarters and a crumpled dollar bill. Eventually you get all the coins and the bill in the proper place but the light is still red and the message claims you owe twenty cents. So you throw in twenty pennies. And they still claim you owe ten cents.

We should have just left but I meant it when I said: don't do stuff that ends with court proceedings! We noticed a little hut that in Kansas would be a toll booth. If they have a manned booth, why can't they make change? Or at least communicate with the kiosk?

We drove over, no problem because there is no other traffic. Apparently, all the Oklahoman's avoid the toll road! The woman in the booth looked annoyed and said, "Just go on!"

What good does it do to try to do the right thing?

We subsidize the production of high fuel efficient vehicles, thinking it will solve a problem only to realize it causes a whole bunch of others.

Another issue in the news is discovery of carcinogenic chemicals in fire retardant fabrics and furnishings. I recall a textile class from college. It was about the time laws were passed requiring children's sleepwear to be treated. My professor was passionate about this cause.

The lawmakers reasoned if it was good for sleepwear it would be even better for the stuffing in the recliner. Oh dear, what is that under the hubby's easy chair? Do I don a hazmat suit before I pick it up?

Truly; no good deed goes unpunished!

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