

## 2010 may bring biggest tax hikes on record

Theoretically, Americans are in for one of the biggest tax hikes on record two years after the next election.

That's 2010, when the Bush tax cuts are set to "sunset," or expire. Without action by Congress, rates will return to those in effect in 2002, when the new Bush administration and the Republican majority in Congress pushed through \$1.35 trillion in tax cuts over 10 years.

The nation had a budget surplus then, as figured by shaky government accounting. Today, after five years of tax cuts, a recession and unprecedented government spending, the deficit approaches \$800 billion a year.

Something hasn't worked out.

Democrats say it's simple: the country couldn't afford the tax cuts, and we need to go back to the old rates. They complain about the fiscal irresponsibility of the cuts, but big deficits seldom bothered the party when it was in power. Its priority has always been spending.

Why cut taxes, goes the argument, with so many things we need to spend the money on?

Republican conservatives, on the other hand, argued they could cut government spending by cutting taxes. This sort of starve-the-budget thinking is pretty common, but it seldom works.

Why?

Because few in Congress, or the state Legislature, for that matter, really believe in spending cuts. Cuts produce complaints from those who depend on government programs: program beneficiaries, employees, bureau-

crats, everyone feeding at the public trough.

You can cut taxes, but the result seldom is lower spending. It hasn't worked in Washington, and it hasn't worked in Topeka.

This country badly needs fiscal restraint, though. The budget "rules" of the Gingrich era didn't bring it. The tough stance of today's Democrats isn't likely to do much better.

Pressure groups work for spending, not for taxpayers. They represent all the interests who want to get money, from social groups to unions to big corporations.

In Washington and in Topeka, darned few voices represent the taxpayer. Fewer still call out for fiscal sanity, lower spending, real tax cuts and less government.

Money talks, and those who make money from government have the biggest voice. It's not a matter of right or wrong, sound fiscal policy or unsound.

Just follow the money.

So, where do we go from here?

It's a good bet Congress will not let all the tax cuts fade away. The Democrats will vote to sock it to the rich. Republicans will try to defend the economic benefits of stimulating investment. Most of the cuts will remain.

And despite that, most of us will see little real difference in our taxes, which will be too high.

Maybe the economy will grow enough to shrink the deficit, maybe it won't.

And we'll still need to talk about less government, not more.

— Steve Haynes

## Cab drivers are international

As we got into the cab, headed for Turner Field to see the Braves play the Dodgers, Jerry asked the driver where he was from.

We do that a lot. Cabbies in American cities no longer come from Brooklyn or Staten Island or Watts. They come from Iran, Sudan, Egypt, Turkey, Ethiopia, and a couple dozen countries in between.

It's sort of an international guessing game we play; look at the driver, get him to talk and try to guess. Then just ask where he's from. It's guaranteed to start an interesting conversation.

It turned out our driver, call him John, was from Ethiopia.

"How do you like our country," Jerry asked.

"It's wonderful," he said.

"Well," Jerry said, "we think it's the most wonderful country in the world, but it has a lot of problems."

"Ah," the driver said, "but it's so much better than the other countries."

"My brother lives in Germany. He can never be a German."

He talked for a while about how European countries treat their "guest workers," millions of Asian and African immigrants who live and work without hope of every being accepted into French or German society.

That's the genius of America, the great Melting Pot we all studied in grade school. Immigrants who come here put up with a lot. They take the worst jobs, work long hours, save and scrim.

But some day, they know they can become citizens. Then they will be Americans. They will join the main-



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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stream.

And John?

"Now I am an American," he said with a grin.

Who knows how many millions of people have uttered that phrase?

In some circles, I know, it's popular to run this country down. You know the refrain.

"People everywhere hate us. They want to kill us, blow us up. They think we're awful."

Which explains why millions of people from nearly every country in the world try to move here every year. Why people will pay thou-

sands of dollars and risk their lives to sneak across the border. Why hundreds of thousands take the citizenship exam every year.

Because, for all its flaws, this probably is the best place in the world to live, raise children and create a new life.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. John isn't buying it.

"Is he a citizen?" Jerry asks as we pull up to the ballpark.

"Yes," he beams and nods. "I am now."

Welcome to the club, John. Welcome to the club.

### Photo Policy

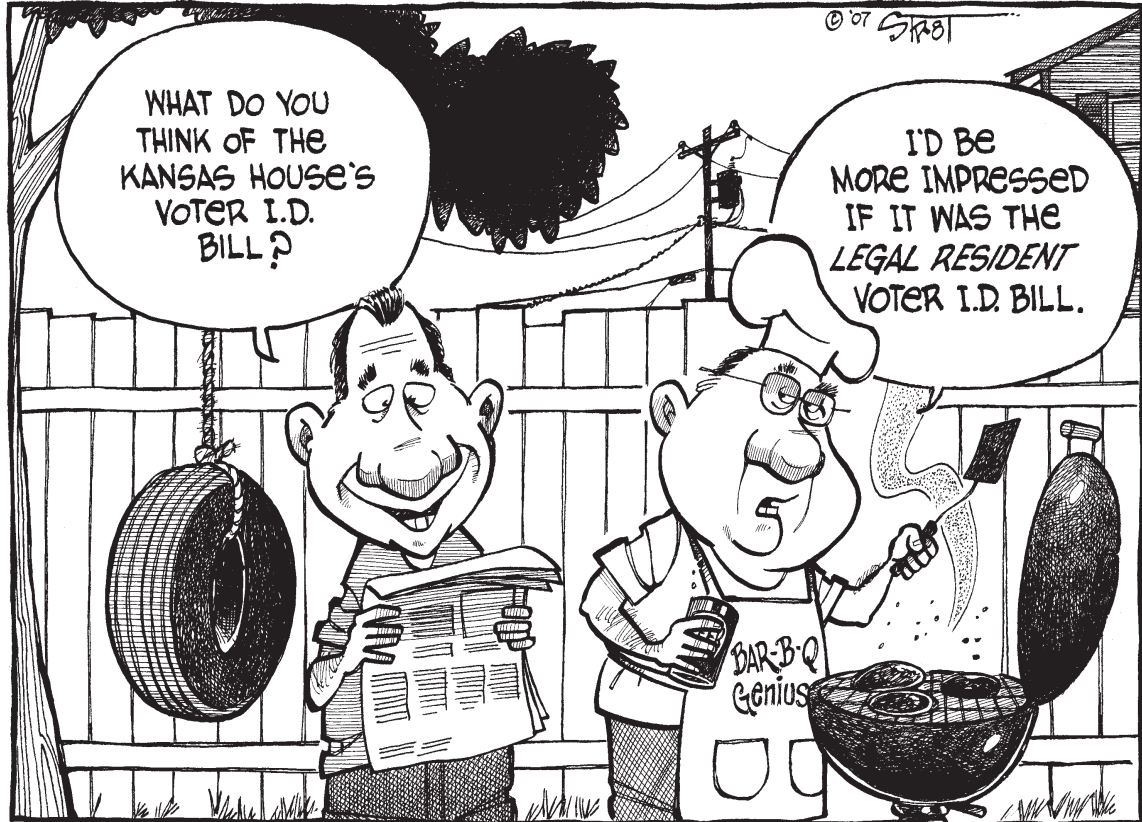
The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.



## Talladega Superspeedway visit

I'm sitting at the top of the Talladega Superspeedway with some friends and companions, watching cars race around the track at 120 to 130 mph.

Talladega, in eastern Alabama, halfway between Birmingham and Atlanta, is to motor sports what Churchill Downs is to horse racing — a sacred place.

I went to Churchill Downs and didn't see a horse.

Now, I'm at Talladega and there are cars on the track — two to be exact. The big NASCAR race was last week.

I get to go a lot of places with the National Newspaper Association. Of course, most of them are off season or "if you had been here last week...."

I'm told that on race weekend, 175,000 people jammed the field and stands for the Aaron 499. Now there are about 25 of us atop the stands listening to our guide and to our expert, Jim Sterling.

Sterling is the step-father to Carl Edwards, who drives No. 99 for Office Depot.

Jim wasn't here for the big race. He teaches at the University of Missouri and can't fly around the country every weekend, though his wife Nancy, Carl's mother, often does.

As it turned out, Carl didn't attend much of this one, either. He blew his engine in the fourth or fifth lap and came in next to last.



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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There's an airstrip right behind the track, and Carl is a pilot. Jim said he flew home and was playing tennis by the time the race ended. I'm sure he was not a happy camper, since that cost him a lot of money and his position in the top 10. He finished 42nd and won only \$84,530 and 27 points out of an almost \$6 million purse.

The winner, Jeff Gordon, took home \$355,511 and 195 points, plus 10 bonus points.

Carl had nothing to be ashamed of, however. Only 26 out of the 43 drivers finished all 192 laps. Several others had engine problems and six drivers fell out of the race due to accidents.

Steve thinks I'm pretty brave to sit up here high above the speedway, since I'm terrified of heights.

Well, my secret is not looking down. I'm checking the cars off to the right and left as they practice below me and watching the horizon.

Our guide says the race cars we're watching are part of a driving

school. Before they took to the track, there was a motorcycle running around the infield. Apparently, there's a Harley Davidson plant nearby and they test their cycles here every day there isn't a race.

Now there's a tough job, driving Harleys around the track at Talladega most every day.

For this big a facility, there isn't much happening. The next big race weekend is the UAW-Ford 500 in October, and that's it for the year.

Better get your tickets now. The grandstands only hold 143,000 people. If you don't get a seat, you'll have to stand or bring a lawn chair or maybe we'll all just watch it on television like I did the Kentucky Derby.

Well, the visit to the track was interesting and informative and I bought myself a Talladega T-shirt and a No. 99 hat.

Next stop — Augusta, Ga., to not see the Masters.

## Voice of friend will be missed

We buried another old friend from the little farming community where I grew up.

Lela Huff was a big woman with a voice to match. I likened her to a white Mahalia Jackson. She had the kind of voice that made the hair on the back of your neck stand up when she sang.

My dad loved to sing with Lela. He had a very deep bass voice and they really sounded good together.

Lela was more than just a voice, though. She was one of the most fun and fun-loving people I ever knew. Her family may have had a little more financial resources than other farm families in our area, but whatever Lela had, she shared. It was a party wherever she was. The Huffs had a pontoon boat they kept at the lake. They hosted the greatest church youth group and 4-H parties.

And the food. There was always food; good food and plenty of it. At the funeral, one of her grandsons said, "Nanna didn't think a pie should ever be cut in more than four pieces."

Someone else recalled the time when, at 1 a.m., Lela woke everyone in the house to make fudge.

I worked for Lela one summer. She had me come clean house. I thought she had the most beautiful and elegant house I had ever seen, with a grand piano in the front room. There were two bathrooms in the house (that alone was pretty impressive), and a thoroughly modern kitchen.

Tragedy was part of Lela's life. Grief that few know could have brought her down. But that wasn't Lela. She was a Godly woman who put her trust, entirely, in God. Her testimony was her life. She never lost her faith.

-ob-

My oldest daughter Halley had been given the task to pick up Tay-



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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lor, her 8-year-old niece, from an after-school program. Unfortunately, Halley was a few minutes late. She said to the program director, "How much do I owe you?"

"Don't worry about it," the director said. "You weren't that late."

"No," Halley replied, "how much do I owe you not to tell Taylor's mom (Halley's sister) I was late?"

"You don't have to worry about me," the director said, "but you might have to pay off Taylor."

"OK," Halley said to Taylor. "How much is it going to cost me for you to keep your mouth shut?"

Without missing a beat, Taylor said, "Ten bucks."

"Ten bucks? I don't think so," answered Aunt Halley.

Taylor shot back, "OK, five bucks and we go to Chuck E. Cheese."

If you've ever been to a Chuck E. Cheese Restaurant, you know that it is pure "kid pandemonium."

Terrified, Halley countered, "I'll give you the 10 bucks, but no Chuck E. Cheese."

Evidently more hungry than broke, Taylor said, "Seven bucks, and we eat at McDonald's."

When Halley called to tell me the story she was still laughing. In the background, I heard a voice say, "Welcome to McDonald's. May I take your order, please?"

Guess Taylor won that round.

-ob-

The tornado that wiped out Greensburg hit closer to home than

I thought. My sister's grandson, Keith VanZandt, lives there. The sketchy news she received indicated his house is gone. He and his girlfriend and their child took cover in the basement. When it was all over and they emerged, everything was gone.

I'm sure by now everyone knows someone who knows someone who was affected by the tornado. Pictures I've seen show total devastation.

Still, the good news is I haven't heard one single accusation that FEMA was to blame, that the government should be issuing cash cards to the victims or that "someone" owes the residents of Greensburg something.

People are picking themselves up, evaluating what they have and starting over. It's what Kansans do. We come from strong pioneer stock.

Other Kansans are responding. Help is on the way.

They'll get through this together. And be stronger for it. They might be beaten down, but not defeated.

### From the Bible

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

I Corinthians 10: 21

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