

Governor asks Legislature to cut its own budget

The governor has the Republicans running the Legislature this time, and they're going to have to admit it.

With a wry smile, Gov. Mark Parkinson, a Democrat, called on the leadership to cut its own budget the way some members are threatening to cut everyone else's.

What else can the GOP members do?

The Associated Press reported this week that proposals submitted to his office by the Legislature's leadership showed spending up 4 percent this year and 3 percent next year.

The leadership sent up a howl. They said the figures represented projected needs, not what they planned to spend — just like every other state agency.

One House leader noted that the governor's budget has been growing, too, but his office has taken over grant programs from other offices in the last couple of years. It may not be able to cut back to 2006 levels, as state schools have been forced to do.

The governor, of course, has changed course this fall and come out in favor of some kind of tax increase to keep schools and other programs from being cut any more next year. Basically, he said the fat is gone from state spending and there's not much left but bone.

The truth is, legislators have been cutting their own spending along with schools, colleges and prisons, among other programs. Leaders say they are prepared to do again what they did in fiscal 2009, when they cut spending below 2008 levels.

Still, there's no room in the state budget for any increase for the Legislature. The budget hawks on the Republican side should know they have to lead by example.

And there certainly is no excuse for even considering any increase in pay, either for state employees or the Legislature itself. With thousands of Kansans unable to find jobs, how can families afford a tax increase this year?

The governor apparently favors an increase in the tobacco tax, the Associated Press story reported, though there's been talk of hiking the sales tax or at least eliminating some "loopholes" to raise more money for schools and colleges.

Schools and colleges are important. So are prisons and parole officers, highways and a host of other things the state does. But when Kansas families have trouble making ends meet and Kansas businesses scrape just to meet payroll, can they afford to pay the state more?

Probably not.

The outcome will be interesting, because pressure for a tax increase will be great from well-organized lobbies, including school boards and teachers.

But before the battle starts, let's rule out any increase for the Legislature, the governor's office and other elected officials. Any pay increases.

And do as Kansans everywhere are doing — more with less.

— Steve Haynes

Death Penalty Repeal Arguments for Kansas' 2010 Legislature...

1. THE HIGH COST OF APPEALS...

IF THE SAPS IN KANSAS EVER FIGURE OUT HOW TO LIMIT APPEALS WE WILL BE IN TROUBLE.



2. STATES WITHOUT CAPITAL PUNISHMENT HAVE FEWER MURDERS...

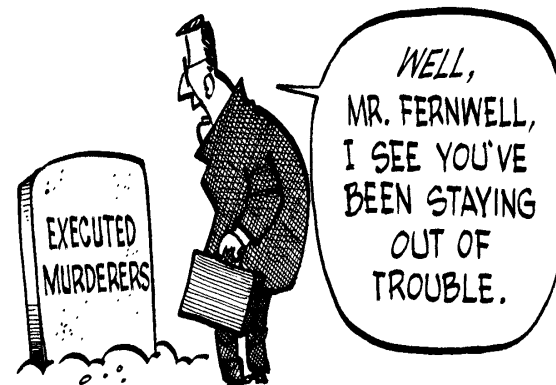


3. IT'S MORE FITTING FOR MURDERERS TO SIT IN PRISON THINKING ABOUT THEIR CRIME...

THE NEXT TIME I GET OUT I'LL COMMIT IT DIFFERENTLY!



4. THE DEATH PENALTY DOES NOT DETER CRIME...



Nothing good about being stormed in

The good thing about being stormed in is there's nothing to do.

The bad thing about being stormed in is there's nothing to do.

Like everyone else, our Christmas plans were changed by the weather. The day before Christmas, when it was just starting to snow, we made a "run" to the store for some last-minute things. We made it home before the storm really hit and settled in for the night. Christmas morning revealed whirling winds and drifted snow that blocked every vehicle on the place. We decided we were staying put.

Nothing to do but cook and eat. Which we did. I thought I was really limiting the menu, with only three to cook for, but I still ended up making two pumpkin pies, a pan of cinnamon rolls, two dozen crescent rolls, a ham, stuffing, mashed potatoes, green-bean casserole, deviled eggs, dill dip and a layered gelatin salad.

When the meal was done, I announced to Jim and son James, "That's it. You two are on your own for the weekend. I'm not cooking again."

And I didn't. I took naps, I watched

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



movies and I worked Sudoku puzzles. Until Saturday night, that is, when the thought of a big pot of beans with cornbread overwhelmed me. Christmas Day, I had cut the ham off the bone, leaving some meaty chunks. After soaking the beans overnight, like my mother taught me, I put them on to cook Sunday morning.

James was anxious. He asked me every half hour from 5 p.m. on, "Are they ready yet?"

Finally, at 7 p.m., I declared, "Let's eat." They were worth the wait. The cornbread was just right, and with chopped onions and vinegar on the side, it was good eatin'.

— ob —

Sunday morning dawned much milder.

As we were getting ready for church, a phone call from friends offered us a luncheon invitation. I said we would love to come under one condition: I would bring leftover deviled eggs and molded gelatin salad. Deal. We packed into the van and headed to town.

After church, we drove to Bob and Ila's house. As we walked in the door, carrying our covered dishes, Bob asked, "Is this some of that 'moldy' gelatin salad?"

It did have green gelatin but it was far from moldy.

— ob —

I hope you got some of what you wanted for Christmas and some of what you needed. We should probably never have everything we want. There wouldn't be anything to look forward to or to work for.

And, we are looking forward. The new year is only days away. No doubt, it will contain some sadness and struggles, but we know it will contain many joys, too.

My prayer is that we have the strength to accept whatever comes and to share ourselves with those around us.

Happy New Year!



To...Carla Reed and the Chamber for putting on a wonderful Christmas dinner. (Called in)

In case you have forgotten, the addresses for this column are:

- ebradley@nwkansas.com
- nortontelegram@nwkansas.com
- 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654
- 877-3361 or 877-6908
- (fax) 877-3732
- drop by the office, 215 S. Kansas Ave.

There is no charge to render a thumbs up; names of those providing the information are not used, only the method of transmission

Your political connection

★ **Governor Mark Parkinson**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232

★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514

★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

★ **U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124

★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399

★ **State Rep. John Faber**, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500

Office hours:

8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail:

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

- Dana Paxton.....general manager
- advertising director
- Dick Boyd.....Blue Jay sports
- Erica Bradley.....managing editor
- Harriett Gill.....society editor
- Sherry Hickman.....bookkeeping/circulation
- Vicki Henderson.....computer production

In today's harried world, seems like everyone's schedule is filled to the brim with activities. Both parents work, kids go to school and participate in student government, sports or any number of activities and events.

Seems families meet each other coming and going. Still, most parents believe it's more important than ever to dedicate the dinner hour to developing and nurturing relationships with family members.

While most of us are fortunate enough to eat every day, the abundance of food in our country is still something to be thankful for and not taken for granted. Farmers and ranchers provide us with the meat, vegetables, fruits, milk, juice and other items we eat each day.

Our food is safe and wholesome. It is also a real bargain with most families paying less than 11 percent of their annual income on food.

That said, it is important that time spent at the dinner table should also be something we as families look forward to and appreciate.

It is a time to give thanks for the bounty we enjoy. Make each and every evening meal memorable with your family.

Carve out a few moments of peace and quiet for these family gatherings. It's important to limit distractions during mealtime. Turn off the television, radio or both.

Establish a quiet place for meals and

Insight

John Schlageck

make a habit of temporarily eliminating interruptions such as cell phones, video games and toys. Make the family the center of attention not a distraction.

Have each member of the family talk about an activity in his or her day and discuss it within the family. This initiates conversation and helps keep the family connected.

By carving out a moment of peace in the day, you communicate that dinner is a special, family time.

Mark milestones at meals. Throw away the old rules of calendar holidays and make family dinner a time to remember. Use place mats and table decorations and easy themed meals to note special days including birthdays, test days and any other significant event worth highlighting. Remember it's about spending time with your family.

Include teamwork at the table. Everyone should play a part. This includes menu planning so children will have a voice. They can search for recipes in cookbooks and online as well as meal preparation such as setting the table, washing vegetable and clean up after the dinner meal is complete.

Packing the pantry is a key to dinner

success. This means having an assortment of condiments on hand including plenty of mustard, barbecue sauce, salad dressing, jams and jellies, herbs, spices, olives and garlic. These will all help pull a flavorful meal together. Today with all of the convenient ingredients available at our fingertips, this provides an easy way for children to participate in whipping up sauces and marinades.

Don't forget to create a bevy of flavors. This means adding variety to meals that also encourage youngsters to select and eat different foods. Remember to add color to the dinner table. By filling a plate with fruit and vegetables, colors like green, orange and red will ensure a meal that's rich in key vitamins and nutrients. Hopefully the kids will eat and enjoy these foods too.

No doubt there are plenty of other ideas and tips that will foster family togetherness through meal preparations, rituals and traditions. These are simply a handful that are tried and true. Come up with your own. Make them part of your own family's tradition. More importantly, enjoy the food and time with your family.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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Letters to the Editor: e-mail ebradley@nwkansas.com, or write 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654