

A legislative look at state improvements

Wednesday, January 18, the Supreme Court Chief Justice Lawton Nuss addressed the legislature on the State of the Judiciary in Kansas. As with all Kansas agencies, he stressed financial concerns dealing with judicial services in Kansas.

News from
your
legislator
Ward Cassidy



He requested that the legislature give the Judicial Branch the ability to organize judges, as they deem best, to provide services. I personally like having one judge per county and would have to see caseload evidence to support such a proposal. It seems like not a day goes by without someone proposing less services to Western Kansas.

I know there are many outdoor enthusiasts in my district. I like the proposal that when we purchase our new car tags, there will be a check-off box to allow us to get a Parks Pass. The cost will be \$15.00. It is another step the Parks Commission has requested for their goal of becoming self-sufficient.

The Governor plans to repeal the "use it or lose it" law associated with groundwater rights in areas closed to new water-right development.

The Governor's tax plan has met with quite a bit of controversy. Like many things this year, it is still a work in progress. Kansas has a long-standing reliance on the "three-legged stool" of blending income, sales, and property tax sources to fund government. Like many of this year's proposals, I will have to learn a lot more about overall funding, and how it will affect my district, before I can support it.

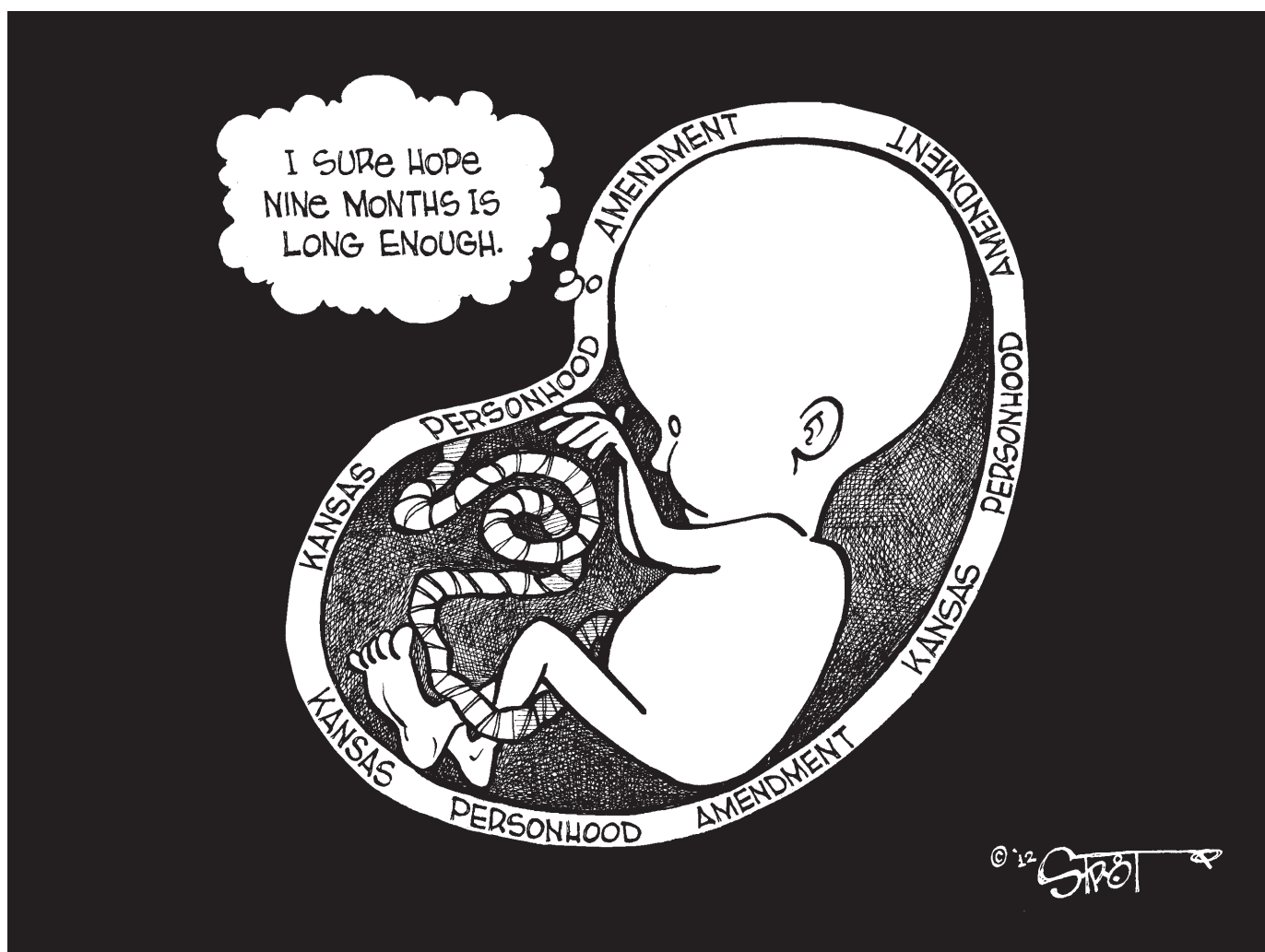
The Governor has stated that he is planning to pay-down debt. Part of this is driven from Moody and Standard and Poor's report that since Kansas has not met our statutory ending balance requirement, our bond rating might be downgraded. Kansas has a large debt load that most folks are really not aware of. The next two paragraphs will try to tie this together.

The Expanded Lottery Act Reserve Fund was created in 2007. It allows for the transfer of net gaming revenue collected from state-owned casinos and electronic gaming machines at pari-mutuel racetracks to the Expanded Lottery Act Reserve Fund. These funds were earmarked for: the reduction of state debt, infrastructure improvements, reduction of local ad valorem tax, and the University Engineering Initiatives Act.

The Governor's budget will use Expanded Lottery Act Reserve Fund dollars to pay off "callable debt" (any secured debt in which the issuer who has granted the secured debt has the right to redeem the debt at a specific price after a specific date). The total of the callable debt proposed to pay this year is almost \$70 million. Just a few examples: Statehouse Improvements—almost \$7m, payoff of Wildlife and Parks Cabins—\$1.8m, KPERs Obligation Bonds—\$36m, and Kansas State Fair Capital Improvements—\$11m.

The reason I have addressed this is to show a little bit of the other side of the complexities of our state budget. I personally believe, if we don't take care of our debt, we will always be burdened with fiscal crisis and further endanger the future of our children.

Quite a few snapshots this week - If you need more details please e-mail me at ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.



The elements of risk in everyday life

Long as last week's column was: I'm not quite through with the subject of risk aversion!

I wasn't when I wrote it and the response indicates there is clearly more to say on the subject.

I have been reading a book "Alone and Invisible No More: How Grassroots Community Action and 21st Century Technologies Can Empower Elders to Stay in Their Homes and Lead Healthier, Happier Lives" by Allan Teel, MD.

A chapter of this book is titled "The Dignity of Risk." A phrase "that grew out of the experience of those who promoted the deinstitutionalization of the developed disabled during the 1970s."

Teel is a general practitioner in Maine. The "dignity of risk" is mostly the brain child of Robert Perske. Perske lists on his resume a stint as a Chaplain at the Kansas Neurological Institute in the 1960's. KNI served as more of a model of what not to do than a shining beacon of hope but keep in mind it was a product of the time.

After studying and visiting in Scandinavia, Perske was: "So moved by what he experienced, he returned home a ruined man when it came to believing that anyone could make institutions into nurturing places for persons to live out their lives."

Perske defines a risk as "when it is not known before hand whether a person can succeed."

Stan Ingersoll, another advocate for developmentally disabled, says, "If you're going to appreciate what decision making is about, then you have to live with the good and the bad. Some of the

This Too Shall Pass

Nancy Hagman



decisions people make may not work out well. And that's really difficult. It's difficult for clients and parents, and for staff members, administrators and the public."

Ingersoll has hit on what is prompting the desire of the Department of Labor to draft new laws to protect youth who work on farms. Children require our protection as do the developmentally disabled, the elderly and so many groups. Thus the moment we see something undesirable occur, or a bad outcome, those of us (who consider ourselves competent) can't help but try to fix it.

I watched a report on a January tornado outbreak. The reporter stood amid the devastation and said, "Less than 24 hours ago these people had no idea something like this would occur!"

Give him a Pulitzer! That is some earth shattering reporting. There are things we cannot control. There are things we never see coming. It makes one wonder why do we cling so hard to life and all its uncertainties.

In order to make sense of it we make plans and pass laws. We attempt to take control, order the universe. And it just thumbs its nose at us.

Teel so eloquently implores us to realize, "To deprive someone of the opportunity for significant achievement because of an associated element of

risk is to deprive them of their potential for growth."

Some time ago a Bible Study I participated in truly brought this home. God provided us a perfect world in the garden. But He gave us free will, because our devotion to Him means nothing if it is preordained.

Life is never going to be perfect; all we can control is our reactions to the things that happen. We can't make anyone else safe. But we can encourage.

What an interesting word encourage is. My dictionary says "to give hope, courage or confidence to; to urge on."

Instead we try to enforce. "To force obedience to; cause to be carried out, put into force." Then we blame ourselves when the unthinkable happens.

Unthinkable---because it's something we never thought of. If the unthinkable happens only rarely why is there a word for it?

I believe in encouragement. Even for bats in finding a route of egress. I encourage them--with a tennis racket--right into another dimension---

We have become a country of enforcers. "Just do as I say!" or "Don't do anything." The government will protect you!

Whatever happened to trying, initiative?

Teel says, ".....every opportunity for growth carries with it the possibility of failure. Accompanying every endeavor is an element of risk. When a person's environment is overprotected in such a manner that there is little or no chance for failure, then in reality there is also little or no chance of real or significant success."

Feeling a sense of pride as an American

"He who cares for the least of these, cares for me," familiar words to most of us. When the State of the Union speech was over last night, I wanted to stand and clap. I thought, "Ahh, at last a message resonating our faith and hope coupled with a positive outlook."

I thought, "There is very little in this address where we can't find some common ground," i.e. supporting training programs/education to help young people or displaced workers; support for veterans programs and helping those less fortunate. How could anyone, in this "Christian" nation not want to help those in need? Warren Buffet, the financial guru, offers himself as an example of needing to pay more in taxes. He points to his secretary who pays a higher tax rate than he does. So, imagine my surprise and, yes, dismay when Ari Fletcher said he really couldn't think of one thing he liked (or agreed on) in the speech and so it began.

In retrospect, Obama probably

Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



alienated members of both parties when he said both democrats and republicans are to blame for the gridlock in Washington. I'm sure the American people agreed with him on that issue.

So will the next year allow for any progress and growth in our country? The following would seem to me to be compromises:

Directed a portion of public land be developed for clean energy to power a given number of homes.

Will reopen off shore drilling, but with stricter regulations to avoid another catastrophic oil spill.

Challenged the states to make education more affordable and a high

priority. As the President said, "Higher education can't be a luxury - it's an economic imperative that every family in America should be able to afford." And, I might add, it is critical to our survival.

Called for tax advantages on new small businesses, on those keeping their businesses in this country or moving them back,

Asked that those with more, help those with less, I know this is only a dream, but I am allowed my fantasies.

So many issues have been supported by republicans in the past, but then it was supported by a republican president. True evidence they see the problem as being with the messenger not the message.

I felt, when the speech was over, a sense of pride, belief in my country and hope for the future. I thought and hoped others would feel the same. Not as democrats or republicans, but as Americans. Mail to:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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