

Governor says the lost decade is over

By Sam Brownback, Kansas Governor

When Jeff Colyer and I took office in January of 2011, tens of thousands of fewer Kansans were working in private sector jobs than a decade ago. Our state was losing residents to all surrounding states. We had the highest taxes in the region and ranked among the worst in private sector job creation. Something had to be done if Kansas was going to be a place where our children and grandchildren could stay to find a job and raise a family.

When we took office, there was \$876.10 in the state's coffers and a projected deficit for the next fiscal year of \$500 million. Through a combination of fiscal restraint, smart cuts, and focusing our resources on the core functions of government, we took that half billion dollar deficit and turned it into a half billion dollar surplus. This billion dollar swing was achieved in one year.

Now that Kansas's economy is getting back on track and we've taken the necessary steps to get the government's fiscal house in order, it was time to take a stand for the future of our state. In May, the Kansas Legislature passed and I signed the largest tax cut in state history, eliminating state income taxes on small businesses and reducing the tax burden on every hardworking Kansan.

From day one, my administration's top priority has been to grow the Kansas economy and create jobs. We had to reverse the trend of capital loss that we were suffering to every state around us and still the tide of rural population decline. This is what we ran for office promising to do and we have taken swift and decisive action.

We did this because it was time to shake up the status quo of taxing, spending, and declining. In our federalist system, state governments are forced to compete against each other for capital, jobs, and residents. Competition offers two options: you can either refuse to adapt to changing conditions and fall behind those who do, or you can lead the way to the future. Kansas had to change the way it competes regionally and nationally for residents and jobs, and so far we have made great progress.

In addition to reducing the tax burden on Kansas families and small businesses, we also improved our economic development toolbox with targeted incentives like letting businesses of any size deduct 100% of the expense of new business equipment and machinery. We created Rural Opportunity Zones to help recruit people to counties with sharply declining populations. And we established education programs to increase engineering and tech career students to meet our businesses' future workforce needs.

Our new pro-growth tax policy will be like a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy. It will pave the way to the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs, bring tens of thousands of people to Kansas and help make our state the best place in America to start and grow a small business. It will leave more than a billion dollars in the hands of Kansans - they know far better how to spend their money than the state government. An expanding economy and growing population will directly benefit our schools and local governments.

We will continue to work to provide a business environment that will keep our state regionally and globally competitive. We will continue to reform state government so that it is more efficient, effective and responsive to our citizens' needs. We will continue to meet the needs of our state's most vulnerable. We will continue to provide for high quality schools.

But most of all, we will continue to strive to make our state even better. Kansas' lost decade is over. No longer will we be satisfied with our children moving to another state for better opportunities. No longer will we accept having the highest tax burden in the region. Now is the time to grow our economy, not state government, and that's what our policies will do.

We are just getting started in Kansas, but we are off the sidelines and in the game.

Your political connection

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Carnys, kids and cats occupy a life

After this week I can, officially, add "carnival barker" to my resume'.

The church we attend always volunteers to run a carnival game at the county fair. It's the game where you drop rubber balls into a box with holes in the bottom. Get five balls in a row and you win. One of the volunteers, using a microphone, calls out, "Drop ball No.1; drop ball No. 2, No. 3, No. 4, and so on, until there is a winner."

Jim always says I'm dangerous with a mic in my hand. We volunteered to work the game one night and I grabbed the microphone. I found myself calling out, "Hey, hey, hey. Step right up folks. Another game of SINKO is about to begin. Step right up. Play a game of SINKO! One ticket a game! There's a winner every game. Get five balls in a row and win a prize!"

I couldn't stop myself. For a moment in time I was a total "carny."

-ob-

My 13-year old granddaughter, Taylor, has been here for a little more than a week. So far, every day she has made it out of bed by the "crack of noon."

I'm partly to blame. We've stayed up way too late at night (even considering the carnival) and then can't crawl out of bed the next day.

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



I've given her fair warning, though. This week is going to be different. We will be getting up at a decent time and we're going to get something accomplished. I want the front porch painted and she said she would help. That is our goal.

Taylor's Aunt Halley is coming to get her in another week and I have a special job lined up for her, too. We're going to get the north porch cleaned up and ready for it to be screened in. That's a job I've wanted done for a long time.

Add in the fact that Jim is just about to wrap up the library shelves and cabinets and I am going to be one happy camper if all those tasks are completed. This might, just might, be the year we finish the house.

If you're a homeowner, I'm not sure you can ever really finish. There is always something needing to be done on a house.

-ob-

I know officers of Fish and Wildlife say there are no mountain lions in this part of the country. Recently, however, a friend (whose judgment I trust) swears she saw a black panther while driving to work one day. Many people have said they have seen cougars, but no one has ever had a camera to snap a picture for proof.

Another friend who is a wildlife photographer dreams of capturing an image of one of those big cats on film. I, too, would love to snap one of those pictures. That's why my camera is always with me. I'll find out where my friend saw "her" cat and stake out the area. Maybe I'll get lucky.

When I was a little kid, there was a mountain lion marauding our farm community. Several hogs were killed at one neighbor's place and huge paw prints were found in the mud. Everyone was on alert. I was old enough to do chores alone and I remember running from the barn to the house every night, so scared that the mountain lion was lurking in the shadows, ready to pounce.

The authorities can tell us "mountain lions don't exist out here", but sooner or later, someone (and I hope it's me) will get a picture.

Farmers and ranchers battle for their livelihoods

Sow the seed in the ground below. Fall on your knees and pray real slow. That rain will come and kiss the seed. And bless you with all that you need ... Joe Ely

Drive through the Kansas countryside this summer, and that refrain could be running through the heads of many a farmer or rancher. Rain has become a scarce commodity in all 105 counties of the state for more than a year since the moisture spigot from up above seems to be shut off tight.

Traveling down the roads in the Kansas River Valley, some of the corn and beans still appear to be tall, lush and green. But looks can be deceiving.

Most of the corn and beans along Highway 24 are irrigated. Drive away from the irrigated fields and the picture changes.

Twenty-five days of 100-degree heat and counting has put the kibosh on dry-land corn, milo and beans. During this period when blast-furnace heat and wind swept through this productive river valley, corn literally burned up as farmers watched.

"During these hot afternoons, you can see the corn turning white," Chris Campbell Leavenworth County farmer/stockman says. "Just before it dies, it gets kinda' grayish-white before it turns brown. You can smell it burning."

Campbell says he hasn't filled silage for more than 10 years, but he just

Insight

John Schlageck



dug a large pit to fill with his drought-damaged corn on July 18. This chopped corn will be used to supplement feed for his 150 head of momma cows later in the year and this winter.

"We're worried about the test weight," Campbell says. "Our corn will probably yield less than 30 bushels per acre if we can get the corn into the machine."

The crop he leaves to harvest may fall over before he has an opportunity to cut it. That's why much of the corn is going into the trench silo and during the middle of July - unheard of.

The Leavenworth County producer has already started supplementing the feed of his cattle in two pastures with hay and protein. He says he hates to feed his winter supply of feed in July because his hay crop is yielding less than half what it generally does.

Last winter was great for cattlemen. There were few if any calving problems, temperatures were mild, the cattle didn't eat as much feed, but now they're paying the piper.

Campbell will be rotating his

pastures, running electric fence down near the creek banks and continuing to dip into his winter forage rations throughout the rest of 2012.

The long-time Leavenworth County farmer, who started farming on his own in 1980, ranks this year's dry weather, "as bad as he can remember." He understands this year's drought will impact everyone's bottom line. Rising input costs with little or no return will eat crop and livestock producers alive - especially if the drought continues next year or the year after.

Like his peers across the Sunflower State, Campbell believes he's in a battle for his livelihood. Like his grandfather and father before him, Campbell is well connected to the soil. He wants to continue growing crops and livestock on the land.

Even though farming comes with pain and strife, he's committed to working beneath the clear blue sky while trying to make a living with his family. Campbell loves his vocation and realizes there's more to farming corn, milo and beans than just planting the seeds. He's been around long enough to know he must take the good years with the bad.

"You have to have a little help from the Lord above," he says. "If he's willing, we'll live to grow and harvest better crops next year."