

Reining in the high cost of State government

By Sam Brownback, Kansas Governor

During the last decade, the cost of state government in Kansas grew at an alarming rate. From Fiscal Year 2003 to Fiscal Year 2008, the spending of state tax dollars in Kansas grew by almost \$2 billion. That's an increase of nearly 50 percent in state government spending in just six years.

This led to an inevitable crash that started shortly thereafter and a financial mess that needed sorting through. Kansas began Fiscal Year 2011 - just six months before I took office - with less than \$1,000 in the bank. In my first year as Governor, the state faced a \$500 million projected budget deficit. Instead of raising taxes to cover the deficit, we reduced spending. In fact, in Fiscal Year 2012, and for the first time in 40 years, the Kansas state government spent less money than it had the year before.

To reign in the era of ever-expanding government, my administration focused not only on the big issues such as tax policy reform, but also on fixing the small things that can add up to big problems.

I directed members of my cabinet and staff to examine every process in state government. A reorganization of agencies enabled consolidation of back office services like human resources and reduced duplicitous bureaucratic labor and red tape.

Immediately upon inauguration we froze state spending and within short order had eliminated more than 2,000 positions that had been open and unfilled for at least six months. We later initiated a voluntary buyout program that allowed more than a thousand state employees who met certain criteria to retire with extra benefits and saved the state millions of dollars in the long term.

The savings quickly mounted and helped turn the \$500 million projected budget deficit into an almost \$500 million ending balance in just a little more than a year.

We aren't done. I believe that government has much to learn from the private sector in cutting costs, creating efficiencies and improving services. Leading private sector firms cut waste, compensate employees based on performance, eliminate inefficiencies, streamline processes, and provide targeted funding to areas that help them meet their goals. This is how they survive. And although government is different, make no mistake, Kansas is in a competition with its surrounding states, and if we want people to invest and live here, we need these efficiencies too.

My administration is evaluating how we deliver the services Kansans require of its state government and targeting where we can improve that delivery while we cut costs. For the first time in decades, state agencies are assessing utility rates for state office buildings in hopes of negotiating lower rates. We are implementing Medicaid reforms that will reduce costs by more than a billion dollars - and improve and expand health care for our most needy Kansans.

A new online tool that many companies find useful is now available to state government managers with a click of a mouse. Known as the Cost Management System or CMS, this new system is helping our state agencies become more effective and efficient without negatively affecting services and programs. It directly links agency activities with cost data and tracks those costs over time by calculating department unit costs and per person costs every payroll period. The department unit costs are tracked on a graph so that trends and variances can be identified and analyzed. Any substantial unit cost increase or decrease will allow agencies to investigate its root cause.

American taxpayers expect their governments at all levels to use their hard earned tax dollars well and to live within their means. All governors and state legislatures in our country should insist that every state tax dollar is spent efficiently and effectively in the delivery of services and programs to the citizens who need them.

In 2010, Missouri spent roughly \$2,300 in all state funding per resident and Oklahoma spent about \$2,800. In Kansas, we spent more than \$3,200 per resident. Kansas taxpayers want their elected leaders to be responsive to their needs and responsible with their tax dollars. I believe that becoming a more efficient and effective state government does not mean essential core services and programs such as K-12 Education, Medicaid, and public safety services should suffer.

Rather, with state agencies able to more readily identify and analyze their costs, state government will be able to better target the use of taxpayers' dollars, cut costs through process improvements, and streamline agency services and programs to better serve you and your family. And the best news is, the savings we generate will end up back in your pocket!



I would like to give a thumbs up to the young man named Tyler at Pizza Hut's drive thru; he is polite, courteous, has a positive ring in his voice and gets your order to you promptly. He is an example of positive customer service. Emailed in.

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Why is granting forgiveness so hard

Forgiveness is an interesting thing. We teach toddlers to say, "I'm sorry," but you can't teach them to feel, "you're forgiven." We often hear the phrase, "I will forgive, but I will never forget." Is it possible to grant forgiveness, while holding fast to memories?

Sometimes we find it harder to forgive those we are closest to, and yet the stranger on the street can be the recipient of our good nature. Why? Generally that person on the street can't evoke the same kind of emotion within us that a loved one will.

Too many times we won't forgive because we don't want to forget. We would rather hold on to those feelings of hurt, anger and frustration. Somehow if we hold on to them, we feel less vulnerable. It is when I hold on to anger and hurt that I am most miserable. Likewise when I am able to forgive and forget, life seems good.

I think often it isn't the big injustices

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



which destroy us, but actually it is those little misjudgments that work like sandpaper on our soul, sanding it down to where our weak areas are exposed.

Crimes against groups of people carry long lasting anger, often from generation to generation. I remember when our oldest son and his wife were visiting. They walked into a restaurant and a patron walked up to our Japanese daughter-in-law and called her a Jap, saying he hadn't seen "one of them for a long time."

Why do our own actions of thoughtlessness linger so long in our

lives? Why do we allow injustices to thwart future good times? Why can we forgive the drunk on the street, but the alcoholic in the family is denied that love? Why do we expect to be forgiven for our own actions, whether infidelity or lying or mistrust and yet not forgive someone else for what appears to us to be their inadequacies? Why? It probably boils down to arrogance. Lack of forgiveness stems from a belief in our own superior status.

I have made countless mistakes and unless I am struck down as I write this I will make countless more. I have in the past, and will continue in the future, to need endless acts of forgiveness. The General Confession in our church says, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And done those things we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us." Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Making heads or tails of today's world happenings

There's a lot going on in the world: Olympics, politics, Chik-fil-a, free speech, shootings, the Land Rover safely landing on Mars. It gets all jumbled up! And it's hard to find good news!

I find the Olympics tedious. They attempt to keep viewers in suspense even though the results were determined hours earlier.

In 1980, the U.S. Hockey team won the gold medal and one of the games (the final I think) was on Sunday morning. The hubby's uncle embarrassingly admitted he stayed home from church to see it.

That was a very long time ago. When was the last time anyone felt embarrassed about missing church?

Even longer ago, 1972, I recall the Munich Olympics. A college student, I'm not certain I knew about the hostage situation involving the Israeli team until I walked into a class. The professor went off on us. "Don't you understand what a terrible thing is happening?"

Just this year I saw a documentary that clarifies the event. For years I mainly connected the '72 Olympics with was her rant.

What did she expect? Should we have huddled in the halls and cried? Was she Jewish? Was she German? (The Germans had tried to showcase their country and distance themselves from the Olympics they hosted during Hitler's regime and the atrocities of World War Two.) Was she unhappy she had to leave the TV in the faculty

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



lounge to teach our class?

Ah, well, enough of the Olympics. Let's talk about Free Speech? I'm all for it. The trouble is people are going to say controversial things. Exhibit One: the Chik-Fil-A Guy.

Marriage is not mentioned in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. Freedom of Religion is. Separation of Church and State is. We are free to attend a church that defines marriage the way we believe. The State is separate from religion; the State can define marriage in a way that protects all citizens equally.

And in order to protect ourselves: We have the Right to Bear Arms. But do we need it? Do we need to defend ourselves by shooting someone else? Do private citizens need semi-automatic weapons and an arsenal of 3,000 rounds of ammunition for any sane purpose?

After the Aurora shootings, a law enforcement officer said there is less paperwork involved when buying guns and ammunition than when buying Sudafed. This may not be strictly true, but it is odd that we so willingly gave up the right to relief from allergies, yet cannot bring ourselves to further restrict sales of guns and ammo. Of

course, Sudafed wasn't mentioned in the Bill of Rights (but it should have been)! We can change the Constitution, I'm voting for the next person who makes this a priority!

After the Sikh temple shooting my Government teacher daughter said, "That's it. Time to implement a governmental solution I have thought is necessary ever since I started teaching high school. Gun control? Nope... state sponsored birth control! It's time to keep the nuts in this country from reproducing."

Ah, but that interferes with Freedom of Religion!

Freedom of the Press is important. But the constant barrage of information interrupts our ability to reflect; to consider if our decisions will withstand the test of time.

Yahoo headlines sum up the mixed messages. Today: "Female Athletes Scrutinized". The story: Olympic women fighting back against being judged not fit because of their weight. Ad on the page proclaims: "Shape Up. Slim Down!"

Then there is the Land Rover. I congratulated our friend, who worked on the project. His response, "Humans are amazing creatures when they put their minds to it!"

Much is made these days of the intent of the Constitutional Framers. We know they did not agree on everything but they put their differences aside.

It gives me hope we will all try to be amazing once again, and solve the problems we face.



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