

Someone needs to face reality

When the Kansas Legislature reconvenes this coming week, a fight over the sales tax will be the focus of attention. During a meeting with reporters during the legislative recess, Governor Brownback promoted his proposed cancellation of a temporary sales tax to cover the state's revenue shortfall by stating that legislators will have to "come around to reality" and accept the tax increase. He's right in that someone needs to face reality in Topeka.

Brownback's comment is just the latest in a pattern of smoke and mirrors, deception and downright deceit that have led up to this manufactured crisis. With the State Senate at odds with the House last year on a tax plan, the Governor's office asked moderate Senate leaders to pass the conservative tax plan on the table so as to move the process forward and on to a conference committee, which would supposedly iron out a compromise. At least that's how the process usually works.

But before a conference committee could be convened, the governor's ally, House Speaker Mike O'Neal, abruptly cut off debate and called in the votes of House Republicans to concur with the Senate plan. Senate leaders were thus rewarded for their show of goodwill towards the governor with a figurative knife in their backs.

On signing day for the mammoth tax cuts, Brownback beamed and announced that Kansans had made a choice between growing the government and growing the private sector, and saluted the choice of the latter. This disingenuous statement ignored the fact that approximately seventy percent of all state expenditures go to public education. That's right. This isn't Washington, D.C., where all discretionary spending of the Federal Government amounts to less than a third of the total budget, and education only a fraction of that. Kansas state government is largely an education enterprise.

A more accurate characterization of Brownback's plan would have been to describe the policy choice as one between public education and tax cuts for the Koch brothers and other wealthy Kansans. Education was the big loser.

Since the bill's signing, the dire predictions of budgetary red ink from non-partisan groups such as the Legislature's own research department have rapidly materialized. While legislators and school administrators struggle with how to fund a shrinking education footprint in our state, Kansas has been signaled out for bipartisan criticism of its tax plan. Governing Magazine recently retained experts Joe Henchman of the conservative Tax Foundation and Nick Johnson of the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities to analyze the tax policies of the fifty states. The duo concurred in singling out the Kansas tax plan as the nation's worst.

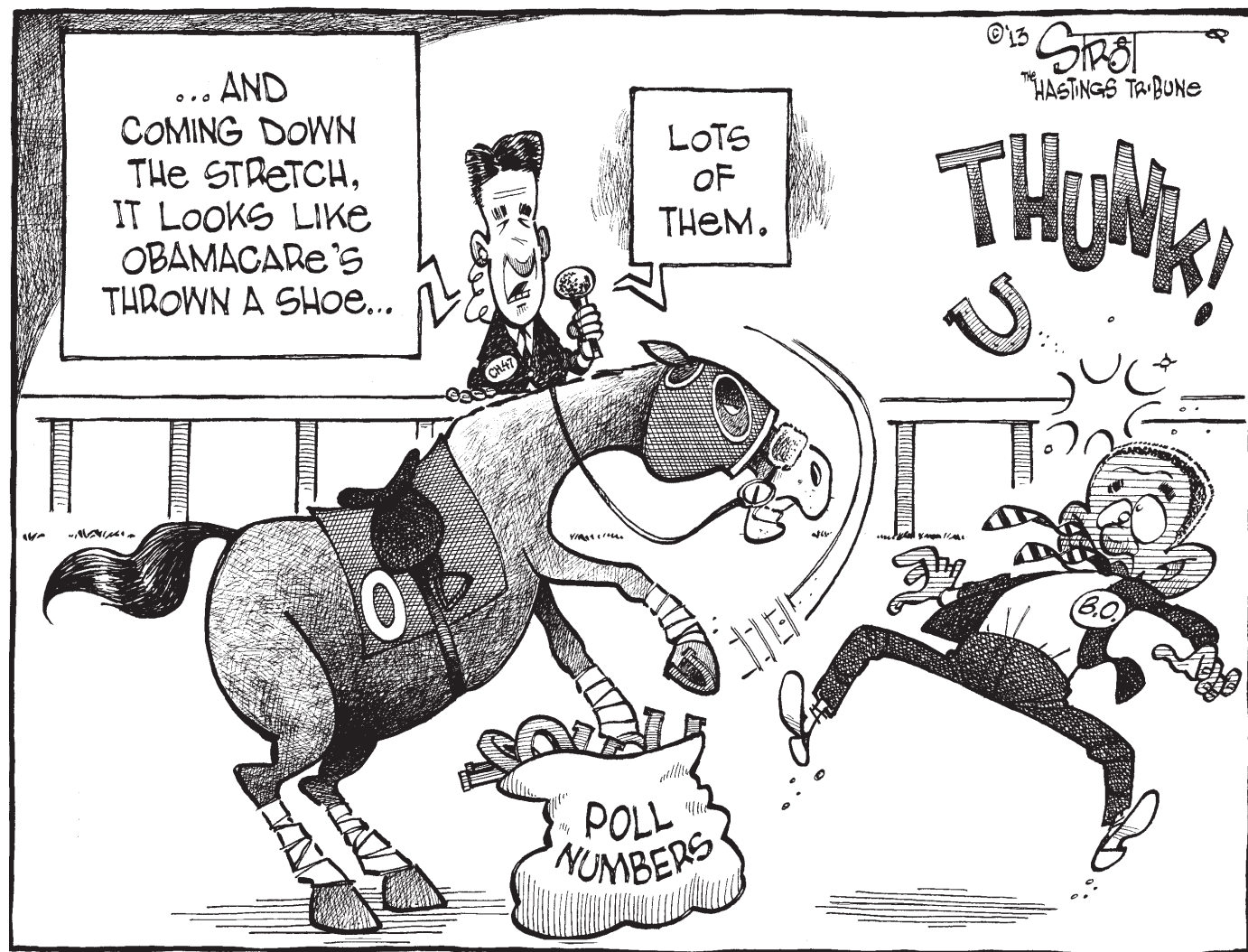
They were particularly critical of the plan's centerpiece, the elimination of taxes on owners of sole proprietorships, limited liability partnerships and sub-chapter S corporations. These individuals will now pay no business or individual state income tax. Henchman called the plan "an incentive to game the tax system without doing anything productive for the economy."

During the legislative recess, Brownback has toured the state's regent institutions where he has cynically tried to portray himself as the leader in Topeka resisting cuts in education funding. The governor feels he needs to at least pay lip service to the concerns of higher ed.

He apparently isn't worried about political pushback from the K-12 education lobby after aggressively moving to strip teachers of collective bargaining rights. Ditto for cities and counties. The Kansas League of Municipalities and Kansas Association of Counties don't donate to political campaigns. So if local governments want to promote a sales tax issue to fund a special project such as a river walk, a jail expansion, recreation or aquatic center, big brother in Topeka can simply elbow local officials aside.

Meanwhile the Governor, according to a recent article in the Kansas City Star, "appears increasingly detached from the fiscal realities he has imposed on his state . . . treading perilously close to delusion." Yes, the artificial fiscal crisis Kansas currently faces is of the governor's own making. And he will eventually have to, in his words, "come around to reality."

Alan Jilka, Former Mayor of Salina



The trial and error of a new recipe

A swing and a miss. That's the way it was with another new recipe. This time it was a scrambled egg, biscuits and gravy breakfast casserole.

All Jim would say was, "I'd just as soon have my eggs separate from my biscuits and gravy." I have to admit, it wasn't one of my favorites, either. Oh well, to File 13 it goes.

There are some really interesting recipes on Facebook and I've copied the ones that sound good. But at the rate I'm going, I won't live long enough to try them all. And what about my poor cookbooks? You might say I have a collection, judging by the boxes of them in the basement. I feel like I've been cheating on them - the way I've ignored them.

My motto regarding recipes is, "Try 'em all. You might miss a good one." So.... much to Jim's dismay, I'll probably keep on testing new dishes. When he laments, "I don't know why you have to keep trying this new stuff. Your plain old meat and potatoes are so good; I wish you would just stick to that."

To which I reply, "You said it, 'Plain old meat and potatoes.' I want to try something new. Besides, if I hadn't tried 'something new' you would never have known baco-wrapped jalapenos stuffed with cream cheese; or pecan pie bar cookies; or Texas Trash; or crème brulee; or stir fry; or; or; or."

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



I think he got my point. Cooks get bored making the same 'ole thing day after day, year after year. It's why women move furniture, dye their hair and buy faddish clothes. They like change. Men don't. It's that simple.

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I am writing a story about my alma mater's 50th alumni anniversary class. It's the class that graduated two years ahead of me. One of the girls in that class sent me some of her memories and it's funny because her perspective of herself and mine of her were totally opposite.

She considered herself a complete "nerd" while I remember her as one of the prettiest girls in her class with beautiful brown eyes (I envied anyone with brown eyes). She also had a creamy olive complexion, a million dollar smile and nice even teeth. She was one of the smartest people in her class, but that didn't make her a nerd. I know I wished I could have been so smart.

She didn't think she had any fashion

sense, but then again, none of us did. Back "in the day", a gathered-waist skirt, white blouse, penny loafers and bobby socks was pretty much the norm for school attire.

Kids nowadays would be appalled to know we actually had a dress code. Girls had to wear skirts or dresses; boys had to wear a belt with their shirt tucked in. What would Mr. Rayburn have done with the low-riding baggy pants and all that underwear showing?

Our behavior was closely monitored, too. No rough housing; no cursing; no disrespect to the teachers; no gum chewing; no holding hands in the hallways. I remember one boy in my class was sent to the principal's office for having a toothpick in his mouth. His defense was, "Hey, it's not gum."

Oh, I know...times change. But people don't. Sure kids want to express themselves. But at what expense? Modesty? Common decency? I have spent quite a bit of time taking pictures at local high schools and when I see some of the girls walking down the halls I ask myself, "Where was their father when they walked out the door that morning?"

All this to say, there are rules in life. Rules that govern our driving; what we can print; and govern our behavior. Rules are not a bad thing. They merely establish the limits. Limits that some feel the need to push to the extreme.

Children need to play it safe on the family farm

The dream of many young farm boys and girls is to ride on a tractor. For a youngster, the mammoth tractor epitomizes raw power, responsibility and coming of age.

Nothing is more exciting to farm kids than the belch of diesel smoke, the roar of engines and rubber wheels on powerful tractors, combines or silage cutters. They draw children like a moth to a flame and, like fire, can be dangerous. Such equipment can cut, crush or trap children. It can harm the ones we want to protect the most - our children.

Soon children will be home from school and the chance of farm accidents will be greater.

During the summer months, never invite children to ride in the tractor, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety director.

"Stress that your youngsters must stay away from machinery," Higgins says. "Never let them play or hide under or around machinery like tractors."

Farms offer children a unique environment to live, play, work and grow up. Safety experts label agriculture one of the most hazardous occupations, and farm children are routinely exposed to the same hazards as their parents. Each year, hundreds of

Insight

John Schlageck



children are killed, and thousands more are injured in farm-related incidents, according to National Safety Council statistics.

Education and awareness are the key ingredients to help make the farm a safer place for children to play, Higgins says. Brushing up on some of the potential hazards can also make it safer for parents.

Describe to children how horses can be fun to ride - with a helmet. Talk about how lambs and baby calves can be pleasurable to pet or feed.

"Remind them that while animals are fun to be around they can also bite, trample and stomp," Higgins says.

Discuss with your youngsters the signs that show an animal may be dangerous. Some of them include pawing the ground, snorting, raised hair and ears laid back.

Animals - even friendly ones - can be unpredictable. Have your children stay away from large ones. Emphasize

they stay away from animals with newborn or young. Tell them to remain calm, speak quietly and move slowly when around animals.

While barns, grain handling facilities and big buildings can be fun to play in, falls can occur or children may be exposed to harmful substances like chemicals and electricity.

Wide-open spaces also provide children with ideal playgrounds, Higgins notes. However, this isolation may also lead to difficulty finding help in the event of an emergency.

Explain the dangers associated with stored grain. Stress the principles that grain can entrap a person almost immediately. Children should never play around, or in grain that is stored in bins, trucks or wagons. Emphasize that it is difficult, or can be impossible, to pull even a child out of grain if he/she becomes trapped.

Remember, it is important that youngsters have a safe place to play. Ask them to identify safe play areas. Talk about areas away from farm machinery, animals, manure pits and silos. Carefully define safe boundaries. Let children know where they can and cannot play.

Make sure your children have a fun, but safe summer on the farm.

Appreciate the facelift at Holly's Daycare. Thank you for being a part of the solution!!! Emailed in.



Congratulations to all the talented students going to State in Forensics. Their Friends and Family Night was wonderful! A big "Thanks" to their coaches Steve Vance and Brandon Gay!

Thumbs Up to Allen Braun for his letter to the editor. Appreciate also the informative article by Wayne LaPierre. Sent in.

Thumbs up to Allen Braun for defending our U.S. Constitution. Brought in.

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