

Legislature needs to get together on income tax

When the dust clears from Tuesday's election, and we know for sure who won, it'll be time for Kansas government to get back to work.

A couple of things must be done next spring, before our citizen-legislators go home to their jobs and farms and businesses.

One is to fix the income tax system, which the last Legislature left badly broken. It's fashionable to blame Gov. Sam Brownback for this, since he's the one who proposed eliminating or slashing the state's income tax.

In truth, however, what passed wasn't the governor's program at all. It included most of the cuts he wanted, it's true, but none of the balancing changes, including closing many popular "loopholes," or tax breaks.

The result was a mishmash of cuts without balancing revenue "enhancements" that would have made the changes more or less "revenue neutral," as the governor had proposed.

Instead, the liberal-dominated Senate passed drastic cuts on the premise that the conservative-controlled House would negotiate later. Instead, the House slam-dunked them to the governor, who signed them. Senate leaders said they'd been double crossed, but House leaders claim they'd made no promises.

Afterward, the nonpartisan Legislative Research Council estimated they could leave the state \$2.5 billion short over the next 10 years, the source of many statements about "the governor's tax cuts." So far, however, the biggest cuts to Kansas schools and other state programs have come under the former Democratic governor, Mark Parkinson, and not on Mr. Brownback's watch.

Of course, that \$2.5 billion estimate assumes

the cuts won't have the projected impact of boosting the state's economy, as the governor claims. It's hard to blame him for a rouge tax plan shoved through the Legislature by opposing forces in the Senate. He did sign it, however, and for that, he'll have to bear part of the burden.

None of the supposed dire consequences need happen, however, if men and women of good will take their seats in the new Legislature two months from now. The tax plan can and should be fixed both to make it closer to what the governor proposed to stimulate the economy, and to avoid any future shortfall. Many legislative leaders agree.

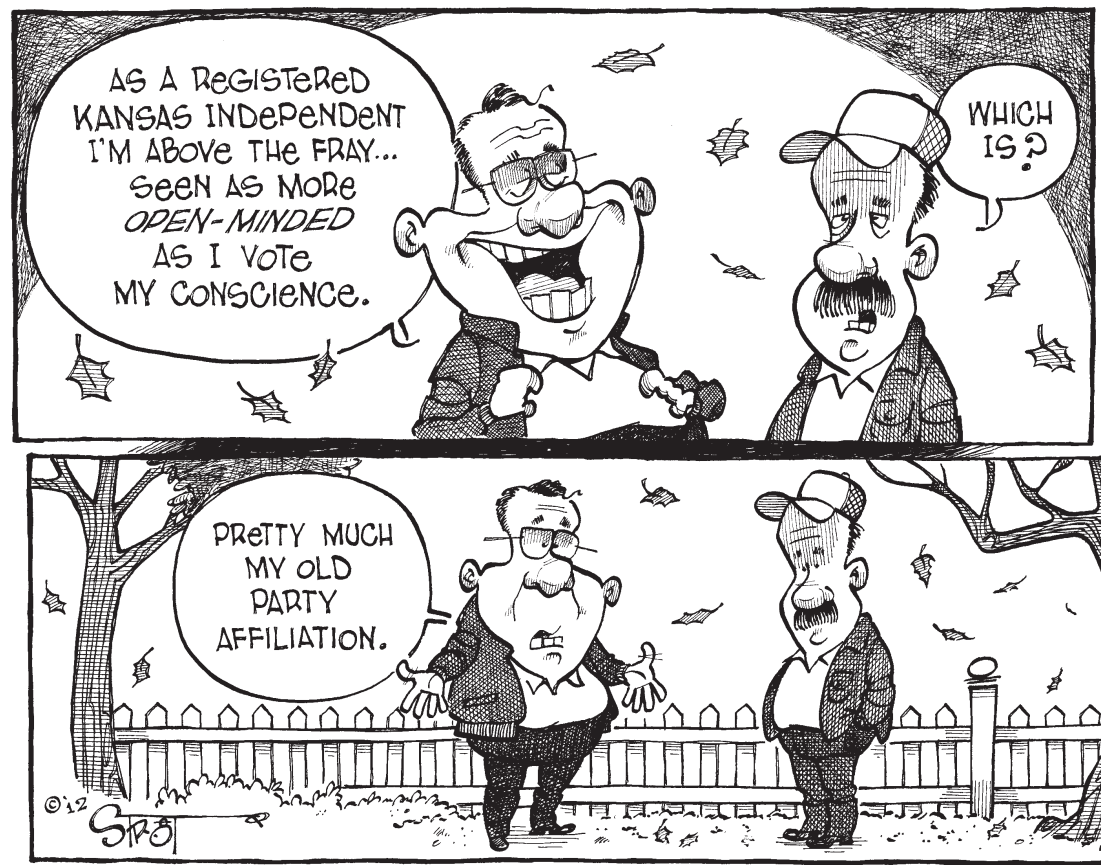
And now that the battle for control of both houses is over, or nearly so, maybe everyone can get busy and make the tax code more sensible. It will take the entire session, the way our Legislature works, to make a decision on this divisive question, but it must be done.

Before anything else, however, the parties will have to caucus and organize for the session. The betting is the conservative Republicans will hang onto control of the House, electing a new speaker, while their compatriots form a new majority in the Senate. Voters still have a say on that, of course, and it's doubtful the governor will be able to summon a majority at will. Kansas Legislators are too independent for that.

But perhaps, with the fight behind us, those who are elected this fall will find ways to work together for the common good of the state, unlike the last session, where partisanship was everything.

Then maybe we won't have a repeat of the tax mess this time.

— Steve Haynes



Casey's Comments



By Casey McCormick sc McCormick@nwkansas.com

Halloween might be scary for some folks, but it served as a pleasant reminder of why we live in a small town.

As the little spooks, princesses and football players scampered up to our front door we went through our usual routine.

Once they left I'd ask my wife, "Who does Spiderman belong to?" This would be followed by her patiently explaining to me how the child is connected to parents,

grandparents or aunts and uncles I should know.

It's not like that in other places. You don't know the kids outside your house and you hope they like what you handed out so they don't return later as vandals.

On the receiving end it is different also. Most homes have the trick or treaters return to empty their loot on the kitchen table so mom and dad can inspect the candy. I've even heard of hospitals of-

fering their x-ray machines to see if bad things have been placed in the goodies.

So this year we enjoyed having local little ones visit. Only problem was we bought more candy than we needed. I wonder how the surplus will be dealt with?

Open Season



By Cynthia Haynes

I love to cook, and when I get the chance, I cook up a storm.

I especially love to bake, but with just two of us in the house and both of us on kind of a permanent diet, I don't get much opportunity.

Still, when Steve brought home eight enormous yellow squash and zucchinis this summer, I accepted the challenge.

I packed the squash up and took it to Colorado, where I have (or at least I take) more time to enjoy working in my kitchen.

While I normally leave the peel on when fixing a stir fry or sauté with my small squash, these babies had skin as thick as paint on a 100-year-old house. They had to be peeled. They also had to be seeded. But after peeling, halving, seeding and chopping them into reasonable size pieces, I still had a lot of squash.

I grabbed a Salad Shooter. You remember Salad Shooters. They were all the rage about 20 years ago. You just put your carrots, cucumbers, radishes or whatever in the tube, push the on button and point the gun-like appliance at your salad and neat slices or strips of vegetable would cover

your lettuce.

I've never tried that, but this little gizmo is great for grating carrots, onions and celery for spaghetti sauce. It's also good for grating zucchini and yellow squash that has been cut up into strips that will fit into its little chute.

Before long, I had a bowl full of shredded zucchini. Six squash later (I gave one to a neighbor), I had 10 bags of squash all measured out in two-cup increments.

This week, I grabbed two of those bags out of the freezer, let them thaw on the counter and prepared to make zucchini bread for friends. I was also going to make a low-sugar loaf for Steve.

I'm not sure what I did wrong, since I've made this recipe dozens of times without mishap. I think I mismeasured the flour in the first batch. When I opened the oven door, the two loaves had fallen. Each one had a crater in the middle.

I had all the ingredients for the low-sugar variety measured out, so I went ahead and made the next two loaves with great misgivings and an additional two

tablespoons of flour. They came out great.

Now, I had a dilemma. I ended up taking one of each loaf to friends we were going to dinner with. Steve and I ate the second low-sugar loaf, but I still had one rather mishapened loaf left. It was cooked through, but it looked weird. I finally cut it into squares and took it to a church social. Everyone thought it was great.

I think I've given the recipe in this column before, so I won't repeat it. However, if anyone wants to try it, e-mail me at c.haynes@nwkansas.com and I'll send it to you. The amount of flour you put in is up to you.

The low-sugar version is made by substituting Splenda-sugar blend for half the sugar and adding a bit more flour to make up for the lack of bulk, since sugar blend only takes up half as much space as real sugar.

Hangin' With Marge



By Margaret Bucholtz

Skin Mask

The internet is a very dangerous thing for people like me. If I want to know something I go to Google and ask and whether the answer is right or wrong it doesn't matter because I wouldn't know the difference anyway.

This week I got on a kick of looking up things that might work for me, like making my own skin mask. I think sometimes I might just be a little bored, but that's alright.

I typed it in and I really don't know how many sites it brought up, I read the first page and then made my decision.

One recipe called for egg whites and lemon juice. Didn't sound too bad until I read you

beat the egg white until it is fluffy then stir in the lemon juice and apply to your face. After it dries you didn't wash it off but you peeled the eggs off of your face and it would pull all the black heads out.

I could just see this white/clear colored skin, something like a snake when it sheds its skin, with all these little black looking things about the size of pepper on it. Something about that just seemed wrong.

The next recipe said you mix baking soda with water to make a paste and then put that on your face. I thought that sounded a little better so I got out the baking soda and stirred it up. Baking

soda is my friend anyway because as a child I grew up in a home that if you had a heart burn you mixed baking soda and water and drank it. Used that method most of my life. So now I am putting it on my face.

I got it all covered and it started drying so I put my glasses on so I could see what was going on. What a shock to see a white face with ridges like the people on Star Wars.

Tucker, one of my grandchildren, likes those kinds of things so hurried up and took a picture of myself and sent it to Dina and Darrin. I put a caption on there "Does this make me look sick?"

Dina wrote me back that she showed it to Tucker and he asked if I had died. She told him what I was doing and then she asked me if it helped. I told her, "I don't know if it helped my face but while it was drying I had to stir the chicken and noodles and some of it dropped into the pan. The good thing was that neither Kurt nor I had heartburn that night."

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GOD SAYS

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descent after him.

Psalms 49:16, 17

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