

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Two proposals that make a lot of sense

A couple of proposals ready to hit the Kansas Legislature make a lot of sense.

One, by Rep. Brenda Landwehr of Wichita, would require a public vote on any proposal to increase taxes or government fees.

Tagged as the "Kansas Taxpayers Bill of Rights," it also would attempt to limit growth in government spending.

Meanwhile, Rep. Patricia Lightner of Overland Park has submitted a proposal requiring a two-thirds majority in the Legislature to approve a tax increase rather than the 50 percent plus one now needed.

Both women are conservative Republicans, and their measures are proposed as constitutional amendments which require a two-thirds majority in the Legislature, then a vote of the people, to become law.

Presented that way, it's not too likely that either will be passed this year. Many in government are loath to give up the power to tax and spend.

But limiting state and local spending does make sense. Rep. Landwehr says she's worried that government spending continues to outpace inflation, wages and salaries. In other words, state government is growing faster than our paychecks.

Over the past 10 years, the state budget has grown 42 percent, from \$7.2 billion in 1995 to \$10.2 billion this year. That is a huge jump during a time that included a recession, drought and high unemployment.

"Kansans have a right for government to live within its means," Rep. Landwehr says.

Imagine that. Over the last three years, though, as the recession has squeezed state revenues, spending has continued to grow, eating up all the state's reserves. Schools, welfare and other state programs cry for more money, though there isn't any, and pressure has been great for a tax increase.

While taxpayers are looking for jobs and businesses are cutting back, apparently, there are many who see no need for state and local government to do likewise.

The fact is, right now, neither the state nor its taxpayers can afford more spending. As the rest of us cut back, so should the state.

That makes both of these proposals appealing. For the "Bill of Rights," we have no details yet, but requiring a vote on tax increase should put a cap on government. People usually are willing to tax themselves when they see a real need, but they don't often get the choice.

And requiring a "super majority" for tax increases in the Legislature should ensure that only the most necessary ever get through.

There will be no tax increase this year — it's an election year, after all — but next year the pressure will mount as schools, special interests and the courts put pressure on the Legislature.

That's when these measures might look real good. —by Steve Haynes, owner of Nor'West Newspapers, of which the Colby Free Press is a property.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail td@nwkansan.com.



### Wow! What was that?

#### Tom Dreiling

##### • My Turn



**THE** cold snap certainly got our attention. Old Man Winter apparently watched one too many television weather reports and noticed where, in the nation's heartland, those folks were just too comfortable for the season at hand and decided to do something about it. He slapped us around good. Not much moisture, but maybe that's the start of something good. I noticed in the Northwest Research-Extension Center's "Climate for Northwestern Kansas" booklet, where Colby's lowest January temperature ever was 28 degrees below zero and that occurred on the 12th in 1912. And the warmest January temperature here also occurred on the 12th in 1953 when the mercury climbed to 81 degrees. Over the years, however, moisture in January hasn't been much of a precipitation pleaser, averaging somewhere around a half- to three-quarters of an inch. Snowfall expectations in January average around 3-4 inches. Maybe January 2004 will exceed all those numbers.

**WELL**, so much for another of our young people's role models. Britney Spears, the 22-year-old pop star made headlines and national television news — and why I still don't know — for getting married and getting the marriage annulled all within hours of one another. She and a childhood boyfriend did Vegas in a big way over the weekend and the result was ending up in a chapel on the Strip where they tied the knot. After a few hours of contemplation, Britney didn't think much of marriage and arranged to have it legally called off. Now, mom and dad, explain to your young daughters how, when they decide they want to try marriage for a couple of hours, that's not the way marriage works. And also why wearing a baseball cap and torn jeans — as Britney chose as her wedding attire — just isn't appropriate. After all, Spears is one of our kids' role models and what's good for our role models is also good for our kids. And why the national media felt this merited the coverage it got remains a puzzle. Then we wonder why our kids are so confused about so many things in their lives.

**THIS** one is for you, ladies! Enjoy. His three children were outside, still in their

pajamas, playing in the mud, with empty food boxes and wrappers strewn all around the front yard. The door of his wife's car was open, as was the front door to the house and there was no sign of the dog. Proceeding into the entry, he found an even bigger mess. A lamp had been knocked over, and the throw rug was wadded against one wall.

In the front room the TV was loudly blaring a cartoon channel, and the family room was strewn with toys and various items of clothing. In the kitchen, dishes filled the sink, breakfast food was spilled on the counter, the fridge door was open wide, dog food was spilled on the floor, a broken glass lay under the table, and a small pile of sand was spread by the back door.

He quickly headed up the stairs, stepping over toys and more piles of clothes, looking for his wife. He was worried she may be ill, or that something serious had happened. He was met with a small trickle of water as it made its way out the bathroom door. As he peered inside he found wet towels, scummy soap and more toys strewn over the floor. Miles of toilet paper lay in a heap and toothpaste had been smeared over the mirror and walls. As he rushed to the bedroom, he found his wife still curled up in the bed in her pajamas, reading a novel. She looked up at him, smiled, and asked how his day went.

He looked at her bewildered and asked, "What happened here today?"

She again smiled and answered, "You know every day when you come home from work and you ask me what in the world did I do today?" "Yes," was his incredulous reply. She answered, "Well, today I didn't do it."

**I WATCHED** the young couple across the

street on Sunday take turns pulling their two youngsters on a sled on Hill Street. There was just enough snow accompanied by cold to keep the white stuff from melting, making for a winter wonderland. You can never get your kids attuned too soon to the pleasures of living in a climate that also provides for snow and the fun it allows. Seeing that young family playing together warmed the heart.

**OF COURSE** on the other side of the coin it caught some motorists by surprise. They found that stopping at the Hill/Franklin intersection created a few problems — like sliding through the stop sign, and one car even slightly bouncing off the curb on the opposite side of Franklin. As motorists, we need to be aware of the conditions and drive accordingly. It usually takes a day to adjust to the change from dry to snow-covered roadways.

**THERE** is this little guy sitting inside a bar just looking at his drink. He stays like that for half-an-hour. Then, this big trouble-making character steps up to the bar right next to this little guy, takes his drink from him and gulps it all down. The poor little guy starts crying.

The big bully says: "Come on man, I was just joking. Here, I'll buy you another drink. I just can't see a man like you crying."

"No, it's not that," the man replies. "Today day is the worst of my life. First, I overslept and was late to an important meeting. My boss, outrageous, fired me. When I left the building to my car, I found out it was stolen. The police, they said they could do nothing. I got a cab to return home, and after I paid the cab driver and the cab had gone, I found that I left my wallet in the cab. I got home only to find my wife entertaining the gardener. I left home and came to this bar. And when I was thinking about putting an end to my life, you show up and drink my poison."

**HAVE** a good evening!

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Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays. td@nwkansan.com.

### Are we really safer?

#### Jay Kelley

##### • Speaking MyMind



Howard Dean has stolen the march in the race for the Democratic nomination for president by being the only one who is consistently anti-war. He is also consistently wrong, but he has competition in that regard.

Joe Lieberman gets points for consistency, but he's for the war and on that subject often sounds like our modern-day Republicans. Besides, in an age where sound-bites have taken the place of substance, Lieberman is about as exciting as day-old bread.

Those two got into another exchange concerning Iraq the other night in which Lieberman made a point I don't think anyone really caught.

In answering Dean's charge that we are less safe after the capture of Saddam Hussein because Osama bin Laden was still on the loose, Lieberman asked if he thought we were less safe after World War II with Hitler gone and Stalin still around.

The point, which was not made in the debate, was that the world is an inherently dangerous place. There will always be the next tyrant or terrorist. There will always be another Napoleon taking advantage of world politics to gain power. There will be another Hitler as well. In fact, I suspect we have stopped one who never got the chance to get big just a few weeks ago.

Neither is Al Qaeda new. Minority groups have used terror weapons for centuries. In fact, several of the judges of Israel in the Biblical book bearing their name would have been considered terrorist, at least by the Philistines!

So, are we safer with Saddam behind bars? Yes, we are. Anytime you put a madman away, the world is a little better place. Are we, however, safe? No and we never really will be as long as we have what others want.

It doesn't matter whether it is material things or intangibles such as a free society, there will always be some who want to take what is not theirs from the rightful owners.

In order to defeat tyrants and terrorists, we have to understand them and what they want. We need to understand two things about terrorists and tyrants. A terrorist usually believes he is a freedom fighter and a tyrant usually believes he is a patriot.

The first thing any tyrant wants is power. If we give up our freedom for protection, we will have neither (I think Benjamin Franklin said that first.)

I think George Bush is doing a good job as president in a tough time, but he and Congress are dead wrong about the Patriot Act. It's one thing to increase funding and clear the way for better interagency cooperation. It is entirely an-

other to give federal agents the authority to spy on citizens without any oversight.

I know, most say that will never happen, but our system is founded on a healthy distrust of government and we should keep it that way. By the way, those who say we need to put more power in the hands of the people are also inviting tyranny.

There is perhaps no greater tyranny than the majority (I didn't make that one up, either, but I forgot who said it first!) Our founders understood the effects of mob rule only too well and put checks in the Constitution, not only on the government, but on the electorate.

The first thing a terrorist wants is power, too. Today it has taken a new form with the ability and apparently the willingness to commit mass murder with little or no effort. This type of terror is not a fight for freedom; it is simply killing and should be treated as such.

The object is no longer to be heard, but to control through whatever means necessary the lives of as many as possible. If we barricade ourselves in a police state — they win.

The only answer to both terrorism and tyranny is a free society made up of citizens willing to take personal responsibility for maintaining that freedom.

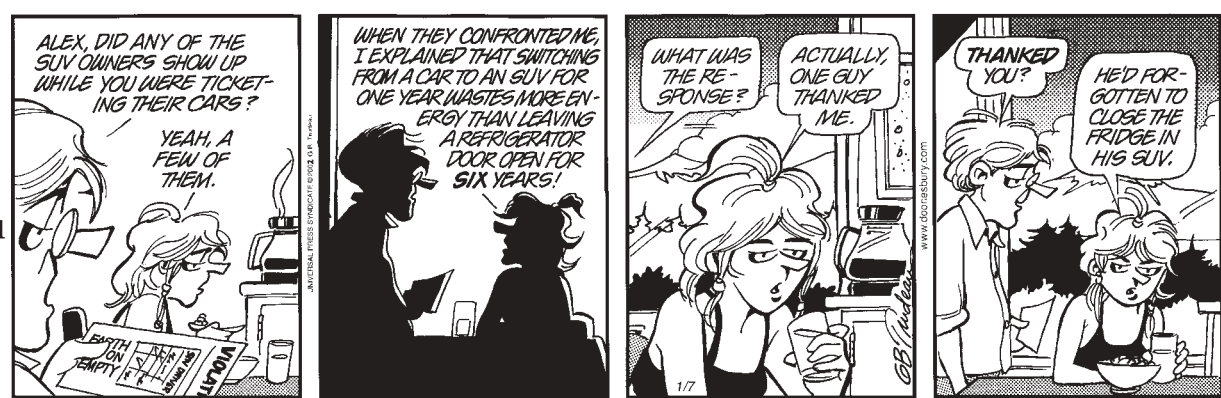
Anything less is failure.

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### Doonesbury

#### • Gary Trudeau



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