

Kansans need to be aware of state's financial status, treasurer says

By LYNN JENKINS

Kansas State Treasurer

Financial awareness, particularly in government, is an issue of great importance to me.

I feel strongly that citizens should know exactly why and how their money is being spent.

Honesty and accountability are two essential components of our government.

We hear reports about the skyrocketing federal deficit and states like California that are struggling to

repair their state's damaged economy. But how do we fare in Kansas? According to the latest edition of State News, which is compiled by the Council of State Governments, the answer is not good.

Unlike the federal government, states are not technically allowed to run deficits. However, to get around this, states will issue certificates of indebtedness or bonds in order to fund their debt in an attempt to stay flush financially.

It would be akin to you taking out a loan to pay down a large amount of personal debt. The problem is that bonds are just a temporary solution that can end up costing substantially more money in the long run.



L. Jenkins

“The state's debt looms at a substantial \$2.6 billion, but well below the debt-ridden California's \$37 billion. However, when that debt is calculated . . . each Kansan would have to pay \$963 to pay off our state's debt making us the 17th worst state in the nation.”

Taken from Moody's Investor Services

According to Moody's Investor Services, "2004 State Debt Medians," the state's debt looms at a substantial \$2.6 billion, but well below the debt-ridden California's \$37

million, barely better than California at \$1,060 per person or 15th worst in the nation.

Compare with that of Nebraska, the state with the least debt in the country, and the difference is startling.

In contrast, each resident of Nebraska would only have to pay a mere \$43 to rid their state of the debt they face. In fact, we are the most indebted state per capita in our region, with our neighboring states maintaining significantly lower debt.

The trend of bonding debt and then shifting it to future generations is extremely concerning and will take our children years to recover.

Fiscal responsibility should be a top priority of our state and it is con-

cerning to see our indebtedness level at such a high level.

As we face budget difficulties in the upcoming years, hopefully we will proceed cautiously with how to deal with state finances and the potential problems that could arise from increasing bond debt payments.

What can you do about the debt problem?

It is as simple as getting involved and expressing your concerns to those individuals that are in a position to improve the fiscal health of Kansas.

It's your state, your money and your children's future.

As always, if I can do anything for you please let me know. It is a pleasure serving as your State Treasurer.

Fireworks displays best enjoyed from safe distances, optometrists say

DEAR ABBY: With Independence Day approaching, I'm asking for your help in reminding your millions of readers about the danger of fireworks, especially to the eyes.

Each year during Fourth of July celebrations, thousands of adults and children are seriously injured as a result of fireworks and pyrotechnic devices.

Many of the injuries affect eyesight, permanently damaging — and in some cases blinding — the victims. In response, the American Optometric Association (AOA) urges people to refrain from using fireworks and to instead enjoy professional displays.

About two-thirds of fireworks-related injuries are burns. Most of the burns involve the hands, eyes, head and face.

Almost half of the victims are under 15 years of age, and 75 percent of them are male. The most frequent cause of fireworks injuries requiring trips to the emergency room is sparklers.

(Did you know that sparklers can heat up to 1,800 degrees, enough to melt gold?) A sparkler can also literally poke someone's eye out.

This may come as a surprise, but bystanders are also not safe from injury. Data from the U.S. Eye Injury Registry reveals that half of all fireworks injuries occur to bystanders.

So, on this Fourth of July, members of the AOA urge your readers to protect their eyes by avoiding fireworks and enjoying professional displays from a safe distance.



Abigail Van Buren

Dear Abby

— DR. WESLEY PITTMAN, PRESIDENT, A.O.A.

DEAR DR. PITTMAN: Thank you for the timely reminder. Although many people, young and old, regard fireworks as harmless fun, the facts show otherwise.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, during 2002, an estimated 8,800 people were treated in hospital ERs for injuries associated with fireworks. An estimated 20 percent to 25 percent of fireworks injuries are to the eyes — mostly contusions and lacerations — and most of those are caused by firecrackers, rockets and sparklers. So, a word to the wise: Have a "blast" on the Fourth of July — but do it in a way that will protect yourselves and your families.

DEAR ABBY: I am 17 and currently involved with a guy from school. The guy that I was with for a year and a half (my ex) wants to marry me.

I still have feelings for him, but not like I used to.

I like my new boyfriend and don't really want to leave him. When my ex and I broke up, it was only supposed to be "a little time apart." My ex showed signs that he was mov-

ing on, so I did the same.

Now that he wants to get back together, I don't know what to do. Should I go back with him and give it a chance or let him down gently?

— PULLED IN TWO DIRECTIONS

DEAR PULLED: You are 17 years old and on the brink of a bright and exciting future.

Why are you in such a hurry to make a permanent commitment? Since you have already "moved on," you should continue moving on.

When the right man comes along, you won't need to ask anyone what to do — you'll know.

DEAR ABBY: Two years ago I got involved with a man who was going through a divorce. I'll call him Tom. Our relationship was great.

We got along well and enjoyed each other's company.

Shortly after I learned I was pregnant, he left me to go back to his wife. It has been a constant game of back-and-forth ever since.

Our son arrived in June, but Tom has made no effort to help support me or the baby. However, he has made an attempt to see his son.

I live with my parents, work and go to college.

They threaten to kick me out because I talk to Tom and want our baby to know his father.

I wonder if I should let him see the baby, if I should try to move out on my own, or if I should stay here and continue to live under my par-

ents' control.

Do you think it is fair for them to give me an ultimatum? On the one hand, I don't think it's right to keep him from seeing the baby; on the other, it's not right that he doesn't help with support or anything.

What advice can you offer?

— DEPRESSED IN PENNSYLVANIA

DEAR DEPRESSED: Your parents may be heavy-handed, but they have your best interests at heart. The best way to assure your child's future is to stay where you are and finish your education.

I agree that your former boyfriend should contribute to his son's support.

To ensure that he does, talk to a lawyer about what his legal responsibilities are. Visitation can be arranged at that time. If it is court-ordered, I'm sure your parents will comply.

DEAR ABBY: The wife of one of my co-workers just had a miscarriage. It's her second one. If the baby had been born, I would send a sympathy card. But what should I do in a case like this?

— STUCK IN INDIANA

DEAR STUCK: Send a card or a short note expressing your sympathy to the couple. I am sure it

will be appreciated.

When couples learn they are going to be parents, they begin to make plans for that child. They have dreams about what they will do with and for that child.

If the pregnancy doesn't come to term, they suffer a tragic loss

and it should be acknowledged.

Editor's note: Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

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Hat display underway at museum

The Dane G. Hansen Memorial Museum in Logan is proud to present "Hats and Headdresses: Adornment of the Head from Around the World" scheduled to open July 16 and run through Sept. 12. The exhibit consists of more than 100 hats and headdresses from a private collection of 225 owned by Stacey Miller.

"The pieces represent over 60 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North and South America and many more cultures, tribes and ethnic groups," Miller said. The hats are a tribute to the diversity of the world's cultures. Not only does the amazing variety of materials used to create the hats speak to man's ingenuity and creativity but also knowledge of the hat can provide insight into a culture's history, customs, values, beliefs and environment.

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