

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint



TABOR could hamstring state

The Kansas chapter of Americans for Prosperity wants us to put pressure on our legislators to support what AFP calls the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights.

It would add an amendment to the Kansas Constitution setting limits on how much tax rates could be raised from one year to the next — just enough for inflation and an increase in population.

It would have been one thing to impose TABOR in the early 1990s when the then-existing tax rates and a strong economy were building up nice surpluses in the state budget.

Under those conditions, the governor and Legislature did the right thing. They lowered the tax rates because they were producing more money than the government needed.

Now we find ourselves with relatively low tax rates compared with 10 years ago. And a Supreme Court that still may require the state to spend millions more on education next year unless the Legislature can come up with a legitimate study showing education is adequately funded now. Is this the time to freeze tax rates?

Let's give our ol' constitution a rest. Let the Legislature have the flexibility to do what needs to be done each year. It is possible to elect representatives who will be responsible. We did it back in the '90s when they lowered the tax rates for us.

The Topeka Capital-Journal

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 pjschiefen@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com.

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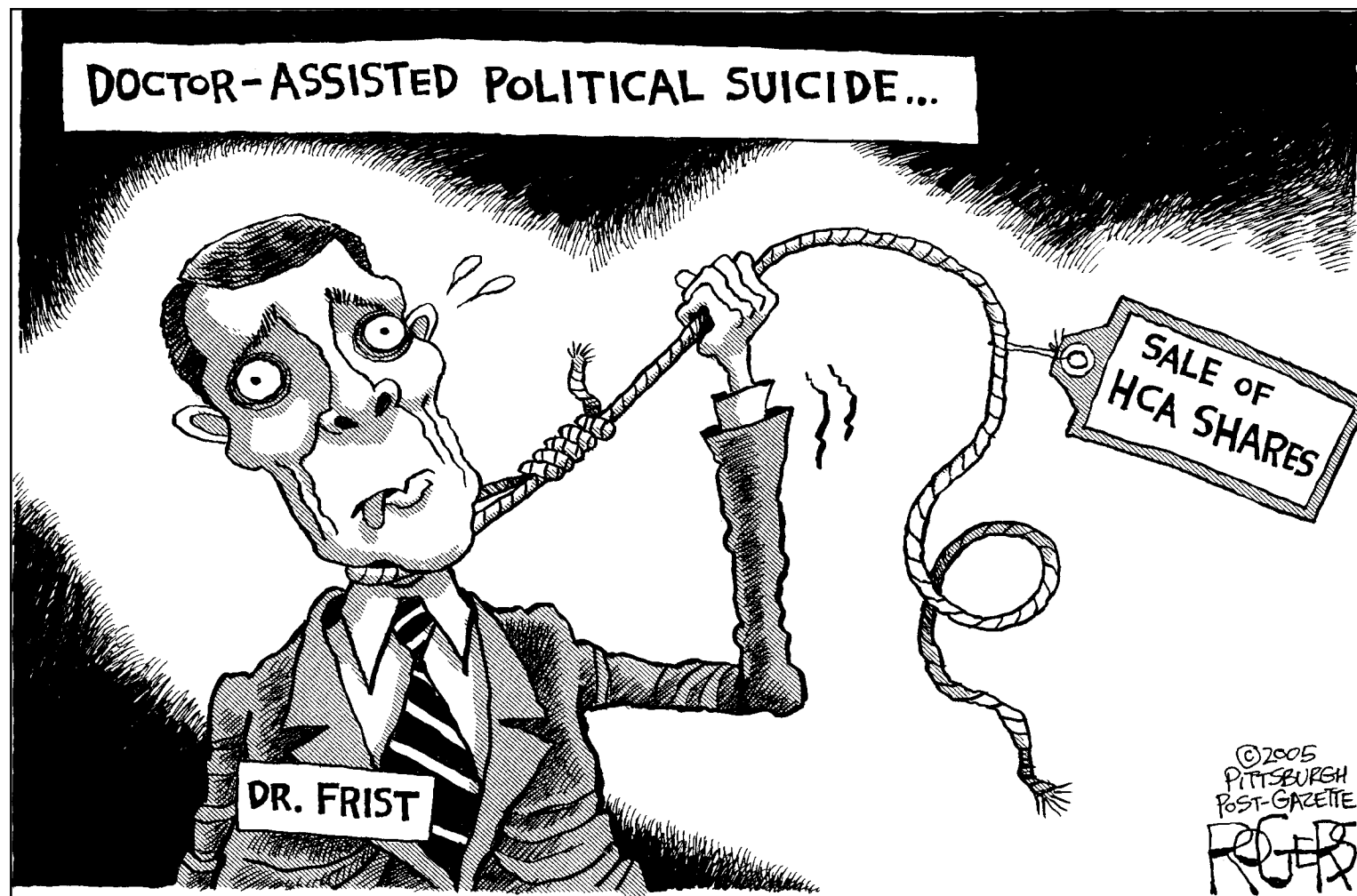
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Area gets a much needed drink

Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain!

Yep, we finally got some rain.

While I'm sure those in the middle of corn harvest are questioning the timing, I'm almost as sure they are finding the rain a blessing. But it reminds me of a saying I heard, "It will rain when we need it and we'll need it when it rains."

I was a bit surprised to wake up to a news-cast Monday morning saying it snowed in Denver. While it's a bit early, I remember a snow close to Labor Day once in Denver.

Just goes to prove someone a bit bigger than us mortal earthling is in charge.

Speaking of sayings I've heard, I heard two of the wisest sayings from women who were seated in the short-lived spectator section during the first day of Dr. Victor Hildyard's hearing in Colby.

I don't know who the two women were, but they were chatting back and forth in earshot of my chair. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't ease-dropping, but the smallness of the room left little unheard as the public chattered about this and that waiting for the hearing to start.

Anyway, I don't remember what the ladies were talking about, but the subject ended up being about common, and not so commonly, known sayings.

The two which captured my attention were, "You can't learn anything with your mouth open" and "Never miss an opportunity to keep your mouth shut!"

Wow! Are those two sayings profound! It would do a significant portion of society some good if everyone took to heart these two sayings and used them often.



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

Just think, if people would listen before speaking — a not so novel new idea — maybe there would be a lot less gossip circulating. And there would be even less gossip making its way around if we'll take every opportunity made available to keep our mouths shut.

The best example of how people talking about other people can hurt someone stems from my childhood.

It was a Sunday afternoon in the early 1960s. Remember those days before cell phones?

A time when many folks, particularly farmers, relied on citizen band radios to keep in contact with their homes or bases of operation.

Well, that particular Sunday afternoon, one of my cousins headed out with a friend on their motorcycles after church.

As they'd done at least a thousand times, the duo headed out to their favorite spot in the hills. Unfortunately, my cousin chose not to adhere to the law and traveled on the left-hand side of that country road that day. And as he crested a hill he smashed head-on into a passenger car and was killed.

The two boys hadn't been away from my cousin's home more than 30-minutes when the accident occurred.

Well, back to my point of keeping one's mouth shut.

My aunt, who was in her kitchen doing the lunch dishes, happened to be in earshot of the CB radio which was mounted just above the door jam in the next room.

My aunt, standing at her kitchen sink, heard two women gossiping on the CB radio about an accident which had just taken place close to one of the women's homes.

Going into full graphic detail of the accident, it was through that conversation that my aunt found out her son had just been killed.

Talk about a time two women needed to have kept quiet. I'll never forget that time in our lives and it was a lesson learned well.

So, to the two women at the hearing last week, thanks for reminding me about a lesson many of us need to use more often.

On the same train of thought, maybe a higher source than me can shed a better light on the subject.

How about what the Good Book says about the subject:

"The one who reveals secrets is a constant gossip; avoid someone with a big mouth," Proverbs 20 v 19 or better yet, "Without wood, fire goes out; without gossip, conflict dies down," Proverbs 26:20.

There's a huge difference between gossip and news. The later is based on fact, and while many people think they have the story correct and should take is upon themselves to share what they know, isn't there another saying that now comes to mind?

How about this one... Silence is GOLDEN!

Farmers see fruits of labor

John Schlageck

• Guest Commentary

Travel out to the fields of Kansas during October and you'll see them teeming with the harvesting of fall crops. Combines chomp through the fields of corn, milo and soybeans eager to dump the bountiful crops into waiting trucks and grain carts.

On gravel and blacktop roads tandem trucks and semis race back from the elevators so the machines can fill them up again. Fall harvest in Kansas marks that magical time of the year when the world's best producers of food and fiber reap what they have sowed.

They work with the land, chemicals, computers and livestock. They must understand markets, people, soil crops and climate. Their livelihood is largely dependent upon factors that are oftentimes completely out of their control.

Like all segments of our society today, farming is in a continual state of change. But there are some aspects of agriculture that never change.

Farmers farm to succeed. They farm to grow and harvest crops and produce livestock. Farmers see their vocation not only as a business, but as a way of life to preserve in good times and bad. They have their feet planted firmly in their soil. They are dedicated to the land and providing us with the safest, most wholesome food on the planet.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates the average per capita consumption of flour and cereal products amounts to approximately 194 pounds annually. When you couple that with approximately 66 pounds of oils, 115 pounds of red meat and 63 pounds of poultry it's readily apparent why Kansas harvest is an important time.

Kansas farmers rank in the top 10 in corn production. Today's consumer has the option of using nearly 4,000 different corn products. These uses range from corn flakes to corn sweeteners.

Corn remains the No. 1 source of livestock feed. A bushel of corn produces approximately 5.6 pounds of retail beef, 13 pounds of retail pork or 19.6 pounds of chicken.

Countless foods are made from today's fall soybean crop. Some of these include crackers,

cooking oils, salad dressings, sandwich spreads and shortenings. Soybeans are also used extensively to feed livestock, poultry and fish.

Farmers are also growing crops that decrease our dependency on imported oil. By using corn, milo and soybeans, Kansas farmers produce a renewable fuel that benefits Kansas farmers by providing new markets for their grain, benefits our environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 35-46 percent and provides a fuel that is good for your vehicle because it keeps fuel systems clean for optimal performance. Ethanol production is the third largest use of U.S. corn, utilizing 7 percent of this nation's corn crop.

So if you have an opportunity to visit our state's fertile fields this fall, think about the professionals who are busy providing the food we find on our tables each and every day. Tip your hat, raise an index finger above the steering wheel of your car or give a friendly wave to these producers of food, fuel and fiber.

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of Kansas Living, a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

