

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint



More transparency is a good idea

From The Hays Daily News
 Because state and federal governments do not have the same legal obligation to publish notices about certain actions they take, unlike local governmental units, much of what they do remains shrouded in secrecy. At the very least, it is difficult to gain access to. That is about to change in Kansas. As early as March 2008, a Web site will be established that will make available detailed information about state revenues, expenditures and debt. We believe this will have benefit to many individuals, businesses, organizations and lawmakers as well. "I think it's a very, very big thing for Kansas and Kansans," said Rep. Jim Morrison, R-Colby. "It should be able to save us, once it goes into play, quite a number of dollars."

The site will be created as part of a \$4.4 million plan to develop a new accounting and financial management system for the state. It's being referred to by legislators as the Kansas Taxpayer Transparency Program.

"This project is another example of making government run efficiently and making government open and accessible to all Kansans," said Nicole Corcoran, the spokeswoman for Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. While the site might appear to be extremely boring reading for most Kansans, those who have interest in how tax dollars go in and out of Topeka should find it useful. Morrison said he fields questions frequently from constituents who want to know budget information, salaries of employees, and which companies are involved in state projects.

Anything that will help make government more transparent and accessible is a good idea in our eyes. We look forward to the site's debut. Perhaps the first item we'll search for is exactly how \$4.4 million was spent creating the program.

About those letters . . .
 The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published.

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 jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

- Where to write, call**
- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
 - U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
 - U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
 - State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
 - State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us



It does not take much

Sometimes it's the little things that have a big impact. Here are some examples.

Those of you who attended Ken Davis' show April 14 at Colby High School may remember the drawing for \$50. The rule for whoever won was they were not supposed to spend the money on themselves.

Here is what happened to one of the winners' money.

"Thank you for inviting Harmony to open for Ken Davis. I am one of the three in Harmony and happened to win \$50 in your drawings. Our church women's group sends care packages to those serving our country from Gove County. I gave the \$50 to the group requesting that it would be used for postage and items for these care packages. We provide chewing gum, crackers, jerky, crossword puzzles, greeting cards, Christian booklets and other items in these packages. We want to let the military personnel know that we care for them and that God cares for them. They love these packages and share the items with others in their units.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to share the good news of Christ with northwest Kansas and to be a part of a blessed and fun evening."

Harmony, from Gove County, provided some music before Davis took the stage. That's a great



John Van Nostrand

Line in the Dust

way to spend \$50.

If you remember the winter, we had some troubles with filling some of our carrier routes because of all the snow and ice. One of those routes was for the north side of town along Range Avenue and the housing developments on both sides of Range. It's a big route.

A college student said he would take the route. He took the list of names and a map of the route and did the route for a few days without any problem. Then, one day, the bundle of papers for that route was never picked up. Nobody answered the phone number the person left. We were left holding the papers and made last minute arrangements to make sure the papers were delivered.

Weeks went by and I forgot about the person until he stopped by the office. He brought back the list of names and map and explained why he immediately stopped delivering the paper.

I could have been bitter over the situation but felt much better about it since he was accountable enough to return the items and explain what happened.

I attended the Kansas Press Association convention in Topeka last week. While I was in workshops wife Jennifer was trying to find yard sales throughout the city.

With the Topeka Capital-Journal classified section in hand, she asked one yard sale organizer about directions to others. She told the people she was from Colby and not familiar with Topeka at all. (Some Topeka people even knew where Colby was, as opposed to those who think Kansas stops at Salina.)

Jennifer said many of those people were very polite and helpful with their directions to other neighborhoods and streets in the city. Amazing what a few words can do — especially to somebody new to town.

Some of those yard sale organizers said either the city or county usually removes yard sale signs left at corners of popular street intersections attracting and directing potential customers. Officials think the signs clutter the streets.

A few select words sure can make a day a lot better.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Your turn

Kansas must break financial ties

Matthew Vines, Darfur Action Group President

Wichita High School East
 The Kansas Legislature will reconvene for a four-day wrap-up session later this week, during which they will iron out the budget and try to get to as much unfinished business as possible.

The targeted Sudan divestment bill is currently in a conference committee, and fortunately, all six legislators on the committee support the measure. However, with 42 other bills in conference committees and little time to work them all, it is entirely possible that our conference committee will never get around to discussing divesting from Sudan, effectively killing any chance that the bill will be passed this year.

Sudan researcher Eric Reeves recently estimated that if no significant action is taken, another 500,000 Darfurians will die by the year's

end, as humanitarian groups are pulling out at alarming rates and starvation and disease are increasingly prevalent. We cannot wait another year to take action.

Please take a few minutes to call or e-mail conference committee members Jim Morrison, Kasha Kelley, and Judith Loganbill to let them know that divestment from Sudan is an issue that must be dealt with this year. As the Legislature prepares to wrap up its 2007 session, these representatives need to know that inaction on their parts will not go unnoticed by Kansans. Their contact information is as follows:

• Rep. Jim Morrison, co-Chair, Colby; E-mail: morrison@house.state.ks.us; Home Phone: (785) 462-3264

• Rep. Kasha Kelley of Arkansas City; E-mail: kelly@house.state.ks.us; Home Phone: (316) 772-0513

• Rep. Judith Loganbill of Wichita; E-mail: loganbill@house.state.ks.us; Home Phone: (316) 683-7382

Brief information on the Darfur genocide (4+ years, 400,000+ dead, 2.5 million displaced)

Our moral obligation to stop funding the slaughter, rape, and torture of innocent human beings

KPERS' statement that the bill will have a "negligible" impact on investment returns

The Wichita Eagle's commentary on the issue was published today: http://blogs.kansas.com/weblog/2007/04/still_time_to_g.html

Please call Rep. Morrison, Kelley, and Loganbill by Wednesday, the first day of the wrap-up session.

Take action today to inspire our elected officials to do the same.

Herb Mattson, Colby Wheat Producer and director Kansas Association of Wheat Growers

Discussion has recently popped up about changing the structure of the Farm Bill, even eliminating the direct payment. Wheat growers have only received the direct payment over the term of the last Farm Bill, so I would like to lay out why wheat growers are actually supporting an increased direct payment.

First, the decoupled direct contract payment is the least market-distorting program in the farm

policy arsenal. Because the direct payment avoids market distortion as much as possible, it is also the most World Trade Organization-friendly program in farm policy. As a commodity that exports almost half its domestically produced product, being trade-friendly is extremely important.

Most importantly to wheat growers over the past five years, the direct payment program is the only program that assures a safety net in times of droughts or other complete crop losses. Other than crop insurance, this is all that can

carry a grower into the next year if Mother Nature deals an uncontrollable fatal blow.

While wheat growers continue to support the three-legged safety net, the direct payment has been the most beneficial program for us, and we see the merits it has.

Now is the time to raise the rate of the Farm Bill's most predictable program, to be equitable among all crops.

Please join me by contacting your members of Congress and telling them why this program is so important to you.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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