

# Opinion



## Other Viewpoints

### State budget cuts won't bridge gap

The state budget is always the biggest issue for the Kansas Legislature... but the budgetary challenges for the 2009 Legislature loom larger than usual.

The many constituencies and special interests hoping for some special attention and largesse next year might want to start working on Plan B.

And when Gov. Kathleen Sebelius asked state agencies recently to cut more deeply than anticipated in the current budget year — 3 percent, rather than the 1 to 2 percent she asked for last June — she might have added: "This is not a drill."

But even those cuts, worth an estimated \$60 million, will not be enough to bridge the gap between the state's revenues and responsibilities.

The state's economic forecasters emerged from their work last week grimly predicting that Kansas could receive \$211.4 million less than expected in tax revenue in the current budget year and face a nearly \$137 million budget hole. By June 2010, the shortfall could be as big as \$1 billion.

Sebelius doesn't want to have to cut public schools or social services — 51 and 24 percent, respectively, of the state's \$6.4 billion general-fund budget — but doing no harm to these big-ticket areas will deepen the pain everywhere else.

Tax increases, always a tool of last resort in Topeka, won't be any easier to get through the Legislature next year, given how the foundering national economy is affecting Kansas businesses and families. And unlike the federal government, budget deficits aren't a constitutional option for the state.

"Everything is on the table, no question about it," Sebelius said. ...

In any case, the newly elected and re-elected state senators and representatives will be earning their meager pay next year in making the numbers work. State Budget Director Duane Goossen might want to check on whether there's anything left over in his bag of tricks from the early part of the decade.

If indeed Sebelius is tapped for a Cabinet post in the Obama-Biden administration, she will have picked a prime time to get out.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated 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**, 2202 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. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (7785) 296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

### COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963 Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

**Steve Haynes - Publisher**  
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

#### NEWS

**Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter**  
aheintz@nwkansas.com

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**  
mballard@nwkansas.com

**Marj Brown, Vera Sloan - Society Editors**  
colby.society@nwkansas.com

#### ADVERTISING

**Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager**  
jstewart@nwkansas.com

**Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales**  
hwoofter@nwkansas.com

**Steifon Matthews - Graphic Design**  
smatthews@nwkansas.com

**Jessica Estes - Classified Ad Desk**  
jestes@nwkansas.com

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

**Tammy Withers - Office Manager**  
twithers@nwkansas.com

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
support@nwkansas.com

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Jim Bowker - General Manager**

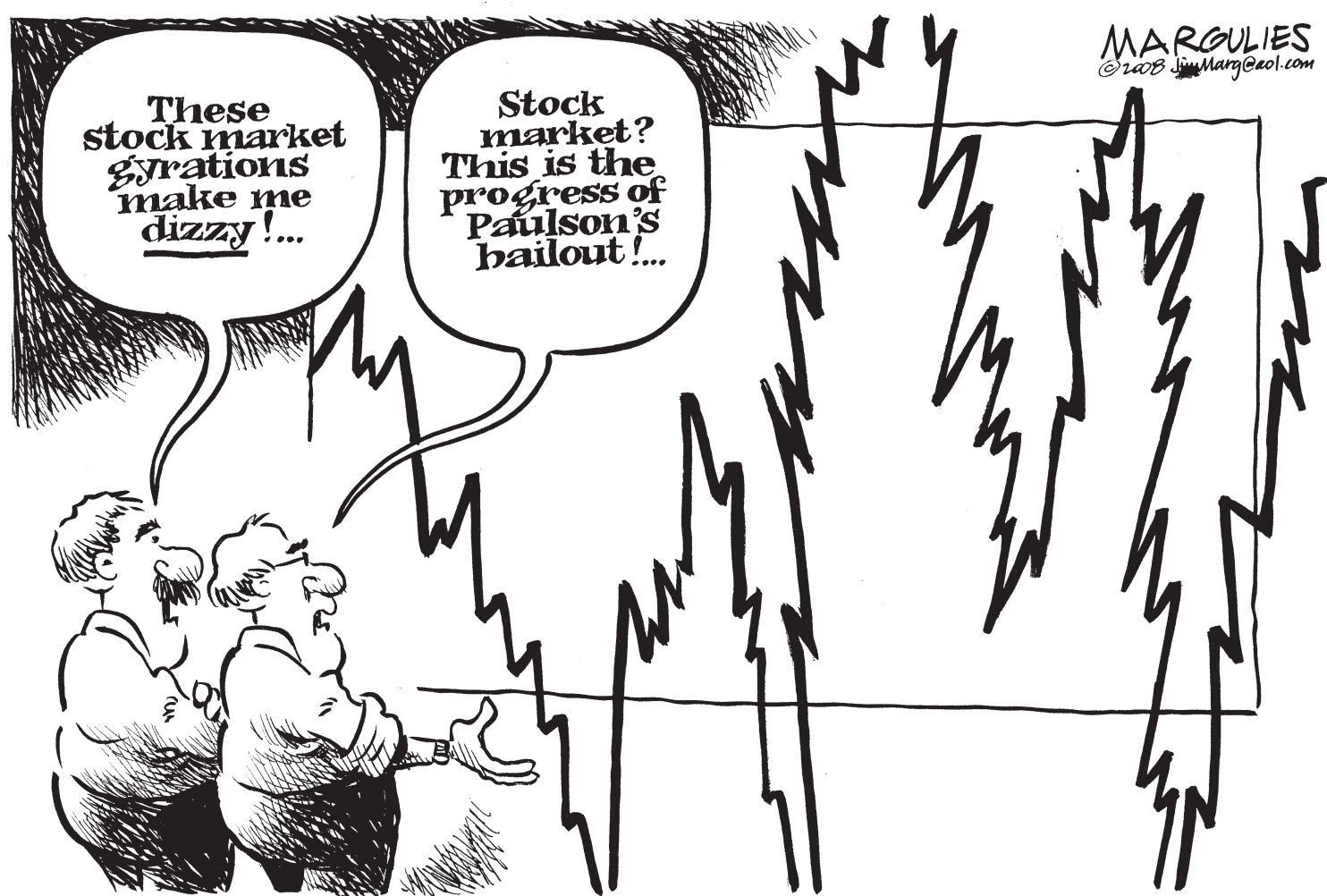
Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, James Ornelas, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Elizabeth Brock

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail within Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.



### Unity must trump complaints

Honestly, I've told many people that I refuse to write about politics. But after hearing complaints about the election, including comments on the idiocy of the American people and the claim that making an international move is the best course of action motivates me to speak for my generation.

I'm not here to advocate for the Republicans or the Democrats, or to tell everyone that I'm moving to Canada. I'm advocating for quite the opposite. Yes, my American right says that I have freedom of speech, including the right to complain, which I could do for the next several paragraphs.

But what would that accomplish, except to further the assumption that twenty-somethings always have something to complain about?

Instead, I'm hoping and praying that as the event moves further behind us, we American citizens will move in the direction of becoming more unified after this divided election. Without unity, a national collapse is in the future.

There were many issues I didn't agree on with Sen. Obama (and I could say the same thing for Sen. McCain), but that doesn't mean I'm going to turn my back on America. As an alternative, we must submit to our new Presi-



**Michelle Myers**

• A Moment with Michelle

dent, even though we may not agree with everything he stands for.

We must obey those who are in authority, though we may hold a different set of rules. Respect must be given, even if they don't deserve it. It doesn't mean that we need to compromise what we believe in order to show respect for our government; it does mean that we should not allow our differences to destroy the United States. This is because in order for the states to be united, there must be unity among the people.

On a smaller scale, I'm currently witnessing the result of a lack of unity. One of my friends is in the beginning stages of what may end up as seeing his parents divorce. It broke my heart to see for the first time such a solemn look on a face who seemed to always have a

bright smile. Since I don't agree with what his parents are doing, would that justify me abandoning the friendship? Of course not. In fact, it should motivate me, along with his other close friends, to offer him the extra support he will need during this time.

I understand that this column won't have any effect at a national level. I'm just hoping that those who feel bitter about the results of the election will be encouraged to adjust their emotions.

I also realize that we don't have much control on what happens at that government level, but as a person who believes in the power of prayer, I think that's the most important thing we can do for our President-elect. I say, let's storm the throne of God, plead that He will have mercy on our nation and that He will give President Obama the strength and the wisdom he needs to bring America to its former glory.

*Michelle Myers, a Colby native, is a student at Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., majoring in Bible and journalism. She enjoys the 32 Starbucks found within five miles of her campus.*

### Old Glory stands for freedom of thought

In case you missed it, Veteran's Day was last week. This sparked some continuing reflection on my part.

Being a Vietnam-era veteran, having served my country in the U.S. Army for nearly three years during the early 1970s, gives me good reason to speak about an issue that's been on my mind.

What I can't seem to understand has to do with our flag: How it's displayed, where it's displayed, and for goodness sake — what in the heck it means to some people.

As a boy growing up in Sheridan County in northwestern Kansas, I attended a two-room school. By the time I was 10, one of our responsibilities in the rural Seguin school was to hoist the flag each morning and take it down in the afternoon before we went home.

I can recall dreaming about this opportunity. When it really happened, I was sitting on top of the world. What an honor, what a privilege!

Back then, there were a few less stars on Old Glory and a few less flags displayed in towns across Kansas. Courthouses, schools, hotels and summer camps flew the flag, but not car dealers, gas stations, shopping malls, pickup trucks, vegetable stands or the moon, assuming our flag is still there.

Because there were fewer flags when I was a youngster, it seems to me that we noticed them more. Old Glory proudly waved everywhere on Veteran's Day, Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. It made you proud to see them waving on front porches, in kids' hands, on bicycle handlebars, near fireworks stands and in parades.

Seeing the flags made you think about what the holiday stood for, and maybe what the flag stood for too.

As I matured, I was fortunate to spend nearly two years in Germany and traveled throughout Western Europe during my tour of duty. At the 563rd Engineer Battalion headquarters, I was lucky enough to see our American flag waving



**John Schlageck**

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

proudly in the breeze every day. Ironically, we were staying in the some of the same barracks Hitler housed his troops in during World War II. Back then, the Nazi swastika no doubt flew from the same pole that our Stars and Stripes then occupied.

Hearing the retreat ceremony each evening was something I never took for granted and looked forward to. I still do today when I'm fortunate to take part in such a revered activity.

During retreat, everyone on the base stopped and stood at attention and saluted while taps sounded and the flag was lowered. It was at times like these I felt calm. Sometimes it took me home, or even reminded me why I was there in Germany to help support our NATO allies in the fight against Communism.

What were my comrades in arms thinking about during this same period? I don't know. We didn't talk about it, but I'm sure their thoughts were similar to mine.

That said, the feelings running through my mind and heart were private, just like those of the soldier standing next to me. I could make the flag stand for whatever I wanted it to be — after all, I was an American. I had freedom of choice. This freedom was given to me by my father, my uncles, my cousins, my grandfather and my great-great-grandfather and all their contemporaries who had served in our armed forces before me during the Korean War, World War II, World War I and the War Between the States.

Yes, as the trumpet sadly sounded and the

flag dropped from the sky, I had privacy — a brief period of time to myself. That was the best part for me, because the whole idea about our flag — about patriotism — is that I could decide for myself what it stands for and what it meant to me.

Our flag is many things to many people. It is a symbol — not of something simple — but of something complicated. The issues and beliefs we all have are vast and varied, some we may believe in while others we may detest.

The Stars and Stripes must remain this way. It can never stand for just one thing or a few things. Our feelings about the flag can never be public and dutiful; instead they must be kept private and free.

We can never make the flag an icon with the same meaning for all of us. Most people, I suspect, don't even think about the flag that much, or even at all because it has become so public and is displayed everywhere. It belongs to us all including advertisers, politicians, and patriots. You name it, if you're a citizen in the United States, the flag can mean whatever you wish.

Old Glory is mine too — to be what I want it to be. This is America, the home of the free.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansas.com or colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

