Opinion



Other **Viewpoints**

Should the Feds bail out the states?

First it was \$700 billion for the financial sector, then President-elect Barack Obama came out in favor of a \$50 billion bailout of the automobile industry. Now, elected officials across the nation are lining up to support a federal bailout of the states. Kansas' own Kathleen Sebelius has already begun to lobby Congress for financial help.

There is little question many states are in dire financial straits. Roughly 30 states faced budget deficits for fiscal year 2009 and more than 20 already have shortfalls for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins on July 1 for most. Analysts are projecting a \$141 million shortfall for Kansas by the end of the current fiscal year....

While the rosy fiscal times enjoyed by the states the past few years clearly have disappeared, important questions need to be addressed before rubber stamping a multi-billion-dollar bailout of the states:

- What was the cause of the current budget problems in the
- Should the federal government spend taxpayer dollars to bail out the states in this economic downturn?

States are not facing budget deficits because they don't tax enough. The real problem facing states is the fundamental issue of overspending taxpayer dollars.... In fact, state spending is up 124 percent over where it was just 10 years ago, and state debt increased by 95 percent during that same period....

It's not right to expect the American taxpayer to pick up the tab. As legendary economist Arthur Laffer recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal, "Whenever the government bails someone out of trouble, they always put someone into trouble."

In this case, a bailout for the states means trouble for taxpay-

There is another very good reason why state officials should be worried about a federal bailout. When has the federal government ever given money to the states without countless strings attached?

A study conducted by the American Legislative Exchange Council during the post 9/11 economic downturn estimated that "every one dollar more of federal assistance increases state and local budget deficits by over 62 cents." It is clear that the many strings accompanying federal dollars impose significant burdens on the states.

State budgets have faced financial duress many times before because of overspending, and probably will again in the future. History suggests federal bailouts are not the answer, as they decrease state sovereignty, promote future fiscal irresponsibility, and reward fiscally imprudent states at the expense of fiscally responsible ones....

Unfortunately, the "do something" disease will continue to plague Washington for the foreseeable future....

-Jonathan Williams

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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.

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Choosing a leader is a guessing game

Choosing a "CEO" is no easy task.

The Colby School Board has just set loose one principal and will be looking for another, and it would be easy to sit on the sidelines and pick at their choices.

The truth is, though, that there's just know way to know what's in a person's heart.

Anyone who's made these hiring decisions can attest to that. The track record of most people in top jobs bears testimony to it.

City managers, police chiefs, pastors, school superintendents and principals, county administrators, top leaders in any business — if a person lasts more than two years, they're ex-

If a board or an employer finds someone who takes to a job and runs with it, they're for-

In the process, candidates are interviewed, backgrounds checked, references called. For a lot of reasons, problems that later seem obvious never come up.

Candidates tend to talk a good game. Ev-

eryone wants to put his best foot forward in an interview, in their resume, in the references And most of us are not trained to be experts

at hiring. Most board members, most people in business know how to do many things well. Human resources isn't part of the curriculum for most, though.

When references are called, often former



Steve Haynes

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Sometimes they have agreed never to reveal why a candidate left his or her last job. Sometimes they fear a lawsuit. It's common.

Candidates may not admit to past sins, pre-

ferring to talk about their strong points. Employers public and private often allow a leader to resign, rather than making the problems public. Investigation may or may not bring things out.

Even candidates without a skeleton in the closet may be ineffective in a given job, due to temperament or interest or circumstances unknown even to them.

And all things being equal, there's no way to accurately predict the dynamic that will develop in a given town among a board, the employees and the chief executive.

Some will last a decade or two, even longer. Many will last five years or more and make a the table. positive contribution.

As many will be two years and out.

her hunch about who will work out.

So we don't judge any board — or business strictly solely on the results of it's hiring, especially on one hire. Over the long run, you hope a town, a district, a business has more good hires than bad and collects a bunch of good and faithful employees.

Usually, that's the case.

Remember that the board members are volunteers trying to do a difficult job, and trying to do what's best.

There have been decisions in the past we've questioned. Hiring, like anything else, is an issue that reasonable people can and will disagree on. But the board members themselves have to make the decision in the end. They will reap the rewards or suffer the consequences, and all for little or no pay.

The only thing we'd ask, and this in itself is no guarantee of a good hire, is that the process always be as open and transparent to the citizens and taxpayers as possible and that the public at large be considered a partner in each

Those who are paying the bills may not get to vote on the decision, but they will share in the benefits or losses. They deserve a place at

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The And in the end, after all the enquiries are Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West made, it still comes down to something of a Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that employers fear giving a bad recommendation. guessing game. Each board member has his or is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Bipartisan cooperation offers balance

What do we do now?

Have we dug ourselves into a hole? Are the walls in that hole threatening to collapse and

Our economy has tanked and pulled the entire world economy into a tailspin, and we don't know how far down the spiral will go!

The Middle East is in political and religious turmoil that threatens the security of not only that immediate geographic area, but indeed, the entire world!

After eight years of an administration that has been woefully lacking in statesmanship and diplomacy, we are in a mess. Is it all this administration's fault? No! Congress has to shoulder part of the blame.

Many people blame the Democrat-controlled Congress, but the Democrats have a slim majority and the president's veto pen has been sustained by the Republican minority. That has stymied any real changes.

Any way you want to fix blame, the truth is, the administration, whether Democrat or Republican has tremendous clout when Congress is evenly divided. An evenly divided Congress must have bipartisan cooperation to maintain a true balance of powers between the three branches of our government. And bipartisan effort doesn't seem to be evident on either side of the aisle right now.

If you have a good dictionary, look up diplomacy and statesmanship. Neither of those qualities is evident when a leader or nation exercises unilateral decisions with impunity.

This administration has claimed democracy as one of its reasons to defy world opinion and the sovereign authority of other nations.

If you look up democracy in your dictionary,



Ken Poland

Ken's World

you will discover that true democracy cannot be installed or forced on a society from the outside. Pure democracy does not guarantee freedom of all members of society. A simple one-tenth of one percent majority can theoretically enslave 49.9 percent of the people.

When a narrow majority attempts to rule without considering the fairness of its rule, rebellion erupts and you have chaos like the Middle East is now in. A minority holding economic or physical power is not conducive to a peaceful social environment, either.

Our Constitution does not guarantee pure democracy. It very clearly makes provisions that prevent a simple majority from ignoring the rights or needs of a minority. It isn't hard at all to interpret the amendment that precludes religion (majority, Christian, or otherwise) from being a deciding factor in government.

The Constitution clearly delineates the procedures that maintain a balance of power between the three branches of government. It states the procedures that must be followed to allow any one of the branches to override the

The court system, as set up by the Constitution, is not served well by ideological divides between the justices. Their decisions are supposed to be based only on constitutional inter-

pretation, not personal preference or ideology. If either of the other branches disagree with the courts' interpretation, there are provisions outlined to override the courts. Think amend-

The wisdom of the authors of the Constitution and consistency of interpretation by the courts is proven by the small number of amendments that have been made over the course of time. Our Constitution, which has sustained a workable democracy, is a complicated system that requires diligence by all branches of our government and the general population, if it is to survive another couple hundred years.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

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