

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Grab opportunity in the budget crisis

"You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. This crisis provides the opportunity for us to do things that you could not do before."

This recent statement by Rep. Rahm Emanuel, President-elect Barack Obama's incoming chief of staff, may seem a bit cavalier, arrogant or even an indication that current conditions provide Obama the opportunity to impose long-lasting policies he never could dream of achieving in good times. However, government officials at all levels probably understand what Emanuel was getting at.

In fact, that philosophy may come in handy during the upcoming session of the Kansas Legislature.

The financial crisis facing the state and nation may give lawmakers an opportunity to think creatively and look at ways to streamline government operations. Some of that streamlining may involve stepping on toes, but it also may bring some long-overdue action to reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency.

For instance, in a column earlier in December, University of Kansas law professor Mike Hoefflich discussed ways that legislators and the state Board of Regents might consider trimming the state's higher education costs. Hoefflich's primary idea was to examine duplication of programs at its university campuses. Rather than cut all programs equally, he suggested, it might be better to eliminate the weakest and preserve the budgets of the strongest.

This would be politically difficult. No campus wants to lose programs. People in authority — regents or lawmakers — would have to make the best decisions they could and force universities to accept them.

Another example arose later in December. In light of the state's current financial situation, a proposal to merge two small agencies — the state Conservation Commission and the Animal Health Department — into the Department of Agriculture has come back to life. Legislative auditors estimate this would save the state about \$710,000 a year, or \$3.5 million over five.

The secretary of agriculture and at least some legislators think the merger could be a good idea. Predictably, the heads of the two agencies do not. The idea, they say, needs more study.

In prosperous times, it's easy for the state to put off tough decisions about such issues. Facing a \$141 million deficit for this year and as much as \$1 billion next year gives legislators a certain amount of cover for decisions that might be politically impossible in better times.

That's where the opportunity comes in. The state is in dire financial straits, but there may be an opportunity to make those lemons into lemonade.

— *The Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press*

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A look back shows new things to come

A new year is all about new beginnings. And that's exactly what 2008 was for me. Here are some examples:

After my tour with the Continental Singers in the fall of 2007, I returned to school in Tennessee for the spring semester, but to no roommate.

I had spent months on the road with 27 other people to hang out with every moment of the day. In school, I was used to having a roommate, so the absence having someone to live with was new for me, and I didn't like it much.

Returning to college in the middle of the school year was hard, since I felt disconnected from those in my class as well as all of the incoming freshmen. But not having a roommate to help me re-establish myself in the community forced me to go beyond my comfort level.

Then summer came. I tried something else that was new for me, leading a girl's Bible study. Five girls and I went through a book called "Authentic Beauty" by Leslie Ludy. Having no leadership experience made the idea intimidating, but I was passionate about the message of the book.

Before I talked myself out of the idea, I e-mailed several girls who I thought would like to be a part of it. From the end of May through mid-August, we met each week to discuss a chapter of the book as it pointed us to the Bible, which showed us that true beauty can only



Michelle Myers

• A Moment with Michelle

come from Christ.

Then the fall came and that brought a variety of new beginnings. I had transferred from Tennessee to Portland, Ore. New school, new city, new church, new friends. For the first time, I sang in a church choir. For the first time, I sang on a worship team with a full band. For the first time, I learned ballroom dancing. And we all know what happened to my hair.

Those are just a few examples of some new things I have been able to experience in only one semester.

The year ended with a wonderful new beginning when my cousin, Diane Harter, and her husband Nate had their first baby on Christmas Day. They had a little girl named Tori Rae, weighing 7 pounds, 14 ounces. As we celebrated New Year's Day at my grandmother's house, I got to hold this sweet, tiny baby in my arms. It was a beautiful way to start a year. As she slept in my arms, I thought about what kind of new things I might experience in the coming months.

The unknown can be scary to think about,

though. With a new president taking over the Oval Office, a lot of people are feeling anxiety about how America will take shape in the next four years. And with the unpredictable economy, many people are in constant worry about how they are going to make ends meet.

Talking about the state of America can be depressing, but I want to encourage my readers to look at 2009 optimistically and view it as an opportunity to try something new.

That's what I'm going to do, anyway. I'm going to try something called a budget. While the concept is familiar to me, I've never put a limit on my spending by means of a budget. Thanks to my parents, I've never had a credit card and I always try to be wise with the way I spend my money. But spending a whole day going through my bank statements and seeing how I spent my money this last semester got me thinking that maybe I should put a little more thought (and some self-control) into the way I spend.

My mom always says that I need to learn to be frugal, because my husband will appreciate that some day. I have a lot to learn about what that means, but it's a goal I'm going to strive for this year. I'll let you know how it goes.

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.

Winter whips up wind chill

When the temperature in Kansas dip below freezing, two types of people usually surface — those who enjoy invigorating weather and those who tolerate the cold from inside.

How an individual feels about cold weather usually depends on where he/she grew up, age and more importantly, attitude.

Another factor comes into play — wind chill factor. Wind chill is usually defined as the cooling effect from wind and temperature on the human body. Wind whisking by exposed skin increases a person's heat loss.

An Antarctic explorer, Paul Siple, and his colleague, Charles Passel, first coined the term "wind chill" in 1939. Siple described wind chill as the relative cooling power — heat removal — from the body with various combinations of wind speed and low temperatures.

Some 70 years later, wind chill has become a common term in our everyday conversation. Knowing the factors helps people protect themselves against frostbite and hypothermia. Tissue damage occurs from frostbite when wind chill temperatures fall below -25 degrees. Hypothermia results when the rapid loss of the body's internal temperature alters judgment. This sometimes results in death.

Western Kansas stockmen know the harder the wind blows, the lower the wind chill factor. Simply put, it is the relationship between wind speed and actual temperature that produces this chilling effect.

People who spend time outdoors during these cold periods — stockmen, construction workers, hunters, runners and skiers — may create their own winds or increase the existing wind. Because movement magnifies airflow, they should be especially cautious of wind



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

chill.

Manual labor and other physical exertion can cause heat loss also. Sweat begins and heat is removed by vaporization. Breathing cold air results in the loss of heat from the lungs.

Few people realize that smoking, drinking, prescription drugs and illegal narcotics may also contribute to frostbite or hypothermia during bitterly cold temperatures. All of these dull the senses.

Alcohol dilates the capillaries of the skin, and that increases the body's heat loss. Nicotine frp, smoke absorbed by the blood causes the capillaries to constrict. This restricts the blood flow to the earlobes, fingertips and other regions of the body. Medication can have side effects too, so venture outside during cold weather with extreme caution.

Wind chill charts for regular references are available wherever outdoor equipment is sold. Use these charts only as a point of information. Charts aren't always accurate because they don't take into account all the possibilities of heat loss, or the preventive measures you may take against it.

Air temperature is rarely a reliable indicator of how cold a person will feel outdoors. Elements such as wind speed, relative humidity and sunshine or solar radiation also play a part.

A person's health and the type of clothing they wear will also affect how a person feels.

When you go outside, dress for the weather and the wind. Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers. These layers can be removed to prevent perspiration and subsequent chilling. Snug mittens are better protection than fitted gloves.

Always wear a hat, preferably wool, ear protection and a scarf or neck gaiter. If it's bitter cold — stay inside.

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.

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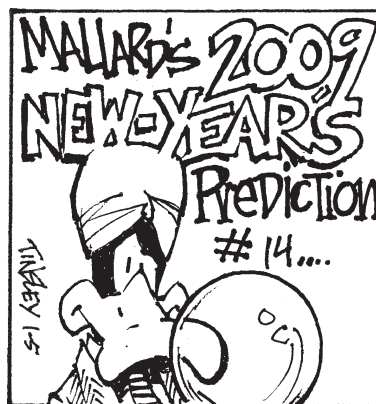
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