



Other Viewpoints

Budget tightening starts in legislature

The inclusion of legislators and other elected officials in a House bill that calls for reducing the salaries of state employees to help erase a \$328 million deficit in the 2010 budget makes the proposal one worth serious consideration.

The House bill calls for a 5-percent reduction in salaries of all state employees. All is the key word there, because we think those responsible for drafting and approving the state's budget should be willing to make the same sacrifices asked of others. In addition to legislators and other elected officials, the bill also includes state university professors and judges.

Legislators and former Gov. Kathleen Sebelius had to rework the current budget earlier this year after state sales and income tax revenues declined further and faster than had been anticipated. Now, Gov. Mark Parkinson and legislators must rework the \$13 billion 2010 budget that was adopted earlier in the session, before state officials learned revenues were continuing their slide.

Given that the state's financial forecasters have cautioned everyone there's no sign tax revenues will pick up anytime soon, it would border on irresponsible not to at least talk about a salary reduction. We don't know if 5 percent is the correct place to open, or close, the discussion, but it does present a starting point....

If the choice has to be made, a pay cut or unpaid furlough sounds a lot better than no job at all.

Parkinson has acknowledge spending must be reduced but has cautioned against overreacting with zealous cuts. He thinks \$250 million can be saved by delaying scheduled tax cuts, implementing an amnesty program for tax dodgers and decoupling the state tax system from the federal code.

However, those measures combined still leave a \$78 million gap between revenues and expenditures, and many Republican legislators aren't any more enthusiastic about delayed tax cuts than state employees are about salary reductions.

The 5-percent pay cut proposed by the House Appropriations Committee would save \$40 million, which by itself wouldn't make much of a dent in the budget deficit.

As the 2009 legislative session enters its final days, it's apparent some compromise will be needed to balance a budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

The best way to reach a compromise is to begin the talks with every option on the table, as unpleasant as some of them may be.

— Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press

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BRACKINS KING FEATURES 5/09



Here's a short course on newspapers

I get enough messages and letters about "putting an ad in the paper" or "running our public service announcement" that I think it's about time we should have a little chat about how a newspaper runs and what we do.

First, let me say that many people assume "the newspaper" knows everything, or should, and therefore there is no need to tell us what's going on. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

The world is large, we at the paper are few and our knowledge is limited. We appreciate it when you let us know. We appreciate it even more when you call or e-mail in time for us to plan to cover an event, sell supporting ads and take a few pictures. Really.

Beyond that, though, here's short course on how a newspaper runs.

Nearly every newspaper has two major departments, news and business. The news department fills about half the space with stories and pictures. News people live in a world of deadlines, writing, story telling and readership. They worry about filling the paper each week with something people will want to read, because that's what they do.

The business department handles the money. It sells subscriptions to readers and advertising to businesses and ordinary people with something to sell. Advertising is valuable only because people read the news, but that's about the only connection between the two.

Ad people worry about sales and marketing. They want their customers to be happy and sell lots of merchandise. They know that advertisers pay most of the bills at any newspaper (about 80 percent most places), so what you



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

pay for the paper only pays to get it printed and delivered.

Advertisers pay for the news, and without news, their ads would be a lot less valuable. It's an interesting relationship, because while they pay for it, advertisers have little influence over what goes in the news. It has to be that way, or no one would trust the newspaper.

One mistake people often make is assuming that because they told someone at the newspaper about an event or cause, everyone at the newspaper knows about it. In practice, news people and ad people, even at a small newspaper, live in different worlds.

An editor might be able to tell you what happened last night at the football game or who got arrested for drunk driving, but likely has no idea what the Ford dealer is advertising this week. Nor will an ad person be able to tell you what is on Page 1 of tonight's paper.

So if you buy an ad for a soup supper, the news department might hear about it. Might not. My advice is tell both. Buy and ad in the paper and send the editor a press release.

Oh, what is an ad, anyway?

Ads are messages in space sold by the business department, usually on the lower right

half of a page. You pay for the space, and you decide what goes there – words, art work, design.

News includes stories and pictures, usually placed on the top half of the page. The reporter writes a story and an editor checks it. The editor decides what stories go where and how they are displayed. Even if you buy an ad, you don't get to tell the editor how to do a news story. That's called freedom of the press.

Many people call the paper, asking us to "advertise" their event or sale. What they means is do a news story for free, and for most community events we're actually glad to do that. It's free, no charge, but the paper gets to decide how big, where the story runs, how it's worded and how many times it runs. (Usually, we have room to run any story just once, by the way, and the timing depends on how many other stories come in that day.)

If you or a group you belong to has something going on, by all means, tell the newspaper. Send the editor a press release or an e-mail, and if you're making money at the event, consider buying an ad. This is how we make a living, after all, and if no one buys an ad, we can't pay the reporters.

There's more, of course. Plenty for the next column, so stay tuned.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Reconciliation bill passed

Here is an update on things in the closing, or "veto," session of the Legislature:

Senate Bill 311 – State General Fund and Special Revenue Fund Expenditures: This bill amends existing law by reversing the current allotment process used by the governor to reduce the approved state General Fund budget when the projected ending balance is less than zero.

If the projected ending balance is deemed insufficient to cover the authorized expenditures and demand transfers by the director of the budget and the director of legislative research, the bill authorizes the governor to seek state Finance Council approval for across-the-board reductions in all accounts with the exception of debt service, Kansas Public Employees Retirement System school employer contributions, and School District Capital Improvement Fund payments.

The bill allows the governor to issue an executive order to make targeted reductions to authorized expenditures and demand transfers if the projected ending balance will be above zero but less than 3.5 percent of total authorized expenditures. Again, the reductions could not be made against debt service payments, school employer contributions and the School District Capital Improvement Fund. Passed 24-16 on Friday.

Senate Bill 306 – Legislation Reconciliation: This is the revisor's reconciliation bill for the 2009 session. Passed 40-0 on Friday.

House Bill 2099 – Kansas Open Records Act: This bill adds to an existing exception in the Kansas Open Records Act that a public agency is not required to disclose the name,



Ralph Ostmeyer

• State Senator

address or other contact information of an alleged victim of stalking, domestic violence or sexual assault. Passed 40-0 on Friday.

House Bill 2195 – State Records: This bill directs the state archivist to prepare recommendations to the state Records Board for preserving and maintaining the authenticity of electronic records; provide that electronic records are maintained in accordance to the preservation process and certified with the archivist's signature; and allow for reasonable fees to be charged for retrieving electronic copies.

The bill also amends several statutes to include an option for document transmittal via e-mail and other electronic means. Passed 40-0 on Friday.

Consideration of Appointments: On Friday, the Senate approved the following appointments:

• Col. Alexander Duckworth to brigadier general, Kansas National Guard.

• Jeffrey E. Lewis to the Kansas Human Rights Commission.

• Michael Braude and Rachel Reiber to the Kansas Public Employees' Retirement Board.

Conference Committee Report for HB 2060: On Friday, the Senate failed to approve the conference committee report for HB 2060.

The bill contains several changes to crime and criminal procedure statutes; it remains in the conference committee for further work.

Feel free to contact me at any time. I can be reached by writing to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan., 66612 or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is ralph.ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov.

Write to us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-you from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

