



Other Viewpoints

Leadership drain hits Kansas' future

Perhaps Kansas should feel complimented, but the exit of a number of top state officials to take positions in the Obama administration is starting to add up.

First came former Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who left in April to head the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Kansas Secretary of Aging Kathy Greenlee was next, accepting a nomination to be the assistant secretary for aging.

In June, Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Adrian Polansky was tapped by Obama to head the federal Farm Service Agency in Kansas. And now, Kansas Commissioner of Education Alexa Posny has been nominated to serve as an assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services in the U.S. Department of Education.

Such losses certainly aren't unprecedented. A new Democratic president is bound to be looking for talented people, especially those who have served in state Democratic administrations like the one led by Sebelius. It's also likely that Sebelius has been in a position to make a few suggestions...

Gov. Mark Parkinson has stepped up admirably as a leader since Sebelius' departure, and the people he taps to replace other exiting officials are likely to do the same, even though they may serve for a relatively short time.

It's a little hard to lose so much governmental experience, but we're confident the former Kansas officials will represent the state well and that Parkinson and his new appointees will rise to the challenge of filling their roles here at home.

— Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

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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

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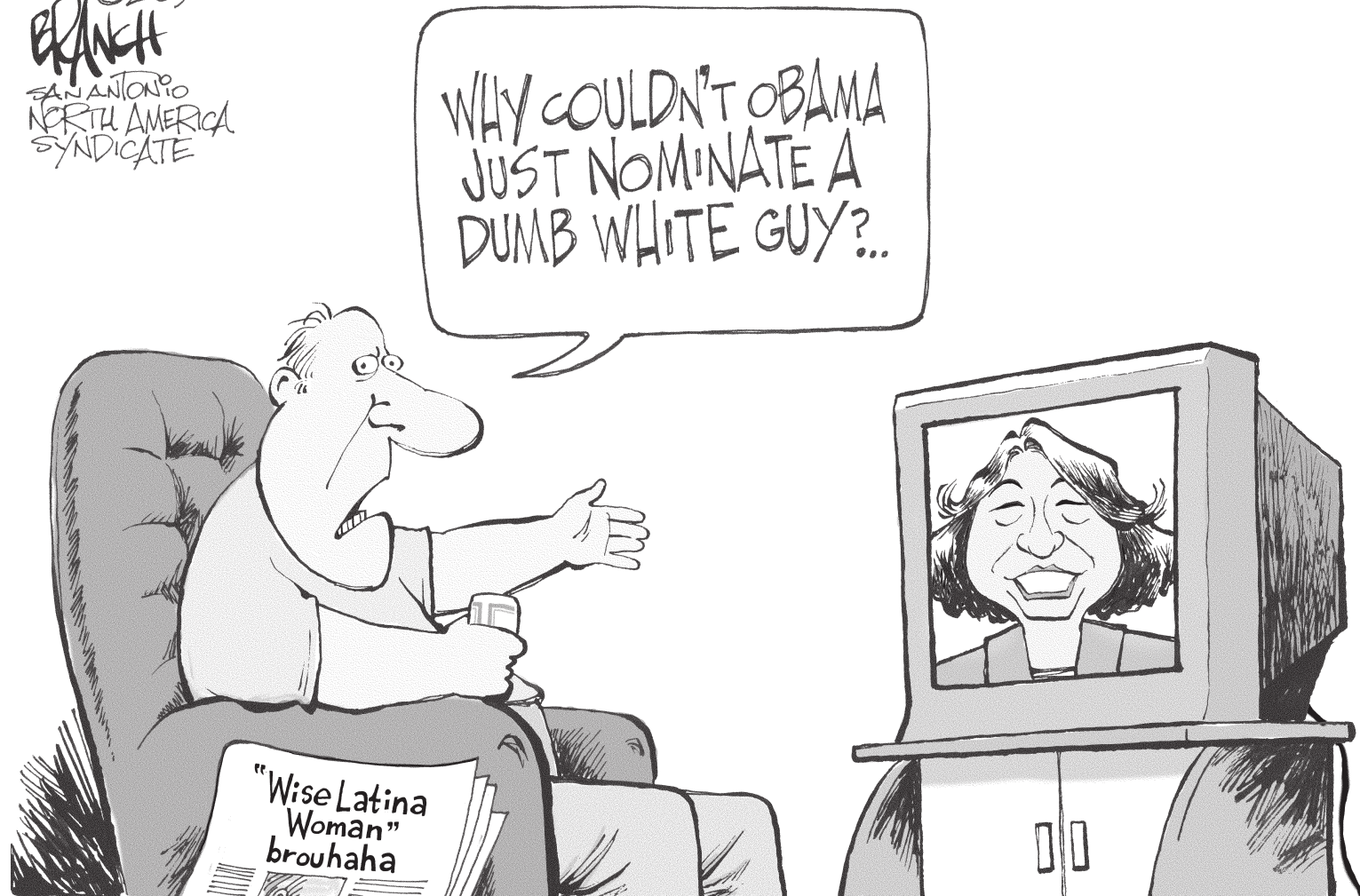
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Nasturtiums didn't outsmart bugs

Bugs ate her out of house and home in the garden last year, and Cynthia was irked.

Potato beetles ate holes in the leaves of her beloved green beans until there was more hole than leaf on most. Pretty little greenish-white moths fluttered around her broccoli, then a month later, little green worms started munching the stalks.

These were particularly tasty when cooked, causing at least one meal to be cut short. Later, all worms got a saltwater bath before dinner. Most swam off the broccoli, but those that stayed were even tastier.

Cynthia vowed that this year would be different.

This year, she said, she would get the upper hand on the critters. She started reading in January or February. She found that nasturtiums were supposed to ward off bugs. She went out and bought nasturtium seeds, lots of nasturtium seeds.

The home-remedy-garden guide said that a little salt on the leaves would guard broccoli and other cabbage against the moths. Rather than use a salt shaker, she went out and bought a spray bottle, filled it with saline solution.

Then she waited, patiently, for planting time.

OK. Not so patiently. She is not a patient woman.

As soon as it was warm enough, she planted flowers all around the bean patch. All around the broccoli patch. All around the whole south



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

garden.

She was ready.

It took time, but the nasturtium plants began to emerge, even before the first green beans poked through the bare, crusty soil of the spring garden. Soon there were dozens of little plant sentries surrounding the bean patch, more around the broccoli patch.

Then we went to the garden center and bought bedding plants, broccoli, cucumbers, tomatoes and green peppers. They went in around and between the flowers.

In fact, she was so high on broccoli, and so certain it'd be protected from the worms, that she bought another half dozen plants. She started to spray the broccoli with a little salt water each day.

Pretty soon, the beans started to come up. About that time, something started to devour her broccoli plants, first one and then the next. Apparently, whatever it was liked broccoli with a little salt.

Cynthia called the extension agent, who told her it likely was a tobacco horn worm or some-

thing like that.

The next day, she found the culprit. He was no horn worm – those big, ugly things that can strip a tomato vine in a day – but he was big enough. She dispatched him to that big bug farm in the sky, but I could tell her confidence in home remedies was shaken.

As the bean plants emerged, though, something else began to happen. Bugs were eating her nasturtiums, leaves, stems and all. It began to look as though they'd never make it to the flowering stage, never be available to protect the green bean plants.

The look of desperation on her face was awful. She called the extension agent again, and he had a recommendation.

With her lines of defense shattered, what was she to do? It just took a quick trip to the hardware store.

She's out there right now sprinkling Sevin on the beans, on the broccoli and, yes, on the nasturtiums. I'll bet she had no idea she'd have to protect the nasturtiums.

It's not a pretty sight, all that white powder, but those flowers are going to bloom, and it's death to any worm that gets on those broccoli plants now. I wouldn't give a plugged nickel for anything that tries to eat the green-bean leaves, either.

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.

Government needs to live within means

Kansas taxpayers should be concerned to hear newly minted Gov. Mark Parkinson's take on the current budget situation. In the governor's words, "everything's on the table."

According to recent press reports, Gov. Parkinson seems to be more than open to the possibility of raising taxes next session to pad the state's budget than was his predecessor, Kathleen Sebelius.

With the nation deep in a recession, almost every state is experiencing budget problems, but before giving any consideration to raising taxes or cutting programs, two fundamental questions must be answered:

• The first is whether government is making the most efficient use of taxpayers' money. With spending in the billions, there have to be many ways to increase efficiency and maintain services at lower costs. Most years, government budgets are built on the "appropriation-plus" method — last year's appropriation plus a bit more. Little, if any, consideration is given to whether past appropriations have been used well or wisely.

Despite the worsening revenue situation, state and local government payrolls actually have grown. Over the past year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that Kansas added 1,100 local and state government jobs, while the state's private sector shed 30,300.

In these challenging economic times, families and businesses are required to live within their means every month. It hardly appears government in Kansas is doing the same.

Part of a thorough efficiency review is determining some justification for each program to continue. This is the same process individual taxpayers follow when their incomes go down or they face a layoff. For government to not do the same would be ultimately selfish.

Other Opinions

• Jonathan Williams
Flint Hills Center

• The second need is to properly diagnose the underlying problem. To simply say we should raise taxes is like treating an eating disorder without knowing whether the patient is eating too much or not enough.

In the case of the Kansas budget, it is resoundingly clear that state government has enjoyed too many second and third helpings. General Fund spending shot up 41 percent between 2004 and 2008, with relatively no change in population.

General fund receipts grew a healthy 26 percent over that four year period, but instead of banking some of that money for a rainy day, legislators spent it all (and then some).

As our elected officials think about potential budget solutions, they should remember tax increases are not a sustainable answer for budget problems. The cost of tax hikes is great. Just take a look at the colossal economic problems facing California today.

Despite having some of the highest taxes in America, California has a \$25 billion state deficit. Increasing taxes during an economic downturn is an economic loser and a job killer — plain and simple.

Compare Kansas to the rest of the nation. Recent studies by the Tax Foundation and the American Legislative Exchange Council rank Kansas in the high 20s and 30s on most per-

sonal and business tax comparisons to other states, showing that Kansas does not have a low tax burden.

The council recently ranked Kansas's economic outlook at a mediocre 24th nationally. The regional comparison is even more troublesome for the Sunflower State: only Nebraska's economic outlook is worse at 29th. Oklahoma and Missouri have both worked to reduce taxes, and the Missouri House recently voted to repeal both their corporate and personal income taxes. Furthermore, the council ranks Colorado's economic outlook second best nationally, due to a competitive, low-tax environment.

Especially during an economic downturn, states need to be doing everything they can to become more competitive, not less. Kansas leaders should be aware that changes to policy are not created in a vacuum. Raising taxes would send a clear message: "Jobs Not Wanted Here ... Try the State Next Door."

If Kansas is to improve its economic outlook, lawmakers must avoid the damaging tax increases that will assuredly make things worse. History shows us that states cannot tax, borrow or spend their way to prosperity. Hopefully, Gov. Parkinson and our legislators will find ways to reduce spending rather than increase taxes.

Jonathan Williams is a fiscal policy fellow with the Wichita-based Flint Hills Center for Public Policy and director of tax and fiscal policy at the American Legislative Exchange Council. He graduated magna cum laude from Northwood University in Midland, Mich., majoring in economics, banking/finance and business management.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

