



## Other Viewpoints

### Governor's tax plan meets opposition

It's not often that a governor steps before a state Legislature and asks it to disregard politics and simply do the right thing. Perhaps that's why Rep. Tom Sloan, a Lawrence Republican, said Democratic Gov. Mark Parkinson's speech Jan. 11 was the most inspiring State of the State speech he had heard in 16 years as a legislator.

As inspiring as his words were, however, some proposals the governor outlined also inspired some strong opposition.

In his 30-minute speech, delivered without notes or a teleprompter, Parkinson spoke eloquently about the efforts of generations of Kansas leaders to support public schools, higher education and human services, and build the state's reputation in such areas as animal health, aviation and cancer research.

While doing that, Kansas leaders also have been able to keep the state's tax burden below the national average, he said, but now, the need to "protect what we have," requires additional taxes. His proposal to raise the state's cigarette tax by 55 cents per pack had been expected; his plan to raise the state's sales tax by one cent for three years was more of a surprise.

The sales tax proposal was greeted by silence — no applause — by the legislators gathered for the speech. Parkinson invited legislators to come up with a better way to find \$400 million to maintain vital state services at their current level, but said after spending many hours looking at the budgets, he found no responsible way to make cuts of that size. "I am open to all options," he said, but the cuts that would be necessary without new revenue are "simply not acceptable."

Those cuts may not be acceptable to Parkinson, but Republican legislative leaders have not reached that conclusion. In the Republican budget message, which was recorded before Parkinson's speech, House Speaker Mike O'Neal dismissed any suggestions of tax increases. The two men agreed that Kansas is near the end of the worst of the recession, but while Parkinson urged the state to "protect what we have built," O'Neal was more concerned about the effect any tax increase would have on business recovery in the state.

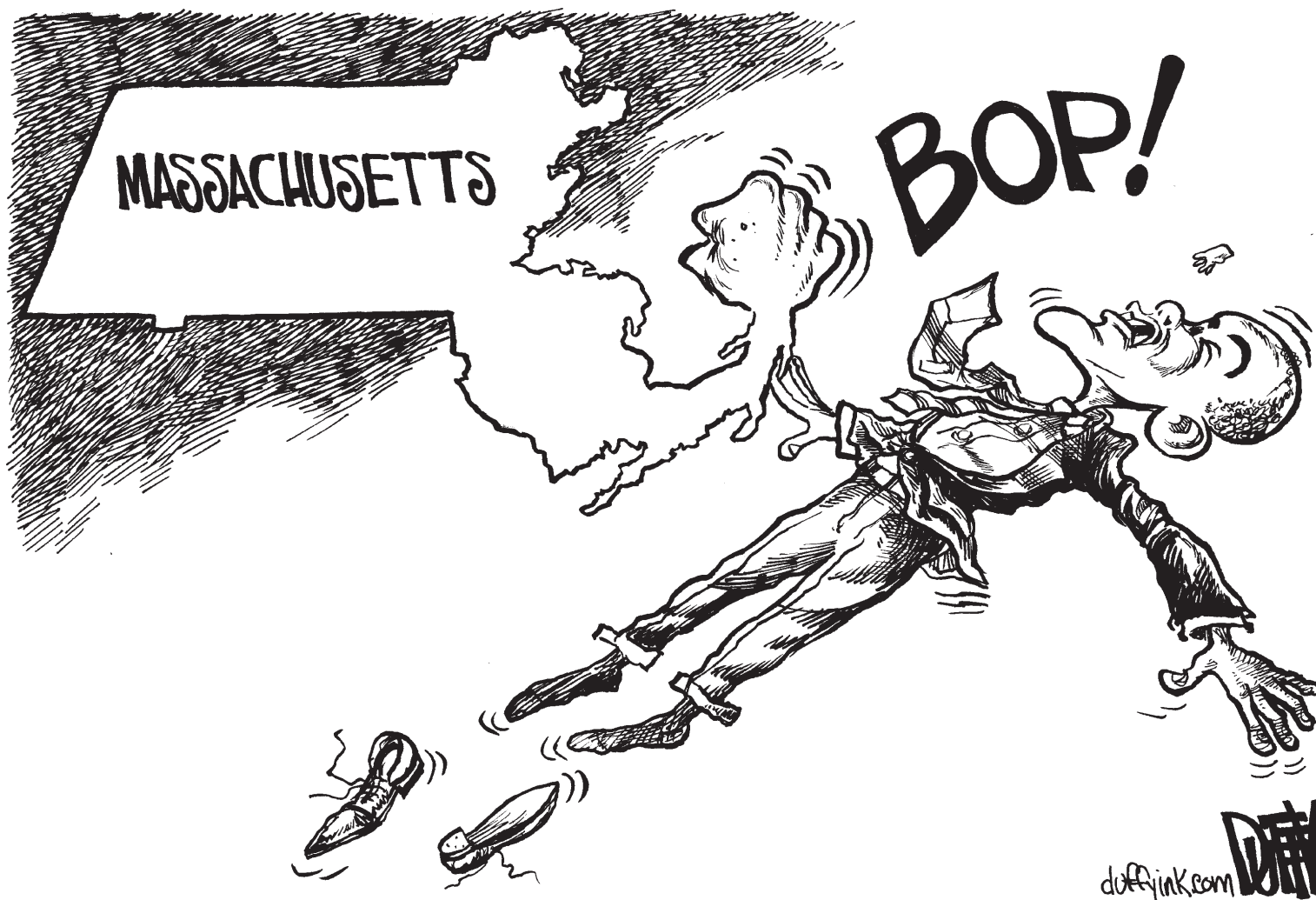
A sales tax wouldn't affect business as directly as some other taxes, but it wouldn't be the first choice of Democratic legislators because it affects Kansans in all economic classes. The fact that Parkinson is calling for the increase to run 36 months — long enough, he hopes, to see the state into brighter economic times — is a big plus, but the increase is a dramatic step.

Parkinson may be retiring as governor after this year, but he still understands politics. Perhaps his proposal of a sales-tax increase will make any other tax increases or canceled tax exemptions conjured up by the Legislature look moderate by comparison.

What set Parkinson's speech apart from others in recent memory was his willingness to put forth plans — including a statewide public smoking ban, increased emphasis on wind energy and creation of a rainy day fund — based not on political expediency but on what is best for the state. It's something many other Kansas governors have chosen not to do, even in the last year of what they knew was their last term.

We agree with Sloan. It's inspiring to see a leader willing to stand on principle. Legislators may be able to disagree with Parkinson's specific budget plans, but it's hard to question his commitment and vision for Kansas.

— Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press



### Some words you just don't want to hear

When Evan called me last Saturday and asked who our insurance agent was, I knew it was no social call. No conversation that begins that way ever ends well.

I just wasn't prepared for the news: A city water main had burst in front of our Colby office, flooding the basement and then the back rooms.

"When I opened the back door," he said, "six inches of water poured out."

Great, I thought. Just great. I was in McCook, 75 miles away, but I quickly made plans to finish my errands and get on the road. I figured I'd have to see this, but I was supposed to pick up inserts for the paper at a couple of stores.

Also, at home in Oberlin, we had a pot of taco meat simmering in the slow cooker for the Colby office "Christmas" party, really an after-Christmas party because no one had time before the holidays.

I had to get that. And Cynthia. Don't forget Cynthia.

So by the time we got to the Colby office, it was 5:30 p.m. and the party was supposed to start at 6.

What a mess. The water had come up a good 6 to 8 inches in the two back rooms. The back room is where we have meetings and keep the "morgue," the place where a newspaper stores its "dead" files of back issues, bound volumes and the like.

The files, mostly, were above the high-water mark, and the safe was, fortunately, closed and water tight. The back, back room, however, was full of — there is no other way to describe it — junk.



**Steve Haynes**

• Along the Sappa

It appeared that no one in this office has ever thrown anything away. There were 20-year-old business records that we'd promised to sort through some day, files and cases of documents that the same company which owned the Colby paper in the 1980s had hauled in from Atwood when it closed a paper there, every vacuum cleaner the Colby paper ever owned (one of which even worked), dead and unused computers from the same era, old machines I think were typewriters, a machine that typed punch-tape to record stories and run the old Lin-o-types, and a stack of dead calculators. You get the picture.

And those were soggy records now, I might add. Real soggy.

Then there was the basement. We opened the door.

Water lapped at the top step. A huge, heavy table floated by. Someone suggested a swim, but the water was icy and we weren't sure the power was completely off.

We closed the door.

We went over to Evan's house and joined the party in progress. Eventually, we all settled down and talked. The kids ran around and talked. We ate tacos and burritos and swilled soda and talked. Adam played the piano; he's

really good. And the old-fashioned good time was had by all.

Then six or eight or nine of us went back down to the office. We set out to salvage what we could: printed company forms in boxes on the floor, for instance. The bottom inch was soggy, the next few inches damp, the rest all dry. Marion, I think, set out to save them all.

We hauled boxes and sweepers. We sorted files, setting a few recent ones aside to be dried and saved. We threw up our hands.

We realized we wouldn't be working in the front room or my office for a long, long time, because the power was off and anyway, the furnace was in the basement. We grabbed desks and moved them to the hall by the newsroom, where I swept the floor. We figured the front-desk girls would need a warm place to work.

Next day, Evan ran phone lines and computer lines and moved their machines. (He's our "systems administrator," or computer expert, but mostly, he's invaluable.) Servicemaster came and started pumping out the last of the water. The city crew kept digging up the street and pumping out an ever-growing hole.

Anyway, by Monday morning, we were able to get back to work with a minimum of problems.

And that was just the start of my week. I think I'll stop answering the phone.

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 likes to ride and watch trains.

### Question of budget cuts and taxes ahead

The state budget will no doubt be the main topic of the 2010 legislative session. Will we raise taxes or make further cuts?

There is an opinion by some that further cuts will only make the hole deeper. I tend to agree with Winston Churchill's statement, "Taxing your way to prosperity is like standing in a bucket and lifting the handle."

Our business community is struggling and doesn't need higher taxes to slow the economy even more.

The governor's speech on Monday was delivered better than the last nine State of the State addresses. He was firm upfront and sometimes cautious as he spoke. I had hoped



**Ralph Ostmeyer**

• State Senator

he would not ask for tax increases to solve to the current fiscal crisis. State receipts still have not leveled off, and we need to be cautious about raising taxes, adding further burdens on the people of Kansas. Businesses have no one to bail them out, and I hope we don't increase

their burden this session.

I enjoyed meeting with the Stockton group visiting Topeka last week, and always appreciate their interest in the government process. As usual, they sent a mix of elected officials, business leaders and citizens to encourage the Legislature to keep Kansas strong.

When we finish the 2010 session, I hope we have made policies that will serve Kansas best with the least harm.

I always appreciate the contacts from my 40th District. The office room number has changed this year to Room 225-East, however, we are still in the same room as before.

### 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 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorrison@ink.org

web: www.morrisonfamily.com

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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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-yous 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



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