



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Do tobacco taxes reform smokers?

In his State of the State address earlier this month, Gov. Mark Parkinson proposed both a 55-cent increase per pack in the cigarette and tobacco tax and a 1 percent increase in the sales tax.

Kansas has been facing a budget crisis for more than a year and we have cut and cut and cut, and now finally someone is saying we can't cut anymore and must raise more money.

Of course, it didn't take long for the more conservative members of our state Legislature to cry out that the sky was falling. One question repeated quite often was how the governor could come out for a cigarette tax increase while also proposing a smoking ban. Would it raise the revenue we need?

Putting aside civil liberties arguments inherent in any smoking-ban debate, we need to know if that combination will work. Do smoking bans lead to fewer smokers and less tobacco tax revenue? It's a good question that deserves an answer, and the only one we can give right now is, "we don't know."

Smoking bans as they usually come about at the state level are restricted to just a few types of businesses, such as restaurants or bars. Some people might quit because of that, and some might just smoke elsewhere — or go outside.

One study by a university in Scotland found that Scots were buying 61,000 packets of cigarettes every week since a smoking ban was put in place. Two others in Ireland and England found that tax revenue fell after smoking bans in those countries. A Swedish study in 2005 found increases in chewing tobacco sales after a smoking ban.

A November 2007 study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that the overall number of adults in the U.S. who smoke has leveled off at 20 percent in the latter half of this decade. It had been declining since the 1960s. Since the study was published, the percentage has remained nearly the same, suggesting that the numbers of new smokers and those quitting have equalized and a good number of the people left are the "hard-core" smokers who can't or won't quit even if their favorite restaurant no longer allows smoking.

Of course, every community, state and country is different. The effect of a ban on smoking in Colby would be different from the effect on Topeka, which in turn would be different from the effect on New York.

In any case, these two proposed taxes aren't excessive and they won't get even close to getting the state back to a budget surplus. They do not give us back all the money we had before we started cutting, but they're not supposed to. What Parkinson is aiming for is a stopgap, a way to compensate for the continually falling revenue for this coming year while keeping the cuts that have already been made in place.

There's nothing wrong with asking state departments to spend less money. In a state with a multi-billion dollar budget, there are thousands of ways to make small cuts that add up to big savings, and we've done that. But at a certain point you have to stop cutting and start looking at alternatives if you want these departments to operate at all. — *Kevin Bottrell*

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@nwkans.com](mailto:s.haynes@nwkans.com) or [colby.editor@nwkans.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkans.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

### COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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**Steve Haynes - Publisher**  
[s.haynes@nwkans.com](mailto:s.haynes@nwkans.com)

#### NEWS

**Kevin Bottrell - News Editor**  
[kbottrell@nwkans.com](mailto:kbottrell@nwkans.com)

**Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter**  
[ahaintz@nwkans.com](mailto:ahaintz@nwkans.com)

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**  
[mballard@nwkans.com](mailto:mballard@nwkans.com)

**Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors**  
[colby.society@nwkans.com](mailto:colby.society@nwkans.com)

#### ADVERTISING

**Heather Woofter - Advertising Representative**  
[hwoofter@nwkans.com](mailto:hwoofter@nwkans.com)

**Andrea Miller - Advertising Representative**  
[a.miller@nwkans.com](mailto:a.miller@nwkans.com)

**Shaly Niemyer - Advertising Representative**  
[sniemyer@nwkans.com](mailto:sniemyer@nwkans.com)

**Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design**  
[kballard@nwkans.com](mailto:kballard@nwkans.com)

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

**Robin Tubbs - Office Manager**  
[rtubbs@nwkans.com](mailto:rtubbs@nwkans.com)

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
[support@nwkans.com](mailto:support@nwkans.com)

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**

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IT'S 3:00am AT THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE PHONE RINGS...



### Haiti deserves more than emergency aid

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Haiti on Jan. 12 is just the latest tragedy to strike a country full of people who are far too familiar with pain and heartbreak.

I'm proud of my government for providing much-needed aid to this impoverished country. And I'm equally proud of our military for their efforts to try and help the Haitian people.

But I have been disturbed and more than a little angry with the government officials and reporters who refuse to acknowledge the historical debt America owes Haiti.

Haiti became a nation after a slave revolt forced France to leave the island in 1804. Napoleon Bonaparte lost so many men of the French army fighting the Haitian guerrillas, he agreed to sell New Orleans and the Louisiana territories to President Thomas Jefferson.

"By their long and bitter struggle for independence, St. Domingue's blacks were instrumental to allowing the United States to more than double the size of its territory," wrote Stanford University Professor Chester Miller in his book, "The Wolf by the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery."

In 1805, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a radical slave leader ordered the killing of the remaining French white people on the island. In response, Jefferson imposed a stiff embargo on the island and America refused to recognize the country's existence until 1862, when we abolished slavery. Unfortunately, this would not be the last time the United States would play a large role in the future of Haiti.

The American army invaded and occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934 to protect U.S. interests. During this time, the modern Haitian military was created by the U.S. Congress.

In the polarized years of the Cold War, the United States made allies of the Duvalier dictators for most of their nearly 30 years in power. While presidents John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan both pressured the brutal governments of Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier



**Andy Heintz**

#### • Wildcat Ramblings

(1957-1971) and his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier (1971-1986) by withdrawing financial aid for brief periods, for the most part our government grudgingly accepted the anticommunist dictatorship.

A resistance movement finally led to "Baby Doc" fleeing Haiti on an American plane and moving to exile in France. The military took over, and civil unrest continued until Jean-Bertrand Aristide became the first democratically elected president in 1990.

Aristide was toppled by opposition forces in 1991. This group terrorized the country for three years, killing dissenters and dissidents. One of the main groups involved in the repression, known as the Front for Advancement and Progress in Haiti, was led by a man named Emmanuel Constant. President Bill Clinton dispatched American troops to restore Aristide to power in 1994. The U.S. achieved this objective, but not without controversy.

Constant fled to the U.S., where he lived in Queens, New York. When New York's Haitian-American community saw him, however, people protested, causing immigration officials to take back his visa and put him in detention in Maryland. But Constant had a winning card.

He scheduled an interview with Ed Bradley on 60 Minutes, where he claimed to have been a CIA informant before launching FRAPH. He filed a \$50 million wrongful-detention lawsuit, arguing that his jailing cost him a chance to run for office in Haiti.

In a few months, the case was settled and Constant was allowed to stay. While he still

hasn't been punished for the part he played in atrocities back in Haiti, Constant eventually wound up in jail after being charged with mortgage fraud.

Later, the George W. Bush administration blocked all aid to Haiti after Aristide's opposition boycotted the 2000 elections, claiming they were fraudulent. This amounted to \$500 million in emergency humanitarian aid from the U.S., the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Caribbean leaders called for a power-sharing compromise. Economist Jeffrey Sachs, a professor at Columbia University, said the opposition rejected the compromise and demanded the president step down. Aristide was flown to the Central African Republic in 2004 in an evacuation organized by the United States, France and Canada. He described it as a kidnapping, but Secretary of State Colin Powell called these allegations "baseless, absurd."

I'm not sure who is telling the truth, but to many critics, the arguments over the 2000 election results were absurd.

"The U.S. position was a travesty," said Sachs. "Aristide had been elected president in an indisputable landslide."

Aristide's own record is not perfect, and there is evidence suggesting he has been involved in corruption, but he has always been vastly more popular than some of the repressive leaders who had Washington's backing over the years.

To me, the U.S. government should show a little humility and apologize for past wrongs done to Haiti while continuing to do everything it can to rebuild the country.

*Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.*

### Respect a first step in protecting victims

Respect for women is not measured only by the often referred to "glass ceiling" but by laws and compassion that protect women from domestic violence.

The lack of respect in our society became painfully clear to me during a question-and-answer period at a breakfast meeting.

After concluding my remarks, which included alluding to a bill passed by the Legislature that upped the penalty for anyone involved in torturing and killing a dog, I said I wish we had much compassion for women. A man in the audience remarked that I must not be aware that dogs cannot protect themselves but women can. Unfortunately, an attitude like that exists all too often.

Out of the last 17 years, 2009 was the third deadliest for Kansas, with 34 adults and 14 children killed. Statistically, that is one adult murder every 7.5 days. Last year, 26 percent of all murders in Kansas related to domestic violence. What is happening in Kansas speaks for itself; it is not different in other parts of our nation.

Tragically, a mother and her two daughters were murdered Thanksgiving weekend in Burlingame. Karen Kahler had filed for divorce in January 2009, and for custody of her children, Emily and Lauren. She filed for a protective order in March and her husband, James Kraig,

#### Other Opinions

##### • Robert T. Stephan Stop Domestic Violence

reportedly assaulted her on the day he was served with the order.

As reported by the media, he continued to harass her by slashing her tires and ripping out her utility cables. Delays requested by the defense in the pending criminal and domestic cases allowed her husband to continue the harassment, as there were no sanctions for his violation of a no-contact order. The system failed Karen Kahler and her two children. Unfortunately, that happens over and over again in our state.

In 2009, Rosa M. Gomez was murdered by her ex-husband at her workplace in Salina. She had divorced him three years ago and had a protection order against him, which he violated three times prior to killing her. Charles R. Losey, a co-worker trying to protect her, also was murdered.

Jennie Jacobsen, a mother of three, was re-

portedly murdered by her boyfriend, Amando Mosqueda, in Lyons. He was on probation for aggravated battery of an ex-girlfriend who had sought protection from him twice. He had served three years in prison for aggravated battery of a man. Jennie had filed for a protection order one week prior to her murder because he had threatened, bruised and strangled her.

It is my opinion that the most often-committed crime in America is domestic violence which leads to injury and murder. All Kansans should support efforts to get the Legislature to pass meaningful laws that will better protect victims of domestic violence as well as provide money for life saving services.

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence has 30 statewide sexual and domestic violence advocacy programs, which provided 62,000 shelter nights, answered 45,000 crises calls, and provided 44,000 supportive counseling hours in 2008.

If you are a victim of domestic violence or know someone who is, you can call toll free (888) END ABUSE (363-2287) to find resources that can help.

*Robert T. Stephan is chair of Gov. Mark Parkinson's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board and a former attorney general of Kansas. www.governor.ks.gov*

#### Mallard Fillmore

##### • Bruce Tinsley

