



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Who foots bill for suing Kansas?

A good idea: change the law so one government unit can't spend taxpayers' money to sue another government entity for money.

And make darned sure that no subdivision of the state can sue the state for money, financing that whole thing with state tax money.

That's what a Wichita-area legislator, Sen. Dick Kelsey of Goddard, proposed last week as Kansas faced another round of school lawsuits financed by tax dollars on both sides. Kelsey happens to be running for Congress, but that does not mean he can't have a good idea.

What it comes down to is you, the taxpayers, paying to sue you, the taxpayer, to force you to cough up more money for schools.

So let's start by asking, do you want to pay for any of this? No?

We didn't think so.

So maybe Sen. Kelsey is on to something here.

Four years ago, in a brazen power grab, the Kansas Supreme Court heard the original "Montoy" school case and ordered the Legislature to come up with nearly a billion dollars more for schools. Never mind that the Legislature, not the courts, is supposed to decide such things as spending levels and tax rates under the constitutional division of powers.

Worse yet, the Legislature caved in and agreed to find the money. But that was then. Now, the state is nearly broke, tax collections run under estimates nearly every month, and the Legislature and governor have spent the better part of two years cutting the budget for all programs.

Should schools be exempt?

The group called "Schools for Fair Funding," led by a group of sharp lawyers who always make money on these cases, says they should. They've ask the Supreme Court to reopen the Montoy case and find that the Legislature needs to dig up that billion.

Many of those who will spend this money, school boards and school administrators, say they need it or children's educations will suffer. Teachers certainly want to see the money come through.

We know schools have needs, but at what price to the rest of the state? Cut colleges and highways even more? Raise taxes with thousands unemployed? Those are tough choices, questions that only the elected Legislature and governor should answer.

But above all else, how is it fair to use taxpayers' money to pay for a suit against the state?

We hope Sen. Kelsey's measure becomes law. We think he's right.

His measure will not protect the state from being sued. Anyone with an interest could file a similar suit, using money donated by school board members, administrators or the teachers' union, say, but it would save the rest of us from paying to sue ourselves.

Let's hope this passes. — Steve Haynes

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@nwkansas.com or colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Free Press, its staff or the owners.

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### Lipstick on a pig:



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### Long-distance gifts get complicated

I cheated out last week and ended up making the guest of honor wrap her own present for a party.

It all started out innocently enough with a baby shower invitation for my youngest daughter. Her sister is giving the shower to celebrate our first grandchild. Unfortunately for me, it will be held where they live, in Augusta, Ga.

I responded to oldest daughter, and she wasn't a bit surprised I wasn't going to make it. Neither daughter had expected me, but they both knew I wanted an invitation to the shower.

I had already decided on my present, sheets to go on the Pac-N-Play combination playpen and portable baby bed that we had already bought for the new grandchild.

I had to go on-line to purchase the sheets at the Babies R Us web site. Man, I hate to shop on line. It's so impersonal, so mechanical, so dull. Still, the only way to get the sheets was visit one of the specialty stores or go on line. Since driving four hours to shop wasn't an option, I got out my computer.

The sheets were \$9.99 apiece or a set or a whatever, and I ordered two — one yellow, one green. At the checkout button, they added the delivery charge and asked if I wanted my purchase gift wrapped. Of course, I wanted it wrapped. It's for a baby shower!

I hit the button and was told that on top of



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

the \$19.98 for the sheets, \$2.87 for tax and \$6.10 for shipping, I would be charged \$4.99 per sheet to have the gifts wrapped.

Ten bucks to wrap a couple of sheets? Couldn't they do it as one package? I would pay \$5, but not \$10. That was outrageous!

I canceled the gift wrap and added a package of cloth diapers that the expectant mother also wanted. The diapers were \$2 more than the gift-wrap service, but I felt better about spending my money on them.

The next step was where to ship them.

They could come to me and I could wrap them and send them on. That sounded like a lot of work.

They could go to my older daughter, the hostess. That sounded like the best bet, but oldest daughter was already overseeing the party and is well known in the family as the person to most likely order your present on line. That girl is more connected to the Internet than Steve Jobs. Besides, most importantly, I

didn't have her address on me and no, I don't have it memorized.

So the third option was to have them sent to the almost-new mother.

I called youngest daughter and gave her these orders:

"Lindsay, my love. I purchased the sheets for that play-pen thingee Daddy and I got you. They'll be delivered to you.

"You are to wrap them in appropriate paper and give them to your sister. When it's party time, you will unwrap your presents and exclaim over them suitably."

She didn't blink an eyelash.

"Right, Mom. I got some blue paper with yellow duckies on it that I used on Sandy's present two years ago. I bet nobody will remember it."

"Since I'm not paying to have the presents wrapped," I said. "I bought a package of cloth diapers instead. You can wrap them or not as you please."

"Oh goodie," she replied. "This baby thing is getting kind of expensive."

Oh baby! You ain't seen nothin' yet!

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

### Health bill won't cut costs

To the Editor:

Since the beginning of the health-care debate, I have argued that, to achieve true reform, health-care costs must be reduced. The failure of bills now pending in Congress to reduce costs means that these proposals would fail.

Overwhelming, credible evidence shows the bills' failure to reduce health care costs. Why does this fact continue to be ignored by President Obama and Democratic leaders in Congress? Two recent reports are particularly important.

First, the chief actuary for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency that administers Medicare, reports that the Senate health-care plan would increase national health spending by \$222 billion over the next 10 years. The agency could not substantiate Democrats' claim that the Senate bill would reduce costs by cutting waste, fraud and abuse in Medicare.

Another study, this one completed by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, found that premiums for families in the individual insurance market would increase up to \$2,100 per year under the Senate bill.

To ignore these and other studies is irresponsible. President Obama promised to cut Americans' health insurance premiums, yet multiple analyses show that health costs would continue to rise under the proposed plans, and that any deficit-reduction claims would be achieved only through budget gimmicks.

President Obama, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Harry Reid must not ignore the evidence. Doing so will have drastic consequences for families and small businesses in Kansas, as well as the financial future of our country.

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, Hays Candidate for the U.S. Senate



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

### Is the Court taxing?

To the Editor:

It's been four years since Wichita, Dodge City, Salina and other Kansas public schools decided to test the meaning of "adequate funding" for schools, words previously added to the Constitution of Kansas.

It was much easier than expected. They used tax dollars budgeted for schools to illegally pay their expenses and found a new sugar daddy. It's now January 2010, and once more Wichita leads the pack, supposedly to reopen the old Supreme Court case of 2006 and try for another sugar transfusion during a period of strapped finances equalling the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Article 4, Section 4 of the Constitution of the United States of America says:

"The United States shall guarantee to every state in this union a republican form of government and shall protect each of them against invasion; and on application of the legislature, or of the executive (when the legislature cannot be convened) against domestic violence."

Study the above carefully and ask yourself, can you even in your wildest imagination see the United States Supreme Court or any other entity of the United States of America deciding how much federal income tax you should pay?

The key is separation of powers — executive, legislative and judicial.

Lloyd Theimer  
Thomas County

### Red Cross grateful

To the Editor:

I am happy to report the Red Cross Blood Drive on Jan. 20, received 141 units of blood. Thirty-five of these people were first time donors. (Each person donates 1 pint or unit of blood). Our goal was 120.

A big thank you to Chris Giersch and his Health Science High School students who donated their time by working at the blood drive, recruiting people to donate blood and bringing cookies; and McDonald's who donated their orange drink and cups. Money donated from Walmart to the Red Cross bought supplies for the Sloppy Joes enjoyed by all.

Thank you to everyone who had to wait extra time in line for donating their blood. Normally there isn't much of a wait time and normally average around 100 people in the same time frame. Red Cross from Wichita brings the nursing staff and had planned on an extra two nurses but an illness and injury prevented them from assisting.

Hooray for Colby!

Bev Vaughn  
Red Cross Blood Drive Coordinator

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