

Kansas Legislature stalled over state budget debate

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in our approach here, because we have been through six rounds of cuts.

"I don't think anyone is interested in making more cuts unless we absolutely have to do that."

Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Jay Emler, a Lindsborg Republican, said he doubts the Senate will debate the budget before taking its annual spring break.

Traditionally, legislators pass a base budget for Kansas government before taking their break. Referred to in the Statehouse as the "mega bill," it contains most of the spending recommendations for agencies,

ranging from aging to wildlife and parks.

Then while they are away, economists take the pulse of revenue collections and give an estimate of what Kansas can expect to collect for the next fiscal year, putting a finer point on economic trends they see on the horizon.

A final "omnibus" spending bill is then produced in late April or early May before the session ends. That's when legislators decide how much additional spending they can afford based on the new figure.

This year it's likely all of those decisions will come in late April and could extended the session beyond its scheduled 90 days.

The last time Kansas faced such a budget crisis was in 2002 with the recession accelerated by the 9/11 attacks. Legislators spent a record 107 days in the Statehouse before finally passing a series of tax and fee increases, pumping more than \$300 million in the budget while making additional cuts.

This recession has been longer and deeper.

Kansas has had an unemployment rate above 6 percent for 14 consecutive months because manufacturers and service providers slashed payrolls.

That resulted in dramatic drops in tax collections, namely income taxes reflecting reduced payrolls. The February report suggests employment may be recovering a little, but no one will proclaim the recession over in Kansas.

Conservative legislators argue that raising taxes now will only stymie any chance Kansas has to make a recovery. They have tried repeatedly to push the tax issue but legislators aren't biting.

Most recently, Rep. Anthony Brown tried to amend tax increases during House debate, calling out Democrats to step up and "be statesmen."

"We have got to get down to business," said Brown, a Eudora Republican. "Is there

anybody who thinks the April revenue estimates are going to be positive? I don't think so."

And that's exactly why Davis and legislators of both parties are waiting. For the past three years, the estimates have been slashed and budgets adjusted. Passing a tax plan based on best guesses may not preclude further cuts this session, or prevent Parkinson from having to make them later this year.

Schmidt, an Independence Republican, has predicted this course of events since February. And he thinks the next month will tell legislators more than just revenue projections.

"Every interest group that has an interest in the state budget will sound the alarm," said Schmidt, an Independence Republican. "April is likely to be a very noisy, very boisterous, high-intensity month."

Boy Scouts celebrate 100 years with lunch at Colby College

When the Boy Scouts of America was officially incorporated on Feb. 8, 1910, Americans were driving Stanley steam automobiles, earning an average of \$750 a year, and paying little more than 30 cents for a gallon of milk.

Throughout 2010, the scouts will celebrate their centennial anniversary. On Wednesday, March 10, area Scouts and volunteer leaders gathered at Colby Community College with Scouting supporters for a luncheon to celebrate Scouting's centennial anniversary and announce several local initiatives taking place this year.

The event included recognition of Alan Sager, Scoutmaster of

Troop 141 chartered to the Colby Rotary Club, and volunteer leaders Scott and Jan Barnum for their Scouting achievements including support of the Six-County Boy Scout Development Fund. The fund is set up to provide expanded programs and services to the six northwestern counties of Kansas that comprise the Buffalo Bill District. Through the end of March, citizens donating \$100 to the fund will be entered into a donor recognition drawing. The winner of the drawing will receive a new Polaris 4x4 all terrain vehicle donated by Goodland Greenline. Donation forms are available from the President's Office at

Colby Community College and at the Sunflower Bank in Colby or by contacting Mark Scheopner at (785) 821-2489. The deadline for the contest in April 5.

"This country needs strong leaders and healthy young people more than ever before, and that is what Scouting is all about," said Stacy Huff, Scout executive of the Coronado Area Council. "This is our time in history to remind the

nation that Scouting is more vibrant, more vital, and more relevant than ever before. Every day, millions of Scouts and adult leaders make a huge difference in our society. We look forward to continuing that commitment in the next century."

Scouts are being encouraged to plant a commemorative tree in their communities this year through the Generations Connection program,

a partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation. Also, through April 2, anyone can nominate a living or past Boy Scout, leader or volunteer who has affected their life for induction into the Boy Scout National Hall of Leadership. An honoree will be selected from each council and will be inducted at the National Jamboree later this year in Virginia. Nominations may be made at www.scouting.org.

Colby man helps farmers find their way in the field

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guidance equipment saves money, time and farmer fatigue," he added.

Davis said the strength of the company is that the products are made available to mainstream operators, and they can add the systems to a 30-year-old tractor, and can even fit them to over 600 different models. Outback has made them affordable, costing anywhere

from to \$1,000 to up to \$6,000 with the average system costing from \$2,000 to \$3,500. He added that there are around 700 systems in operation in a seven county area in his territory, and surprisingly the highest percentage of his customers are over 60.

Davis lives in Colby and is the son of Loyde and Connie Davis and is a 1992 graduate of Colby High School.

Weather Corner section with forecast for Friday through Saturday and sunrise/sunset times.

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Table of TV listings for Tuesday Evening, March 30, 2010, including channels like KAKE/ABC, KBSL/CBS, KSNK/NBC, etc.

Table of TV listings for Wednesday Evening, March 31, 2010, including channels like KAKE/ABC, KBSL/CBS, KSNK/NBC, etc.

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