



## Other Viewpoints

### No joy to be found in record spending

The economic state of our cities and state makes the numbers seem more shocking than they might in a boom time: \$1.6 million spent by the 4th Congressional District candidates trying to win a job that pays \$174,000 a year. \$4.74 million spent by the U.S. Senate candidates, also in pursuit of a \$174,000-a-year salary.

And it's only July. True, the GOP primary on Aug. 3 likely is where the high-stakes drama of the Senate race will end, given that Kansas hasn't elected a Democratic senator since 1932. The Republican nominee, whether Rep. Jerry Moran of Hays or Rep. Todd Tiahrt of Goddard, may not need to spend much to mop up a November victory.

But their more than \$4.74 million in spending already has obliterated not only the spending for the 1996 Senate primary contest between Sheila Frahm and Sam Brownback (\$681,000 as of mid-July that year), but also threatens to overtake the total \$5.5 million officially spent on that race (Brownback went through a total of \$2.1 million; Democrat Jill Docking spent about \$1.1 million, in the general election — not including the unreported millions spent by third-party groups).

This time, the Republicans' profligate campaign spending is coming from two avowed fiscal conservatives during a time of intense voter anxiety about spending.

It grates further because Moran and Tiahrt are nearly interchangeable on the issues. As *Topeka Capital-Journal* columnist Ric Anderson observed over the weekend: "Come on, nearly \$5 million to split hairs?"

For its part, the race to replace Tiahrt already has seen \$1.6 million spent, mostly between GOP front-runners Mike Pompeo and Wink Hartman. Meanwhile, state Rep. Raj Goyle, D-Wichita, has racked up \$1.2 million, most of it ready to be spent should he dispatch primary rival Robert Tillman.

The 4th District spending already has exceeded the total \$1.38 million spent by Tiahrt and Democratic challenger Randy Rathbun in 1996, even nearing the total \$1.74 million spent by Tiahrt and Democrat Carlos Nolla in 2002.

And it's only July. In the context of the current campaigns, it's hard to believe that Tiahrt spent just \$42,400 on television ads to unseat Democratic incumbent Dan Glickman in 1994.

None of the Kansas races come close to the stratospheric spending in states such as Arizona, Connecticut, California and Nevada (where the total spending this election cycle already ranges from \$17 million to \$21 million).

But they are rubbing frugal Kansans the wrong way all the same, especially when so much of the spending is on negative ads.

After the state's two historic 1996 contests electing Brownback and Pat Roberts to the Senate saw \$8.7 million spent — about \$8 for every Kansan who voted that November — state party officials called such totals "out of control" and "scary."

Many Kansans already would apply such terms to what they're seeing spent this year. And it's only July.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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### Senate race sounds like shooting match

The conversation got pretty crazy in the Republican race for the U.S. Senate, which will be decided in the party primary on Tuesday.

Conversation? Some days, it seems more like a shouting match.

The two major candidates, U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran of Hays and Rep. Todd Tiahrt of Goddard, were trying to show that they were the farthest to the right. And that is a hard race to call.

Both are true conservatives, judging by their voting records and their statements, but there are differences.

Mr. Moran is conservative in the old-fashioned sense. He's an independent thinker like Barry Goldwater, perhaps the most revered conservative Republican of the 20th Century.

Mr. Moran has voted against big spending programs for years, both those proposed by the Democrats, such as the Obamacare bill, and those put forward by Republicans, like President Bush's No Child Left Behind law.

He's always voted against big government and he's been a consistent voice against big spending, regardless of what his party's leadership said.

Rep. Tiahrt is a different sort of conservative, a religious or social conservative in the mold of Sen. Sam Brownback, who's leaving the Senate seat to be the state's next governor. Like Mr. Brownback, he has become the



**Steve Haynes**

#### • Along the Sappa

darling of Kansans for Right to Life and other social-conservative groups.

It's not that Mr. Moran is for abortion, but he apparently has not worshiped at that shrine often enough to win the group's endorsement. While Sen. Brownback has not made an endorsement, he went out of his way early in the campaign to make joint appearances with the Goddard congressman.

In some ways, the contest may have been about "wings" of the party: Sen. Brownback is clearly the leader of the far-right conservative wing. While he's not exactly a moderate, Rep. Moran is too independent to fit nicely in that wing — or any other. He's never held himself out to be a follower of the House leadership, either.

Burdett Loomis, a University of Kansas political science professor who's been following the campaign, pegs Mr. Moran as something of a maverick. He notes that the Hays congressman has been an independent thinker who of-

ten as not bucked the leadership.

Mr. Tiahrt has been more orthodox, and that shows in his endorsements from Speaker Dennis Hastert and other party regulars. He has good relationships with the leadership, even the liberal Democrat chair of the House Appropriations Committee.

Mr. Loomis figures Mr. Moran for a more independent senator, Mr. Tiahrt for the organization guy. He points out that Mr. Tiahrt and his family now live in Washington, while Mr. Moran comes home each weekend to Hays. That puts Mr. Tiahrt squarely in the old Washington tradition, he notes.

Oddly enough, the Tiahrt campaign attacked Mr. Moran for leaving his wife Robba "alone" to raise their two daughters. Mr. Moran not only comes home every weekend, he's visited all 69 counties of his huge district every year.

What kind of senator will we get? Conservative, for sure. Independent, in contact with the voters, or distant, living in Washington? The voters get to decide.

What is your choice?

*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.*

### State representative an important race

To the Editor:

As most of you know, on Tuesday, northwest Kansas will have an important decision to make concerning the state representative for the 121st District.

This race is between Jim Morrison and Brenda McCants. In my opinion, the 121st needs a change. This last year was very frustrating for me as I tried to work with my local representative. Time and time again, I heard about the "House leadership's position." Frankly, I was concerned that my representative was not listening to me, or us (the constituents of the 121st).

I don't want a representative who simply votes a party line without looking after the region in which they were elected. This was especially apparent when it came to school finance. I am not exaggerating when I say that our schools were in peril without the tax increase. As an administrator, I was very concerned as to how services would be provided when we had to reduce staff (and it would have been significant positions) due to budget



#### Free Press Letter Drop

#### • Our readers sound off

reductions.

Furthermore, I want everyone to notice who is campaigning for Jim Morrison. From what I read and see, it looks like it is politicians from the East. That really concerns me! I know from my experience and my many contacts in Topeka that those politicians do not have the needs of northwest Kansas at heart.

The rhetoric about growing our economy by holding down taxes is easy to say, but what will happen when we lose more small schools and the staff who worked in them? We all know that it takes people to generate any economy, and with the House leadership's position,

northwest Kansas is doomed.

And one last thing to think. Rep. Morrison accepted an endorsement from the Kansas Chamber of Commerce, a group that supported "no" monies for schools or persons with disabilities. The Kansas Chamber's president referred to the increase in taxes for education and the disabled as "catering to the needs of those at government's trough."

My response is that our government should help take care of its citizens, especially our children and disabled. These individuals are NOT animals at the trough and should not be characterized as such. (Thankfully our local Chamber is not a member of this statewide organization.)

It is definitely time for change. Brenda McCants understands the need to preserve our rural communities and can be counted on to listen to you the constituents of northwest Kansas.

Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeyer  
Colby

### Wanted: grownups at the primary polls

July 12's excellent piece in the *Clay Center Dispatch* from the *Hutchinson News* showed clearly how politics in Kansas has degenerated to a new low.

Todd Tiahrt's ad campaign against Jerry Moran for Sam Brownback's Senate seat is beyond absurd. The notion that somehow Jerry Moran is in Speaker Nancy Pelosi's camp and is a big-taxing big spender is utterly preposterous. That anyone would believe, let alone be moved to vote, on the basis of that fantasy, is down right revolting.

Tiahrt's contempt for truth in his advertising and for the intelligence of the Kansas voter is stunning. Are Kansas primary voters really this stupid? Can this shameful campaign of misinformation possibly succeed?

Radicals reign in primary campaigns because common folks allow it by not voting. Glenn Cook of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* describes many primary voters as "toddlers ... like 2-year-olds at the dinner table. They're fickle, their attention span is short, and they absolutely, positively won't eat something they don't want."

These are the voters Tiahrt is wooing in the Kansas GOP primary with his bizarre campaign. He must need them, because his advertising doesn't speak to anyone half well

#### Other Opinions

#### • Jane Harder Clay Center Dispatch

informed. And he's behind in the polls.

When their clients are behind in the polls, political consultants recommend ruthless attacks on the opposition. Generally this means lying or stretching the truth beyond all possible recognition.

The theory, universally held by political consultants, is that "the masses are asses," and predicts that negative attacks, truthful or not, will attract the ignorant and the uninformed and motivate them to go to the polls, often in great enough numbers, to turn a loser candidate into a winner.

On such theory rests Tiahrt's hopes for a come-from-behind victory.

The problem with this contempt for voters is that sometimes it works.

Nothing boosts a campaign like burying your opponent in mud. Not everyone is so eas-

ily seduced, but enough people will vote their rage before they vote their mind or conscience that negative advertising can work. And the more ill-informed the voter, the angrier he is likely to be.

Of course, it's not just the hothead toddlers showing up at the polls that changes the outcome — there just aren't enough of them. It's the low voter turnout due to grownups failing to show up that makes the madness work.

Not all primary voters are toddlers. But far too many grownups may fail to show up in the primary election this August, just because of the misinformation and stench of it all.

And that would not bode well for the choices voters will be left with come November.

— *The Clay Center Dispatch*

## ELECTION

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