



Budget strings hamper House

Kansans understand that state lawmakers face a difficult budget challenge this year.

Most Kansans also would applaud efforts to place a lid on spending in the state budget.

What many Kansans would object to, however, is bypassing the democratic legislative process to achieve those goals.

Rules passed by the Kansas House earlier this month give the House Appropriations Committee exclusive power for setting the total of the body’s proposed state budget. That means that as few as 12 House members – a majority of the 23-member Appropriations Committee – will set a budget limit that can’t be exceeded even by a majority vote of the entire House.

The rule change is being portrayed as a “pay-go” provision, which would require any spending increase to be offset by a spending cut elsewhere in the budget. On some level, that seems like a reasonable approach, but, in practice, it hamstringing any effort to make significant changes in the budget after it has come out of the Appropriations Committee. That committee always has been one of the most powerful in the House; now it’s power is almost absolute.

An example of how the provision will affect budget consideration played out last week when the House approved a bill to cut state spending for the current fiscal year. Among other things, the bill approved 7.5 percent salary cuts for state employees making more than \$100,000 per year. The bill also cut state spending on special education to a level that some legislators contend will cost Kansas between \$16 million and \$25 million in federal education funds in future years.

Democrats proposed several unsuccessful amendments to restore some of that funding. Trying to accommodate the pay-go provision, Rep. Jerry Henry, Cummings, proposed raising funds by forcing the sale of excess state property. Members of the House Rules Committee wouldn’t allow that move because the budget had no line item for selling property and the funding was uncertain.

This situation illustrates just how difficult it will be to make any significant changes to the House budget proposal after it leaves Appropriations Committee. Giving the budget-writing committee so much control over the budget stifles the kind of give-and-take that should be part of the legislative process.

The rules also may widen the disparities between budget proposals passed in the House and in the Senate. Many constituents already are looking to the Senate to be a more moderate voice on some budget issues. If the House Appropriations Committee draws severe or unreasonable lines on state spending, negotiations with the Senate will become more difficult.

When Kansas voters elect their state legislators, they expect those people to be able to represent their constituents in all important matters facing the Legislature. Unfortunately, the new Kansas House rules severely limit the ability of the vast majority of House members to have any influence over the Legislature’s most important business: the state budget....

– *The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press*

Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

COLBY FREE PRESS

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

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.
Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell @ nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor

Shelby Pulkrabek - Society Reporter
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Andrea Bowers, Kathryn Ballard, Tammy Withers

Advertising Representatives
abowers @ nwkansas.com kballard @ nwkansas.com twithers @ nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support @ nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

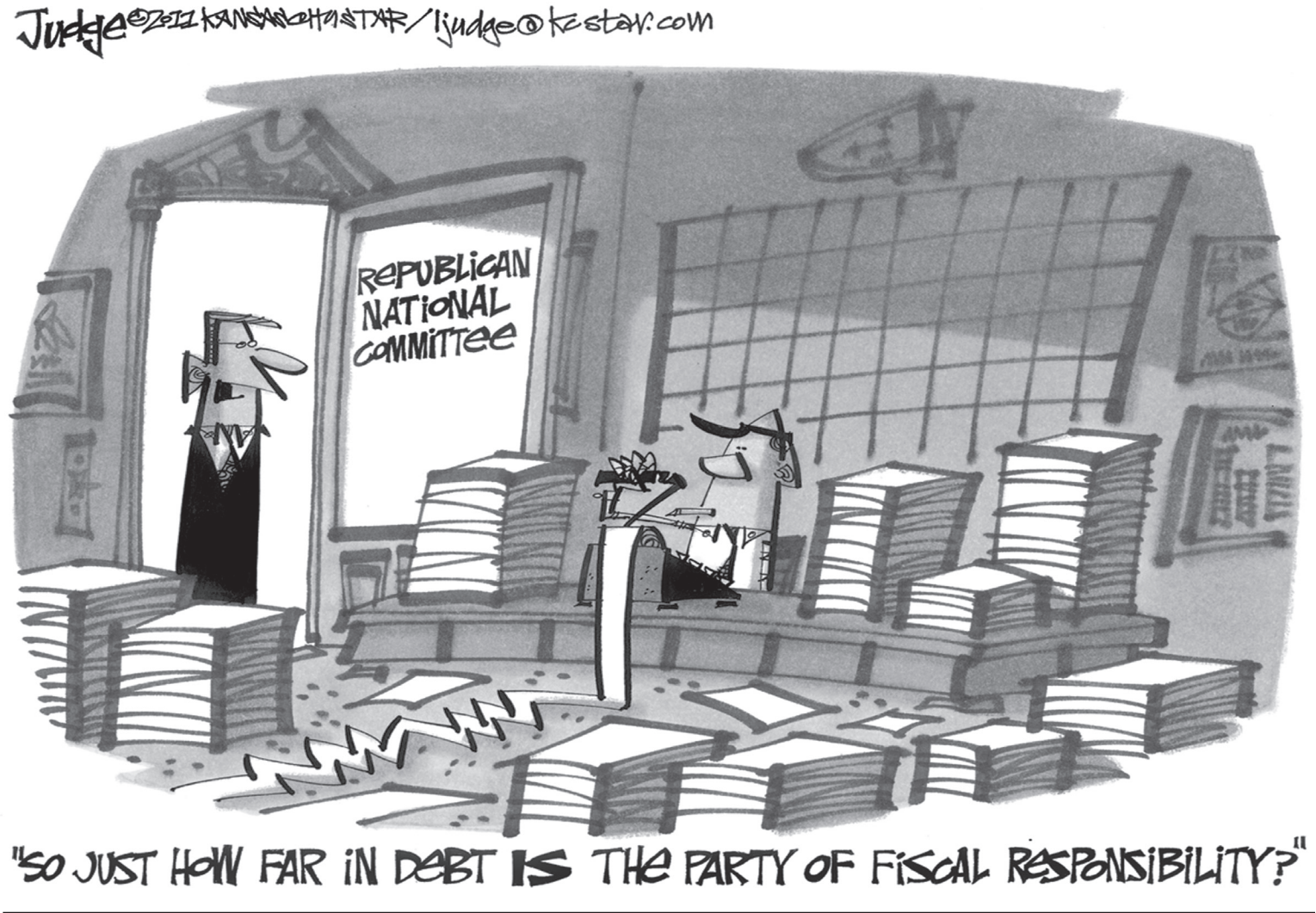
Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day, by Nor’West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Athletic director fell hard

They say, the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

Lew Perkins always seemed to think he was pretty big.

The imperious University of Kansas athletic director had his own one-man table placed at court side in Allen Fieldhouse, among the officials and scorekeepers.

Too busy to travel with others, he’d jet around the country on private planes, saving his precious time. The athletic department paid the bills.

No one ever took Lew Perkins for Mr. Nice Guy, especially not former football coach Mark Mangino, who had been hired before Perkins arrived. Though he was the university’s all-time winningest coach, with an Orange Bowl trophy in his case, Mangino was never Perkins’ guy.

When he had a losing season, and complaints started to come in about the big guy, the AD sharpened his knives and appointed an investigator.

Mangino had a temper, to be sure. The emotional coach once was ejected from a high school football game – his son was the quarterback and he went on the field to argue with officials. He had his problems, but still.

There’s your reward for winning all those games, Mark.

There’s another cliché that fits here: Live by the sword, die by the sword.

Perkins tumbled over, among other things, allegations that he accepted \$50,000 worth of free exercise equipment from a vendor. It wasn’t just that, of course. The athletics department had lost millions of dollars worth of basketball tickets on his watch while Perkins was squeezing ever-bigger donations out of alumni for the ones they had.

The guy got things done, but he made KU look bad. And so it was his time to go.

Perkins paid a \$4,000 fine to the state Governmental Ethics commission last month under a consent decree which allowed him to claim, “I never acted with any intent to violate any laws or ethical rules.”

Like any fool couldn’t have figured out that allowing \$50,000 worth of exercise equipment delivered to your home for personal use might compromise your ethical standing.

Timberrrrr! Thud.

KU has not had much luck with athletic directors since the well-liked, long-serving Bob Frederick was pushed aside a few years back. Everyone thought Frederick was a nice guy, good at the job, but the powers that be maybe came to think maybe he was too nice to losing coaches.

The Frederick fiasco led, eventually, to the loss of basketball coach Roy Williams. Frederick was replaced as athletic director by Al Bohl, a strange character who talked a lot and seemed pretty important. He had hired some great coaches, including Gary Pinkel and Nick Saban, in earlier jobs, and of course, Mangino, but handling coaches apparently wasn’t his



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

specialty. If fact, it was hard to see what he was good at in Kansas.

When he found out he was being fired, Bohl held a press conference on his front lawn, blaming Williams for his troubles, and talked like he could make it all go away. Instead, he went away, and not a moment too soon.

Bohl was replaced by Perkins, whose track record at the University of Connecticut made the case that he was the guy who could finally lift the struggling women’s basketball, baseball and track programs to heights of glory.

And, you have to hand it to him, Lew Perkins was, if not humble, at least good at his job, or at least better than the last guy. He built buildings, raised money and made enemies.

Now, the university has a new sheriff, Sheahon Zenger, who talks about integrity, hard work, adversity and other old-fashioned values. Zenger talks a lot, packing sentence after sentence into a machine-gun delivery that’s, well, breathless.

Has Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little finally got this right? Time will tell. Zenger, who says he tells student athletes when they come on board that life will be hard, talks about the right things.

Maybe he’s the guy to restore the integrity and humility so lacking since Bob Frederick went away. (Both came, interestingly, from Illinois State.)

We hope so. Our university and its fans deserve a better deal than they got from the last two.

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.

Rescission Bill affects this year and next

Another very busy week in Topeka. Monday started off with another lengthy debate over the governor’s Freeze Bill (The Rescission Bill).

The Kansas House passed Gov. Sam Brownback’s bill, which transforms a projected \$50 million deficit for the current fiscal year into a \$37.5 million positive ending balance. Because the budget for the current fiscal year serves as the base for the next year’s budget, every dollar saved in this year’s rescission bill is worth two dollars in the 2012 budget.

At the end of the week, we wrapped with the Kansas Health Care Freedom Amendment. The House has successfully passed several significant pieces of legislation. The House has made huge steps toward responsible and accountable budgeting and protecting the rights of Kansans to make their own health care choices while sending a message to Washington that the era of ever-expanding federal government must end.

The Rescission Bill had three important amendments. The first will move \$181,000 in idle dollars from the Regents operating grant to provide money for veterans. The second transferred \$195,000 in idle funds from Regents operating funds to the Veterans Claim Assistance Program. Our veterans are important and we must make sure they are assisted in meeting their needs.

The third amendment was approved by 91 members. It took all state money away from Planned Parenthood to ensure that state dollars are not used for abortions. These funds will be transferred to city and county health agencies.

I would like to personally thank each and every veteran for your service. Also, if you know of any active duty service members from the 121st District, would you let me know their names and where they are stationed. Thanks for your help.

This weeks question is: Should grocery stores and convenience stores be allowed to sell hard liquor? There is a House Bill coming which would allow grocery stores and convenience stores to sell hard liquor, wine and beer. What do you think? Please call, write or e-mail me with your thoughts.

With more than 300 bills currently introduced in the House, the pace has been busy. The next deadline “Turn Around Day,” is Friday, Feb. 25. This is the day in which bills must be passed out of their House of origin, either the House or the Senate.



Rick Billinger

- This week in Topeka

High School here at the Capitol. Teacher Brad Eckols brought Elizabeth Brack, Lexi Hardiek, Gage Pfeifer and Cody Roberts to Topeka. I wish to thank them. Also, I appreciated all of my constituents who have stopped by an visited with me, both in the office and at the receptions.

The Town Hall Meeting in Colby on Saturday had a location change. It will be at 1:45 p.m. in Room 106 at the Student Union of Colby Community College.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to represent the 121st District. If you have any input on any issues which will come before the Legislature this year, please contact me at: rick.billinger@house.ks.gov or call me at (785) 899-4700.

Rick Billinger is the state representative from the 121st District. He currently serves on the Commerce and Economic Development, Education Funding, Insurance and Local Government committees.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building Room C-4, Washington, D.C. 20002 (202) 224-6521

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

