



Free Press Viewpoint

Deep cuts now will hurt less later

A tussle between the conservative Kansas House and the more moderate (but hardly liberal this year) Kansas Senate over how to handle a bill making cuts to the current state budget is deadlocked, putting off an agreement on savings.

That is not good. The bill needs to pass this week, because every day counts. A month's delay, threatened by the dispute between houses, will cost the state a month's savings. That could amount to millions.

House members want to cut right away. Some claim the total should be closer to \$50 million or \$55 million rather than the \$35 million sought by Gov. Sam Brownback.

Senate members are worried about losing federal money for special education. They want to lock in an extra \$25 million to guarantee that the federal government won't punish the state for not providing enough.

The governor has suggested passing the \$35 million in cuts now and dealing with special education later, when the budget situation is more clear and the state knows how much is needed. Some suspect it could be a bit more than the \$25 million.

We say cut now while the budget stroke can be as broad and deep as possible. A month or two months from now, any given level of cuts will produce fewer savings. And everyone knows the state faces a shortfall in this year's budget.

Any deficit left undealt with will just come out of the ending balance the state has to begin next year's budget July 1, meaning even deeper cuts next year. It will hurt less to cut a little more a little sooner.

And as the governor suggests, the time to deal with special education will be when the figures needed to make an intelligent decision are in. Not while holding up the entire show in Topeka.

It's an issue that needs to be dealt with, but as part of the bigger puzzle of how much the state can afford to spend on schools.

Public education, kindergarten through high school, already gets more than half the budget. Teachers and administrators want more, of course. Some have suggested raising the sales tax yet again to raise money, but voters have spoken on that subject: they said, "no," electing more conservatives to the House and to state office.

Despite the cries of teachers and others, the state will spend more on education next year than last. The problem is, the increase is going to teacher pensions and other programs, not to classrooms. That's too bad, but teachers are not offering to take pension cuts, either.

Gov. Brownback lamented that situation, which forced him to cut the budget for teaching kids once again, even after a tax increase last year.

But people have said the state must start living within its means. In this case, a "suitable" budget for education will be one the state can pay for, and in the end, that should be something we all can live with.

With another tax increase out of the question, this issue needs to be settled quickly so the state can start saving, and the Legislature can move on to figuring out next year's budget.

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

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"WOW, YOU GUYS ARE IN TROUBLE."

Snow brings out old faithful – sports car?

She shakes. She rattles. She rolls.

She's a candy-apple-red sports car that's seen a lot of highway and loves to run. She also goes through snow like a four-wheel-drive truck.

So that's why I was driving my 1990 Probe a couple of weeks ago. The old gal sits out in the weather winter and summer and only gets out on the road now and then these days. But when I need her, she's always there.

The snow wasn't that deep, but my Toyota took one look at the slight incline on the alley leading to our garage and said, "No thank you; I don't think so."

So I traded in my almost new car with heated seats, power everything and antilock brakes for the Probe, a five-speed, manual transmission bucket of bolts that I dearly love but don't drive very much anymore.

As I drove from Oberlin to Colby with the temperatures somewhere below zero, I remembered why I don't drive this beloved hunk of metal much now.



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

The Probe doesn't have a compact disc player. It doesn't have a tape player. It doesn't even have a working radio or clock. I can't tell the temperature, and while the heater works fine, the air conditioning is out and there are no seat heaters. Hadn't been invented yet, I guess.

It was built before fancy antilock brakes were even an option, so you gotta be careful at stop signs. Sometimes you stop, and sometimes you press the brakes and just keep going through the intersection.

But it had one big advantage over my Solara. It doesn't mind snow. In fact, it was bought in the Colorado mountains. It knows how to

go around hairpin curves and over mountain passes. It doesn't mind snow and ice and freezing temperatures.

But it finally stopped last week after I drove it to Norton.

When I was ready to go, it wouldn't start. A friend got a battery charger for me and we tried again. Still nothing.

Had my old friend finally died? Had it frozen to death out in the snow on Main Street?

Well, we hope not. While it's still in the auto hospital, we think it just needs a new battery cable, a new battery and some new fuses.

We'll be back in business, the Probe and I.

So, if you see me drive by in a red sports car with slightly peeling candy-apple-red paint within the next few weeks, get out your snow shovel.

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

Budget work aims at administration cuts

I am sitting on the Budget Committee this year. Last Monday, Feb. 15, we received the President's budget for the next fiscal year.

Last Tuesday, Jacob Lew, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, appeared before the committee and I had the opportunity to question him about the resulting deficits. The president claimed that the budget would fulfill his pledge to reduce the deficit in half by the end of his first term, but the numbers presented by the Congressional Budget Office and the numbers in the president's budget demonstrate otherwise.

The House is voting on a continuing resolution to provide money to run the government for the rest of the year. You may have heard that House Republicans are working toward \$100 billion in cuts for the rest of the year.



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

• Capitol Notes

I have cosponsored an amendment that will defund nine White House "czar" positions. During the past two years, the President has appointed "czars" to oversee certain areas of policy, including on the auto industry, global warming and the closing of the Guantanamo Bay detention center.

It is my opinion that this is an overreach of the President's authority. I spoke about this on

the floor of the House. The amendment passed 249-179 on Thursday night.

I also spoke on the House floor about the need to defund Planned Parenthood and to end federal funding of abortion.

After a busy week of many late-night votes, next week I will be back in the district for another 12 town hall meetings. Thanks to those of you who attended one of the 14 earlier this month. I hope to see you at one of my town hall meetings this week.

I will be at the Oakley Town Hall from 1 to 2 p.m. Thursday for my Logan County meeting. Thomas County will be scheduled later.

Tim Huelskamp is the Congressman from Kansas' 1st District, serving his first term.

Incumbents' talk gets boastful

I'll keep it short and sweet this time. Or, maybe you will call it short and stinky.

We live in an era of easy access to print media, instant broadcast and electronic gasconade.

We've all described someone's opinion or account of things by declaring, "They are full of it!" We all know the 'it' is short of saying the vulgar terminology for the excrement we mean. Perhaps, in the political arena, we need to just call it gasconade.

There is nothing vulgar about that word. Extravagant boasting is not vulgar, just tiresome and irritating to the ear.

Our politicians today don't have to use their "franking" privilege to campaign. They can



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

use the editorial pages, talk-show programs and Internet to keep the public informed.

Of course, their information always implies their support or opposition on the issues. (Is that campaigning?) They seldom if ever give both the negative and positive aspects of an issue. And, yes, there are two sides to all issues

— and good and bad in all stances.

Incidentally, outside of the editorial page, you have to pay for campaign ads. Newspapers, are you missing out on some revenue?

Gasconade is a new word, at least to me. Maybe we should realize that a good portion of the political information we receive from our government is gasconade. It's an element in most all political strategies: There is a lot of extravagant boasting.

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