



Other Viewpoints

Make budget deal without more delay

Way back on Jan. 12, Gov. Sam Brownback asked the Legislature to have a "spending freeze bill" for the current year's state budget on his "desk for signature before the end of the month." Now, both January and February have passed without the House and Senate agreeing on such a rescission bill. If the two chambers' negotiations don't deliver soon after the Legislature reconvenes Wednesday, Brownback needs to step in and lead the way to a responsible resolution.

It's not as if bipartisanship is required either; both chambers are controlled by the governor's party, the GOP. In 2009, when the governor was a Democrat, the much-contested bill reducing that current-year's state budget was finished by Feb. 17.

"My hope is that we're going to come to the table, negotiate and have some compromise," Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairwoman Carolyn McGinn, R-Sedgwick, said Sunday on KPTS' "Ask Your Legislator."

The delay this time may not seem like a big deal in Topeka. But each day that passes gives state agencies, school districts and others that rely on state funding less time between now and July 1 to account for the state's cuts.

Since each chamber passed its version of the bill, progress has been made in reconciling the differences. But disagreement remains over how to cut the budget while protecting the state's ability to secure special education funding into the future.

The Senate proposal includes \$26 million to ensure the federal aid for special ed continues; the House version, which Brownback favors, does not. The most likely compromise is imperfect, covering the obligation by diverting scheduled contributions to the state employee pension fund and settling for a minuscule ending balance for the fiscal year. But it beats the alternative, which House negotiators preferred as of last week — diverting the pension payment now and, as of July 1, cutting K-12 public schools' base aid from the state by another \$40 per student beyond the \$232 per-pupil cut Brownback seeks.

Kansas school districts are federally mandated to provide special education services. They should not have to raid other funding to do so, or watch state leaders irresponsibly forfeit future federal special-ed dollars to which they are entitled.

In any case, it's past time to finish the current budget and focus on the even bigger challenge of the next one.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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COLBY FREE PRESS

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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

R. M. FINE...
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What's the real budget math?

The following is lifted from a recent release by Sen. Jerry Moran:

President Obama delivered his fiscal year 2012 budget to Congress this week, which fails to confront the real fiscal and economic challenges before us. The budget includes \$8.7 trillion in new spending, proposes \$1.6 trillion in new taxes, ignores the recommendations of the president's own fiscal commission, and doubles the national debt by 2012....

Administration officials are proud of the fact that the budget proposal will reduce the deficit by \$1.1 trillion over the next 10 years, but that doesn't amount to much when you consider this year alone we face a \$1.6 trillion deficit.

Let's get real, senator! Are we talking about the national debt doubling; are we talking annual deficit spending doubling; or are we evading honest assessment of present circumstances? Your math doesn't compute.

What is the track record of the previous administration and the Republican-controlled Congress? Had they doubled the previous year's deficit spending, it would have still been zero. Whether it was due to their incompetence or justified expansion of budgets, we went from a positive cash flow in government to a drastic negative cash flow.

Meanwhile, both the private economy and business economy went into the dumps. Lowering national income through tax reductions didn't create jobs. Lowering national income during a period of increased military commitment and drastic expenditures for public protection from terrorists did, in fact, upset the total economy of our nation.

Whether it was due to lack of oversight from regulatory agencies, restrictive regulation, or



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

not enough regulation, the fact is our economy went into the tank!

When the Bush administration finally woke up to the fact that our economy was in an out-of-control tailspin, it was too late to make changes before the beginning of the new year. Many of the initial stimulus programs were enactments of Bush Administration proposals.

In past years, the first new bills before Congress have been to authorize the enactment and funding of unfinished business from the last session. That is what happened with the 2009 opening agenda, even though the administrative branch had changed hands.

But all of a sudden the Republican minority decided to be cantankerous and opposed all bills, regardless of origin. Obama became the target of the opposition, though he was fulfilling Bush's remedial legislative suggestions.

It soon became evident that the patient (our economy) was sicker than first believed. Ordinarily, we try finding new and stronger medication immediately, but in this case the minority decided to just say "no."

We'll just continue the same old regimen of the past administration's eight years of spend and borrow. No new income resources and no change in priority of expenditures. In fact, the only remedy will be lowering taxes more,

cutting regulations further, and if necessary, cutting social welfare programs to the bone. Never mind that tax cuts far exceeded what politicians on either side of the aisle were willing to cut from expenditures.

Midterm elections have come and gone. We had a huge shift of power in the House. What has been the result? Very little attention to reality and the critical issues facing us. No, we immediately go about dismantling and defunding the major bills passed last year.

We will reverse the last two years and return to the failing policies of the first decade in the 21st century. No presentation of meaningful legislation for the future. Pull the plug on life support and hope for a miracle. Don't even have the lights on in intensive care or a stand-by plan, in case the miracle doesn't come.

Sen. Moran, you are indicating deficit spending in excess of \$14 trillion? That is what it will take to double the national debt by the year 2012. Is that what you really saw in the president's budget proposal?

Did I fail to see all of the proposal? Or does one of us need to refresh our math skills? \$1.6 trillion is a far cry from \$14 trillion, the amount it would take to double the debt in one year.

Do you readers remember the new word I learned and introduced to you? Gasconade. Well, maybe I'll just have to revert to the vulgar phrase: Sen. Moran, you are full of it! Your statement goes beyond extravagant boasting or intentional misrepresentation of facts.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rwinc@cheerful.com.

Tuition for illegals repealed by House

The legislature reached the halfway point of the 2011 session this week, called Turnaround. Some of the committees met Monday and Tuesday, before we turned our attention to the impending Turnaround deadline. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday were all spent on the House floor. I was fortunate to carry three bills on the floor this week; one bill from commerce and economic development, one for insurance and the other for local government. By the time we adjourned on Friday the House had debated and voted on about 65 pieces of legislation. It was a hectic week and some of the debates took hours.

Legislation passed this week includes a repeal in state tuition for illegal immigrants, union paycheck protection, strengthening late-term abortion reporting by requiring parental consent for minors, requiring voters to show a photo identification and raising the speed limit on four-lane highways to 75 mph.

The House voted 72 to 50 to repeal the 2004 law that requires public colleges and universities to give in-state tuition to illegal immigrants who attended three years of high school in Kansas. The change would require students of families in the U.S. illegally to pay the same tuition rate as citizens from other states. According to Board of Regents, 413 such students were enrolled at regents' schools last fall.

The House voted 76-45 on Thursday for the Paycheck Protection Bill. This bill will prohibit unions from automatically withdrawing dues from union member's paychecks to be used for political action committees. This legislation protects workers from being forced or coerced



Rick Billinger

• This week in Topeka

into political contributions. Union members may still contribute but not with an automatic withdrawal. This bill gives union members the freedom to choose how they would like their contributions spent. If unions use an employee's paycheck deduction improperly, it allows the employee to sue the union for damages. Seven other states have passed similar legislation. Before the final vote some union members made a disturbance in the gallery trying to intimidate legislatures voting on the bill.

On a vote of 96 - 25 the House passed legislation placing further restrictions on late term abortions. The bill expands parental consent requirements for minors seeking abortions and strengthens the state's partial-birth abortion law to better align with federal law. This bill is similar to legislation that passed in prior sessions but was vetoed by Sebelius and Parkinson.

The fetal pain abortion bill passed 91-30. This restricts abortions after 21 weeks when medical research show a baby can feel pain.

Voter identification was passed 83 - 36. This legislation will insure the voters of Kansas are protected from being canceled out by ballots cast illegally. The bill will require voters to show photo identification at the polls. The bill

strengthens the penalties for voting without being qualified, voting multiple times during the same election, tampering with elections, falsely impersonating another voter and illegally handling advance ballots.

Friday we also voted to raise the speed limit on four-lane highways to 75 mph. This vote passed 95-23. The new law applies to four-lane divided highways and simply allows the Department of Transportation to raise the limit in areas they deem safe to do so. Rural areas will probably be the first to see this change.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 1605 was passed urging the U.S. Congress to fund the construction of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan. The resolution passed the Senate Thursday by a unanimous vote and passed the House unanimously. This facility should bring hundreds of jobs.

As you may have heard, Boeing announced this week they had won the \$35 billion contract to replace a fleet of aging Air Force mid-air refueling tankers. This will also bring thousands of jobs to Kansas. The economic impact is projected to be \$355 million a year.

Thank you again for allowing me the honor 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.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

