

## Other Viewpoints

### Police videocams money well spent

At a cost of \$5,500 per unit, equipping law enforcement patrol cars with cameras isn't cheap. But considering the benefits of the technology, it's money well spent.

Car-mounted cameras offer protection both for officers and the people they serve.

For officers, video evidence can go a long way toward refuting false accusations of police brutality or behavior that is otherwise inappropriate. For the public, camera footage offers a way to help hold officers accountable for their actions if they step out of line.

It's a win-win, and local law enforcement administrators deserve credit for investing in the technology.

The Topeka Police Department recently acquired 20 new in-car camera systems to add to the 45 it had already installed in its vehicles. The Shawnee County Sheriff's Office operates 58 in-car cameras, while the Kansas Highway Patrol has placed about 500 in its vehicles.

In addition, the Topeka Department is examining other possible uses of video technology, including acquiring cameras that officers can wear on their uniforms.

If it can be done at a reasonable cost, great. The more protection for officers and local residents, the better.

However, there's a comfort limit to expanded use of video. In parts of the United States, and to a larger degree in some foreign nations, authorities are using remotely operated cameras capable of scanning large expanses of communities around the clock.

That use of technology has touched off concerns over privacy, and for good reason. Critics of the tactic say studies have shown it's often abused by authorities for voyeuristic purposes, and that it has a limited effect on reducing crime.

But as long as cameras aren't used in overly invasive ways, they're a worthwhile investment.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press*

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

**State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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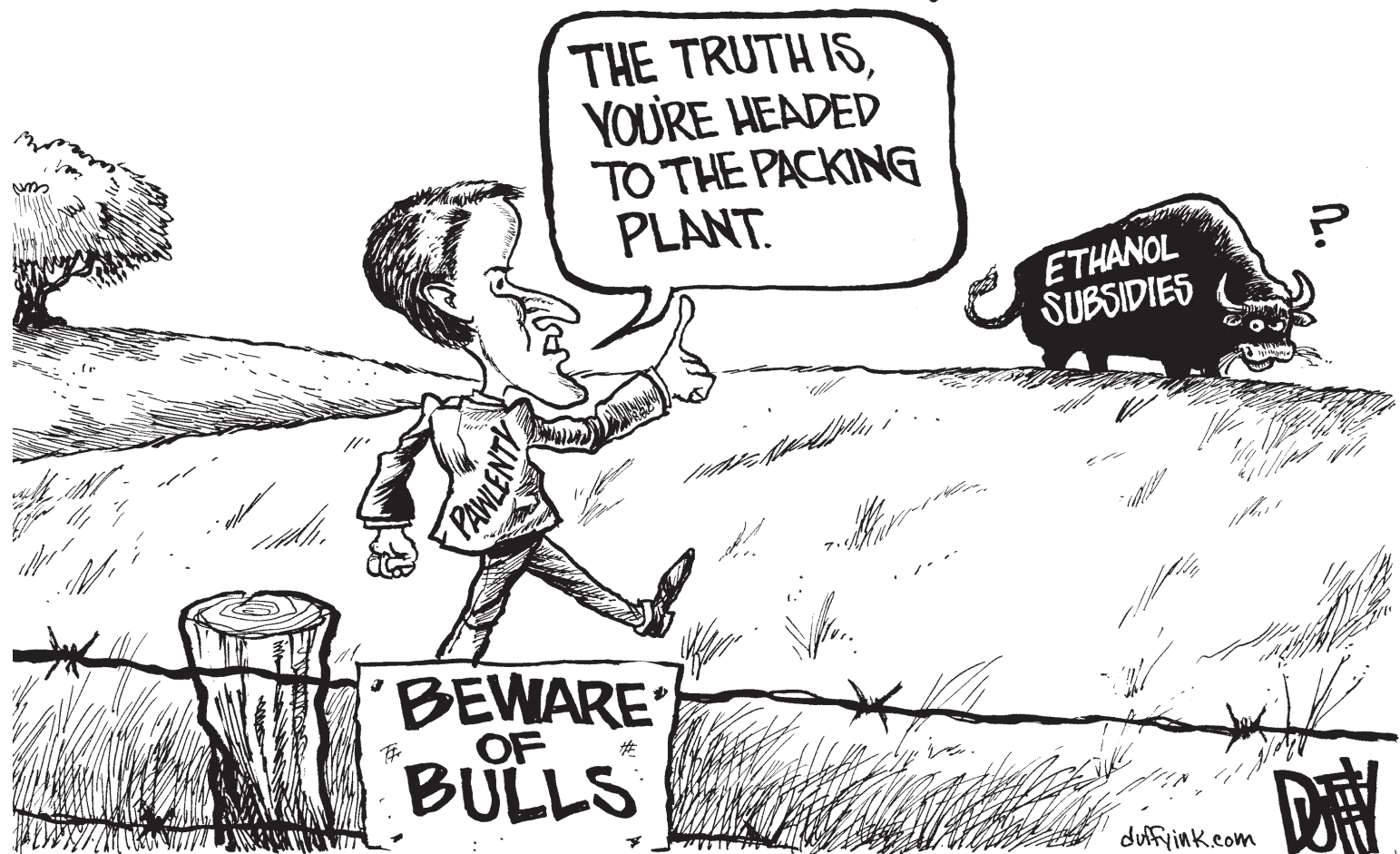
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### 'TRUTH' MEETS CONSEQUENCES



### Apocalypse again defies prediction

The world did not end.

Why anyone is surprised, I'm not sure. Jesus himself told us to be prepared for the End of the World, but he also said that we would not know when he would be coming.

Yet prophets have been predicting the Apocalypse since the first century. And there are always plenty of people ready to believe, as thousands did this year, that the end is at hand.

Could it be? Sure, but I wouldn't spend the savings account and mortgage the farm, as some apparently did, to take one last grand vacation with the kids. Or shell out \$100 million on ads to tout the End of Time.

The odds are against it.

Jesus talked about the Judgment many times. One of the most memorable, in the Book of Matthew, seems pretty clear to me:

"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man...."



**Steve Haynes**

• Along the Sappa

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matthew 24:36-44)

There's always someone who claims to have "figured it out." The radio preacher Harold Camping is only the latest of dozens, maybe hundreds. Someone comes along once or twice a decade and declaims the Rapture.

Yet, the world never ends.

Will it happen?

I'm sure of it. Both the Bible and science teach that someday, what began with a bang or a flourish of God's hand will end. One of the problems, I suspect, is that we humans do not much understand God's timetable. His idea of

a "day" or a "lifetime" may be somewhat longer than ours.

But we only have our own perspective. That takes us back to the Bible, where Jesus advises us to "be ready," to lead a life good enough that, whenever we're called — in this life, and on the final day, we'll be among those chosen for the "A" team, not among those left behind.

That makes sense, both because we know our time on this Earth is limited, and because we know we cannot know the day or the hour, either of our own demise or of the Second Coming:

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions." (Matthew 24:45-47)

It's human nature to want to know, but we don't need to have that knowledge to be good people or good Christians. We just need to live like the Judgment might indeed be tonight.

Steve Haynes is president of NorWest Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

### Budget stabilization would prevent cuts

This budget year would have gone much differently if, instead of starting out with a \$27 million deficit, it began with a \$1.0 billion surplus and another \$6.8 billion set aside for tax relief or capital projects. That could have been the reality if Kansas had followed the budget guidelines in a new study from Kansas Policy Institute. A Budget Stabilization Plan for Kansas," would solve many of the problems that face the Legislature and Governor with each new session. In fact, if the rules-based plan proposed in the study were in place since 1994, state spending would have been within 3 percent of actual general fund spending in 2010 and Kansas would have nearly \$8 billion in funds ready for stabilization, emergencies, investment, and tax cuts.

"A budget stabilization plan is needed in Kansas because the state created a structural deficit in the budget over the past decade," writes the study's author Dr. Barry Poulson, an adjunct fiscal policy fellow at the institute. "Instead of planning for the inevitable downturns in the economic cycle, the state chose to ratchet up spending during good times and depleted reserves when revenue growth slowed. Despite cuts in state spending, the state has incurred almost a billion dollars in deficit spending over the last three years."

Policy Institute president Dave Trabert had this to add. "Much of the pain in the last two budget cycles was completely avoidable. Tax revenue grew 48 percent in the six years leading up to the recession; responsible budgeting would have set money aside for the inevitable downturn. A rules-based budgeting system is needed in Kansas because history shows that needed fiscal discipline won't occur naturally. The FY 2012 general fund budget just passed will increase spending by \$376 million and give school districts access to a half billion dollars in carryover cash, yet some legislators still say we aren't spending enough."

### Other Opinions

• James Franko  
Kansas Policy Institute

Under the plan put forward in the new study, the incremental amount that can be spent each year is the sum of inflation and population growth for the prior year as long as actual revenues are increasing. Revenues that exceed the limit are diverted to an Emergency Fund; when the limit on the Emergency Fund is reached, surplus revenue goes to a Budget Stabilization Fund. Once the Budget Stabilization Fund limit is reached, surplus revenue goes to a Capital Investment Fund and/or is used to provide tax relief.

The plan also allows money to be withdrawn from the Budget Stabilization fund in years when revenues decline. This counter-cyclical aspect allows spending to increase more in recessionary times to meet the increased demand for social services. General Fund spending declined 13.7 percent between 2008 and 2010 but had this Budget Stabilization Plan been in place, spending would have increased 7.5 percent.

"Not only do we see sustainable growth in state spending, we also see a mandated system for the state to weather the inevitable economic storms. If we'd used this plan since 1994, Kansas would have \$245 million in an Emergency Fund, \$782 million in a Budget Stabilization Fund, and nearly \$7 billion set aside for capital investment or able to be returned to taxpayers," continued Trabert. "That is how you responsibly fund services, create jobs and stimulate the economy, letting taxpayers keep

more of their own money."

The crux of the problem for Kansas is that revenues increase rapidly when times are good and the Legislature often complies with spending to match. When the economy slows down, and revenues decline, the state is between a rock and hard place. There is more demand for social services and further demands are placed on the state budget. With a rules-based plan, Kansas would have the reserves to meet that demand and still return money to all Kansans.

Trabert concluded, "Kansas doesn't have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem. Until we get that under control, Kansas are going to continue the pattern of leaving the state for lower taxes and more stable governance. This kind of a spending limitation makes that a reality and even lets the legislators make it home on time."

James Franko is the communications director at the Kansas Policy Institute, with experience on Capitol Hill and with the National Center for Policy Analysis. A Kansas native and Wildcat, he was raised in Stilwell and graduated from Kansas State University in 2005.



### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

