



Other Viewpoints

Higher tax revenue a positive indicator

The state's fiscal prognosticators think Kansas' tax revenues will increase by 5 percent through the next budget year. If they are on the mark, and we've no reason to believe they are not, the budget uncertainty that plagued governors and legislators in recent years may be behind us.

Higher tax revenues indicate higher earnings and sales across the state. That's good news for everyone.

The prognosticators – better known perhaps as economic forecasters – recently raised their state revenue projections for the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, by 3.5 percent. They also predicted further growth in the 2013 fiscal year, which runs from July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013.

In terms of dollars, the state now is expected to take in \$205 million more than previously thought this fiscal year, and revenues for the 2013 fiscal year are expected to grow an additional \$293 million.

It wasn't that long ago that Govs. Kathleen Sebelius and Mark Parkinson, and legislators, struggled to put together a budget that could survive the annual legislative session, let alone an entire fiscal year.

Sebelius and legislators – later Parkinson and legislators – would arrive at a budget solution both could agree on only to learn a short time later the economic forecasters had revised revenue projections for the state coffers downward. The governor then would have to order spending cuts to match the reduced revenue projections. That scenario was repeated several years in a row.

Escaping that cycle should be a change welcomed by all, especially Gov. Sam Brownback and legislators, who apparently will be able to draft a budget confident the money to fund it will be available.

Whether they decide to spend it or reduce government spending and taxes is another matter. It's no secret Brownback and the conservative Republicans who dominate the Legislature are adamant about continuing by choice the spending reductions previous administrations had to accept out of necessity.

Republicans also make no secret of their desire to reduce or eliminate some taxes. Several measures along those lines are expected to be introduced during the 2012 legislative session.

We'll let the political process play out, but for now it's enough to know Kansas' economy is showing signs of life through increased state tax revenues.

Alan Conroy, director of the Legislative Research Department, said higher energy costs and the uncertainty of the financial crisis in Europe could stall the state's economy, but at this point the economic forecasters also expect Kansas' unemployment rate to decline slightly in 2012.

But for now, Conroy said, the state is withholding more income taxes from paychecks this year than last year, indicating growth in payrolls.

It's difficult to see that as anything but a positive trend.

– *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*



Old clippings tell part of soldier's story

He was my mother's first boyfriend, her first love, I'm told.

He was not my father; in fact, I never met him, but when Mother died in June, I found the old newspaper clippings among her things. Apparently, they'd grown up together in the tiny town of Dardanelle, Ark., on the river west of Little Rock.

"Dardanelle Marine Killed in Pacific Area," the yellowed headline read. "Pfc. Charles McClure is Killed in Action." "Final Rites Tuesday For Dardanelle Hero."

Charles McClure. I'd heard that name all my life. Every time my mother would relate some story of her youth and growing up in that small Arkansas town, she would mention his name along with other friends.

He was a second brother to her in these stories. Charles, her brother, Jeff Jr., and she would go fishing, climb trees, play hooky and generally take on the world together.

He had died in the war.

When we went through Mother's photo albums and invited Uncle Jeff and our cousins to take the photos they wanted, Jeff asked for the page that had the notices mother had saved about Charles. I said fine, but send me copies.

When the copies came, Jeff, who had served in the Navy during the war, wrote this:

"Cindy, here is the story of Charles McClure's death on Saipan. We later learned that Charles was killed during a mopping up operation during the invasion. He was shot by a Jap in a spider trap. A spider trap was a hole dug that a soldier could stand up in and had a camouflaged top to make it blend in with the environment. As Charles approached his posi-



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

tion, he shot him just under his chin and the bullet came out the top of his head."

Love, Uncle Jeff.

P.S. "I forgot to tell you, Emma dated Charles a lot when they were in high school. He lived just two blocks down the street from us. I spent many a day in their home."

The copies I received were not complete – maybe the originals weren't. It doesn't make any difference. Here are some excerpts.

"Mr. and Mrs. W.H. McClure were notified Tuesday afternoon by the War Department that their youngest son, Pfc. Charles McClure, age 19, of the U.S. Marine Corps, had been killed in action in the Pacific area."

Another clipping contained a tribute to Charles.

"Remember the little tow-headed McClure boy you have seen around home so much – the one you watched grow up into such a pretty big guy at eighteen? Well, he gave his life for you people not long ago; gave his life trying to make this world a better place for you to live."

"I don't know if he really realized what he died for – he probably didn't – but that was it. He just knew he had another job to do – something that was required of him. That's about what they all think when they go into battle;

just 'let's get this thing over with so we can go home – back to Arkansas Tech and home.'

"I don't know what he thought about when the Chaplain had him kneel down for that last prayer. The kid wasn't very religious, kind of took God for granted, like he did life. So I imagine instead of asking God to spare his life, he thought of the folks at home – wondered how his mother was, and if dad's crop was going to come out all right this year. He was really hoping the folks weren't worrying too much about him."

"He was always willing to do and to give more than his share, in his work, school, play or anything."

"There isn't a question in my mind but that he would have made one of the best citizens Dardanelle ever produced."

Charles was the first soldier from that tiny community to die in the war. He wouldn't be the last.

They brought him home and laid him to rest just after Christmas 1944 in the cemetery where my grandparents and mother's two sisters and their husbands are buried.

Apparently, Mom moved on. During college, she met a young soldier and married him right after the war. They went to live near his home in Kansas.

When Mom went home, though, we always visited the family plot and the McClure plot.

I never quite understood why before now.

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@nwkansan.com

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We should defend those who defend us

In the land of the free and the home of the brave, it is easy to take for granted our abilities to exercise our God-given liberties.

Freedoms of speech, religion and assembly as well as our constitutionally-enshrined rights to vote and to air our grievances with government officials are just a few of the liberties many across the world are denied. Our freedoms and liberties represent the value and importance we place on the individual. But, despite our age of individualism, we still have men and women who answer the call to serve others.

The exercise of our liberties would not be possible if not for the willingness of our veterans and current service members to put themselves in harm's way in order to defend us. It is incumbent upon each of us to make sure that even as we sometimes take for granted our abilities to exercise our God-given liberties, we never take for granted the men and women who have preserved them.

This week, I encourage every Kansan to thank at least one of the quarter million veter-



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

• Capitol Notes

ans who call the Sunflower State their home. Our former and current service members need to know that they have the appreciation, support, and prayers of the people they fought and fight to protect.

As a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, this week I will have the distinct privilege of taking part in a number of activities to thank our veterans, but as I do so, I want to make sure that our veterans are receiving the services and care that have been promised to them.

Too many of our men and women in uniform come home to find themselves in less-than-ideal situations. The stories we have

heard before the committee have left me very concerned for the safety of our veterans, especially in medical facilities. Earlier this fall, testimony revealed that for years poor leadership at the Miami, Fla., Veterans' Medical Center has led to serious concerns about patient safety and veteran deaths. We heard one story about how poor cleaning procedures of endoscopes could have exposed 2,000 of the men and women who have served our country to blood-transmitted diseases.

Veterans already put their lives on the line in international conflicts; they should not be forced to do so again when they go in for routine medical procedures.

Our men and women in uniform have served as the defenders of our abilities to exercise our freedoms and liberties. Let's make sure we defend them when they are home, never taking for granted what they have done for us.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp of Fowler represents the First District of Kansas. He serves on the Veterans' Affairs, Budget and Agriculture Committees.

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