



Other Viewpoints

Kansas needs fund for the down times

An interesting proposal for the Kansas Legislature to consider this session was unveiled this week. Interesting not only because it has bipartisan support, but also because it would require the state to create a rainy day fund.

Kansas is one of only three states in the nation without such a budget stabilization plan. Rainy day funds help diminish the effects of extreme fluctuations in the economy, as the emergency fund builds up during bullish times and is tapped into when bear markets are growling.

A group of 28 state senators, including Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, R-Grinnell, and Sen. Allen Schmidt, D-Hays, has signed on as co-sponsors of the legislation. If made into law, legislators would be required to set aside 0.25 percent of annual state revenue into a reserve account. The fund only could be dipped into with a super-majority vote of both houses. Additionally, once the rainy day fund exceeds 5 percent of the state’s budget, excess dollars could be used to pay for government programs.

“We need a budget stabilization fund so that our state is equipped to deal with the impact of another national recession without jeopardizing critical services, like our schools, law enforcement and our highway system,” said Senate Vice President John Vratil in a press release.

Given the events of the past three years, we would have to agree. Far too often, lagging revenues have resulted in Topeka delaying payments to schools and the governor has enacted budget cuts after the Legislature has ended the session. A rainy day fund could eliminate both unpredictability of the business cycle and the seemingly arbitrary decreases demanded by the governor.

What we don’t like about the plan is changing the Kansas Constitution to make it happen. While such amendments ensure general acceptance by requiring two-thirds of both the House and Senate and the majority of voters on a statewide ballot, we believe the Constitution should remain as uncluttered as possible. The document already was amended to force Topeka to fashion a balanced budget every year, which both the legislative and executive branches comply with.

But adopting a new fiscal policy, commonsense as it is, shouldn’t require tinkering around with Kansas’ most important document.

We would encourage state leaders to adopt the simple measure without a constitutional amendment.

– The Hays Daily News, via the Associated Press

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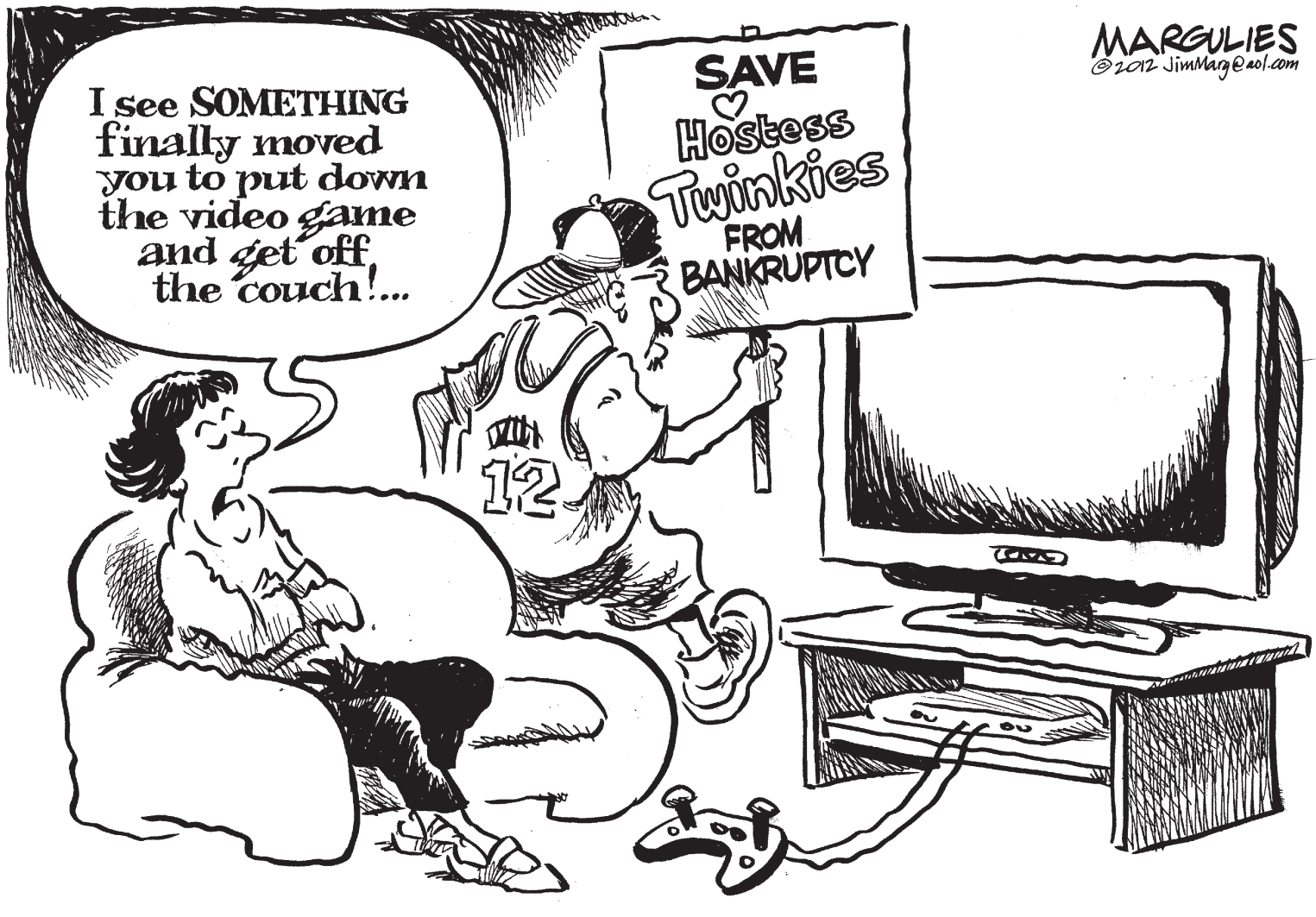
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Winter potluck holds treasures

The Great American Potluck – sounds like a new reality show doesn’t it? Winter is the perfect season for it, too.

Scoring would be a problem, though. There are really two kinds of food served at a potluck – tried and true recipes everyone raves about is the first. The second is that new recipe that might be wonderful, might be awful, and certainly is not something you want to have lots of leftovers of for the next week.

A new face or two was visible at our church pot luck yesterday.

An old friend also showed up for that dinner – a recipe. Not having the recipe I can only guess, of course, but it looked an awful lot like the Swedish meatballs my mother used to make now and then way back when she was still a full-time mom.

My kids never got to eat them nearly as often. Two kinds of meat, sour cream (which I either don’t have or have had too long), and lots of finicky measuring and mixing and cooking first in a skillet and then in the oven, make this a recipe to bypass most of the time; it’s time-consuming and not the healthiest combination.

Of course pizza isn’t particularly healthy either, especially with extra cheese, but at least it’s fast.

Potlucks are a great tradition, offering both



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

old favorites and an opportunity to come up with some new favorites as well. Here at the paper, we have discovered they can be an unexpected way to pass on a fine old tradition.

Seems we have a generation of young adults who have largely grown up on fast food, or at least on Mom’s cooking. I suspect they had a generation of parents who had neither the time or energy to drag kids into the kitchen and force them to peel potatoes or chop carrots.

When these young people get out on their own, though, they start thinking about learning to do more in the kitchen than turn on a microwave. (OK, before all you 20-somethings start yelling at me, this is a broad generalization in no way meant to denigrate either your culinary ability or your dietary choices. It’s just a recognition of the fact that few college students have the skills to cook five-course gourmet meals, and fewer still go out of their way to cook them.)

Kansas began in hard times

This Jan. 29, our state will be 151 years old. Kansas was admitted to the Union two and a half months before the beginning of the Civil War – one of our nation’s most terrible times.

It’s important to recall our heritage, our roots and a bit of our state’s history, especially in celebration of another Kansas birthday.

The war between the northern and southern states officially began on April 12, 1861, after the shelling of Fort Sumter. The Kansas territory had been at war for years before it was officially admitted on Jan. 29, 1861, one year after Abraham Lincoln was elected president.

As a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, the Missouri Compromise was overturned. That meant Kansas did not have to enter the Union as a slave state or a free state. The people of the Kansas territory were free to answer the slavery question on their own. This was called, “self-determination,” and once a state, Kansas could decide its own destiny.

This was a period of bloody battles and fighting as both proslavery forces and abolitionists flocked into the Kansas territory. Both sides were determined to tip the balance of Congress in their favor. The term, “Bleeding Kansas,” aptly described the tension and bloodshed of that period.

Sixty-six years later, during a much better period in our state’s history, state legislators adopted our flag. This flag depicts a history of



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

peaceful coexistence between the natives of the land and the newly arrived settlers.

Like so many other states, the flag is the state seal set on a field of dark blue. In the foreground of the seal is a farmer plowing his field. A little further up is a wagon train with oxen-drawn schooners headed westward. Beyond these pioneers are Native Americans hunting bison.

The pioneers in the Kansas flag represent Manifest Destiny. This was the prevailing attitude of the United States government starting in the 1840s. The farmer and his field represent Kansas’ rich agricultural heritage. The seal also includes a steamboat churning its way down the Kansas River and was meant to represent commerce. Today, agriculture, manufacturing and service industries play an integral part of the Kansas economy.

Above the plains in the state seal are rolling hills and above them, 34 stars representing Kansas’s entry into the United States’ expand-

ing family of states. Above the stars is the state motto, Ad Astra per Aspera, Latin for “To the Stars Through Difficulties.” This is a tribute to the original settlers who dreamed so grandly when they left their homes and moved westward.

Just above the seal is the state crest, a sunflower above a bar of blue and gold. The sunflower is the state flower, and the blue and gold represent the Louisiana Purchase, which made the lands of Kansas a part of the United States. Beneath the state seal is the word Kansas in large, yellow block letters.

Kansas has several nicknames including the Sunflower State, Jayhawk State and the Wheat State. Our state is located in the Heartland, in fact Lebanon is the town situated closest to the geographical center of the continental United States.

Kansas agriculture is proud to be part of this rich rural heritage of putting food on people’s plates and helping feed the world. This state’s farmers and ranchers wish our Wheat State a happy birthday Jan. 29.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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