



Free Press
Viewpoint

Learn from history:
don't spend it all

State Rep. Ward Cassidy struck a cord Saturday when he told a “town-hall” meeting crowd that the big issue at the Legislature this session may well be defending the state’s growing income stream and preserving the 7.5 percent ending balance required by law.

While the state’s revenue is recovering after more than three years of recession, he said, and cash is coming in ahead of official projections, nearly every state program and agency has been cut in the last few years.

That means that nearly every program and agency wants more money. Some, like schools and support for the disabled, have huge blocks of backers who depend on them. These groups won’t just ask for money; they’ll demand it.

Most agencies, Mr. Cassidy said, probably need and deserve more, but even with its newfound income stream, the state won’t have enough to satisfy every need. Far from it.

Rep. Cassidy said the ending balance is important, not just because the law requires a cushion against tough times or unexpected need, but because it should help prevent a repeat of the deep cuts the state had to make during the last recession.

If the state had had that kind of reserve, he said, it might not have had to cut so deeply or so broadly as it did. Cuts hit nearly every agency, from education to transportation, and most in between. When big, well-liked programs like roads and schools take cuts, you know things are tough.

But in the years leading up to the recession, Kansas had been spending nearly every penny it brought in. One reason for that was the fact that the Legislature caved in to the state Supreme Court and threw money at education after losing a court case on school finance.

When the recession came along, the state had spent most of the “ending balance,” its reserve or “rainy day fund.” It had no cushion to fall back on.

Deep cuts needed to balance the budget affected everyone, but were especially tough on schools. Now the group Schools for Fair Funding, an alliance of districts formed to sue the state and lobby for more school spending, is in court once again. It claims the cuts violated the terms of the previous decision and the agreement worked out to satisfy the suit.

Never mind that the courts should never have ordered the Legislature to spend more than the state could afford, or that most of us thought spending decisions ought to be left to our elected representatives.

Never mind that the school districts involved were spending state money to sue the state, something most Kansans probably think is wrong. At heart, the issue is a power grab by the courts which the Legislature chose to cave in to rather than to fight.

That battle will have to be waged some day, and the time may come sooner rather than later. Defending that ending balance will be tough indeed. Mr. Cassidy has called this one right.

– Steve Haynes

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

News Editor

colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter

colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor

mballard @ nwkansas.com

Christina Beringer - Society Reporter

colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard

Advertising Representative

kballard @ nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design

khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Kylie Freeman - Office Manager

kfreeman @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support @ nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Gary Meyer, Pressmen

Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear,

Tracy Traxel, Mailing

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



Obama economy worthy of praise

To the Editor:

I’ve just got to respond to the column, “He’s owned it; the Obama economy,” by Rep. Tim Huelskamp. My, oh my! Is no one listening to the insane political agenda of this election cycle?

I happen to agree that President Obama is entitled to and should take some credit for our economy. I’m not sure I agree with the representative’s assessment.

I, personally, see an unbelievable recovery of the stock markets from the 2008 year’s end. I observe a decided improvement in jobs available. They had taken a precipitous drop in the eight years prior.

Statistics indicate an improvement in job numbers. That improvement may not be good enough, but it’s at least an improvement. The farm economy has been quite healthy the last three years.

As regards the relationship of federal spending to gross domestic production? It is far more favorable today than it was during most of the Bush years. A considerable portion of the first year’s deficit spending was funding the “unfunded” programs the Bush administration sent forward in his effort to stem the failing economy.

Just exactly what did Obama do to keep those stimulants from working? The collapse of the housing economy occurred before Obama took office. Deregulation was in high gear prior to Obama’s time. It apparently didn’t stimulate much, did it? Tax reductions for the wealthy



Free Press
Letter Drop

- Our readers sound off

hadn’t created very many jobs.

So far, I’ve not heard Rep. Huelskamp come up with anything that would be different from the policies of the first eight years of this century. We went from surplus to deficits, lost manufacturing jobs, lost high-tech support jobs, failed in establishing a functioning democratic government in Iraq, failed to stop or arrest Al Queda and Osama Bin Laden. We watched Enron go down, we witnessed the Abramoff scandal, we witnessed the beginning collapse of several major banking firms.

Letters to the editor don’t allow enough space to list all the negatives of those eight years. As a matter of fact, just what can you think of that was so great in the Bush years?

Ken Poland, Gem

No ‘right to swim’ owed

To the Editor:

I am responding to Diane Karlin, who is inconvenienced by the unclean college swimming pool, and apparently believes taxpayers

owe her a clean treatment facility for her medical condition.

I do not agree that taxpayers owe Diane or me a swimming pool to treat our respective ills.

Richard Hawkins, Colby

Social workers get kudos

To the Editor:

March 4 through 10 is School Social Work Week.

School social workers are the liaisons for our families to help their students succeed. They address social and psychological issues that can block academic progress through counseling, crisis intervention, prevention programs and utilizing the community’s resources.

School social workers help young people overcome difficulties in their lives and give them a better chance at succeeding in school. They assist their fellow school personnel with addressing environmental and family issues that affect our students to help keep students learning in the classroom.

School social workers are truly the vital link between home, school and the community. Be sure to thank your school social worker for all they do for the students, teachers and community.

Happy School Social Work Week.

Laura Foster, president

Kansas School Social Work Association
Wichita

Religious liberty essential to our nation

Our nation has a long legacy of defending an individual’s religious freedoms.

James Madison, the father of our nation’s constitution and the author of the Bill of Rights, once wrote that “conscience is the most sacred of all property.” Since our nation’s earliest days, the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently affirmed our First Amendment right to exercise our religious beliefs freely. But today, decisions by the Obama administration are threatening Americans’ religious liberty.

This past summer, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services exercised its authority under the health care reform law to require that most employee-provided health insurance plans cover contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs. This new mandate contains a “religious employer” exemption, but it is so narrow that many religiously-affiliated hospitals, educational institutions and charities do not meet the requirements.

After releasing this rule, the department heard opposition from hundreds of thousands of Americans. However, despite the concerns of so many, Health and Human Services announced last month it would not change the mandate for nonprofit religious employers, but only extend to next year the deadline for compliance.

Extending the deadline does not change what is at stake. Faith-based groups who object to this requirement on moral grounds are being forced to choose between offering services that violate their religious beliefs or eliminating employees’ health coverage.

If faith-based groups stop offering health coverage to avoid violating their faith, many Americans will lose their current health care simply because that coverage does not fall



U.S. Senator
Jerry Moran

- Moran’s Memo

within the administration’s preferred policy parameters. Targeting religious beliefs in this manner erodes the principle of religious liberty upon which our country was founded.

Last October, I joined Senate colleagues in requesting that Health and Human Services Secretary Sebelius reconsider this regulation, respecting religious liberty. Additionally, in September I sponsored S. 1467, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act, legislation that would protect health care providers and employers from being forced to pay for products and services that violate their ethical values.

Our federal government should not force religious groups to betray their fundamental beliefs. Current conscience protections permit some religious groups to abstain from participating in war or working on religious holy days, and others to be exempt from the health care law’s individual mandate to purchase a certain level of health insurance as defined by the federal government.

In the recently decided case Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church v. EEOC, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled the government cannot interfere with “the internal governance of the church” in hiring decisions. Similarly, religious groups should not be forced to offer insurance plans to their employees that violate their fundamental beliefs.

The threat to religious liberty caused by this unprecedented overreach by the federal government should be of concern for all Americans – whether or not they ascribe to a particular faith. The new mandate could force religiously-affiliated organizations to close or drastically curtail services to those in need.

These organizations are vital in serving communities in Kansas and across our country. If this mandate stands, many nonprofit hospitals, soup kitchens, family shelters and schools in Kansas will be forced to choose between violating the law or going against their religious beliefs. These organizations will have to either pay for services they consider immoral, face an ongoing series of fines for not complying, or limit the services they provide. Individuals of all ages, beliefs and backgrounds who depend on these institutions will have to seek care elsewhere.

What is most concerning is this: if the government can compel an individual or group to violate one’s “sacred” conscience, then there is no limit to government power. All of our cherished constitutional rights would be subject to the whims of the federal government and those in power.

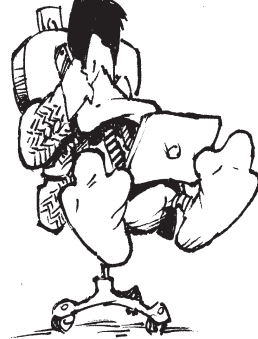
One group’s beliefs are being trampled today; another’s might be tomorrow. Our nation’s constitutional rights and freedoms are essential to who we are as Americans, and our commitment to these precious rights must be protected at every turn.

Jerry Moran of Hays is the junior U.S. senator from Kansas. His committee appointments include Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Veterans Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Committee on Aging.

Mallard
Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

PRESS “ONE”
FOR OPTIONS THAT
HAVE NOTHING TO DO
WITH YOUR PROBLEM
IN ENGLISH....



“PRESS “TWO”
FOR OPTIONS THAT
HAVE NOTHING TO DO
WITH YOUR PROBLEM
IN SPANISH....