

## Other Viewpoints

# Budget cutbacks carry an ugly side

Gov. Sam Brownback deserves a lot of credit for turning a \$500 million budget deficit into a surplus. But it's hard to hear him take that credit, as he did on cable TV and national radio, without also acknowledging the ugly side effects of his fiscal cure.

The Republican talked basketball and state governance with the "Morning Joe" panel on MSNBC and former Education Secretary Bill Bennett on radio, clearly relishing the opportunities to tout his historic cut in state income taxes to a national audience.

"You need to move here, Bill. The taxes are really good," Brownback told Bennett.

He also said: "What we did was protect essential services, but we really cut back on a lot of other things and eliminated a lot of things. So you just focus more on what government should do and cut out the things that it shouldn't do." On MSNBC, he talked of finding "nickels and dimes in a lot of different places."

Sounds so simple. And harmless.

Tell that to Sedgwick County. It's considering closing the Judge Riddell Boys Ranch, a 51-year-old model juvenile-justice program, because the state has provided "insufficient funds, as they have in other programs, to cover our costs," as County Manager William Buchanan put it last week.

Check in with the more than 7,000 disabled Kansans whose names are on waiting lists for home- or community-based services, some for up to three years. That situation has drawn scrutiny from the U.S. Justice Department.

And superintendents around the state could offer an earful about the closed schools, scrapped programs and eliminated jobs stemming from state funding cuts. Last summer Wichita's school district had to pass a budget that cut \$28 million by shedding more than 200 jobs and some valued programs. Last month it closed five schools - the only way the board could manage to afford to open the new schools promised by a 2008 bond issue.

During this month's trial in Topeka in the lawsuit brought against the state by Wichita and 53 other districts, the three-judge panel has heard testimony about the consequences of state funding cuts, including larger class sizes and higher fees in Dodge City. According to Kansas Education Policy Report, teachers in the Wichita district testified about classroom budgets so tight that they hunt for discarded pencils in the hallways, buy old sneakers at garage sales for gym class and purchase supplies themselves.

Brad Neuenswander, deputy commissioner for learning services for the Kansas State Department of Education, testified last week that budget cuts have forced many districts to draw down their reserves, and that a handful of districts are on the brink of being unable to pay bills and make payroll.

The \$40 million in increased state funding for schools statewide for fiscal 2013 will help, of course. But it won't mean much if districts' fears are realized and the massive tax cuts translate into massive school funding cuts in coming years.

Given the fiscal state of the state when he took office last year, Brownback has bragging rights about the prospects of ending the fiscal year June 30 with \$600 million in the bank. But that tidy sum came at a price for many Kansans, and the tax cuts are sure to drive up that price.

- The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press

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SO YOU'LL HELP US?



# Anti-war camp ignores Afghan women

Wars rarely render just results for everyone.

Even when war is waged for humanitarian reasons, innocent people are killed or forced to suffer through no fault of their own. This sobering realization should humble us all; no matter what our stance is on a certain war.

This is why I've been disappointed by the rhetoric used by some people in the anti-war camp in regards to the ongoing war in Afghanistan. Many antiwar types have called for the U.S. to withdraw from this war-ravaged country without discussing the possible consequences this would have for women in Afghanistan.

Not surprisingly, many home-grown women's rights groups in Afghanistan have been alarmed by the willingness of their government to seek compromise with the Taliban. The inclusion of Taliban members into Hamid Karzai's government would be a terrible setback for the fledgling women's rights movement in Afghanistan if the government doesn't pass strong laws guaranteeing basic rights for women along with adequate enforcement mechanisms capable of defending these laws. Given the Afghan government's history, this is unlikely to happen without pressure from the U.S. and other members of the international community.

But instead of encouraging the Obama administration to pressure the Karzai government to address women's rights issues, many on the left have chosen to tiptoe around this issue, or piously frame it in way that suits their self-interest and conforms to their world view. Here is a speech by the left-wing group Code



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

Pink at an anti-war rally in Chicago during a National Atlantic Treaty Organization conference that exemplifies this approach:

"The leaders of the male summit are meeting now and one of the justifications they have for the war on Afghanistan is that they are helping women ... (crowd boos) ... So we are here to tell leaders of the summit what women really want: Clean water, clean air, clean energy, reproductive rights, art and culture valued more than war. Women want justice and peace!"

Much as conservatives often frame U.S. conflicts as a battle between Superman (the U.S.) and Lex Luthor (whomever we're fighting against), this speech is self-absorbed and riddled with oversimplifications. As Meredith Tax, whose article first alerted me to the Code Pink speech, astutely asks in an article for *Dis-sent*, a left-center magazine: "Is this supposed to be what the women of Afghanistan really want - or are we just talking about ourselves here."

The answer is pretty obvious to anyone not wearing rose-colored glasses. Now don't misunderstand me. I do think the U.S. should withdraw from Afghanistan in the next several months, even if the Taliban hasn't been sound-

ly defeated. Furthermore, the U.S. military hurt its own cause in regards to winning the hearts and minds of women in Afghanistan by making a huge investment in the Afghan Local Police, which according to Human Rights Watch, is full of rapists and thugs who are not held accountable for their crimes:

"The report, while acknowledging that ALP units had contributed recently to improved security in some areas, documented serious abuses by ALP and other U.S.-backed forces in several provinces, including looting, illegal detention, beatings, killings, sexual assault and extortion."

Nonetheless people like me, who favor an eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan even if the Taliban threat hasn't been neutralized, should have the courage to admit that this act could have horrendous consequences for women. To not recognize this is an act of sheer cowardice.

Furthermore, those of us who oppose the war should not let our opposition to the conflict blind us to the plight of Afghan women. Instead, we should pressure the Obama administration to make women's rights a high priority every time it sits down with the Afghan government.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at [www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision](http://www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision).

# Special interests too narrow for election

What should our governor and Legislature in Kansas be focusing on? Election time gives us a chance to find responsible public servants that are interested in programs and policies that benefit all citizens and not just a few special interest groups.

The sitting Legislature was unable to even come to grips with redistricting. How do we expect them to handle the complex needs of both the liberals and conservatives or the Christians and the non-Christians.

Ideology just doesn't cut it. Partisan and religious loyalties prevent pragmatic observation of reality and of what is needed to keep society on an even keel that allows freedom for individuals to pursue their own ideas of spiritual relationships and social responsibilities.

- Getting Kansans back to work.
- Creating a tax system that works for Kansas families.
- Providing a quality education to all Kansas students.
- Protecting our environment.
- Public health programs that are accessible to all.

None of these endeavors are dependent upon degrees of liberal or conservative bias, nor are they met by any narrow theological or doctrinal mandates of religion. The general popula-



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

tion is made up of individuals ranging all the way from free thinking, anything-goes liberals to "my way or the highway" conservatives.

Our religious community is made up of many different faiths and denominational loyalties. How to pray, when to pray, what to pray for, degree ranking of sins, who is the ultimate spokesman for God and a host of other minor differences makes it impossible to legislate on the basis of religious dogma.

Neither popular election nor carefully vetted appointment will guarantee the perfection of our public servants. Man is not perfect. But man can manage to make things work with a little cooperation and compromise.

At any given time, we are only half a generation, or a decade, away from either monarchy or anarchy. Does that convince you that elections are important? Does that convince you that radicals on either side of the issues

are dangerous? Neither religious or partisan monarchy nor survival-of-the-fittest anarchy is where we need to be going.

I have declared myself to be a firm (radical even) believer in separation of church and state. The state is responsible for all of society, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age or financial status. The church is responsible for the spiritual needs of their own constituents. How the church sees the relationship between man and God and man and man will prepare their followers to influence public policies that allow the state to protect the freedom of all, regardless of their religious beliefs.

The state should not be meddling in religious canon and the church should not be meddling in partisan politics or secular law. Secular laws are to regulate man's relationship with man, not man's relationship with his God or any other concept of a higher being. Church law should be primarily directed at man's relationship to God, and that relationship will determine how man deals with man.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired 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](mailto:rwinc@cheerful.com).

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ted to the Want Ad desk. Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

