



## Other Viewpoints

# Lawmakers target property tax boosts

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback and fellow Republicans in the Legislature finally are setting their sights on taxes that really frustrate Kansans – property taxes. And they are doing so by trying to control a persistent problem – local property taxes that automatically rise because market-based property valuations escalate.

The Republican leaders last Friday delivered a proposed “property tax transparency” law that would require local governments either to reduce their property tax levies proportionate to property value increases or to vote publicly that they are taking advantage of the higher values and collecting the additional tax revenue.

For many years, Kansans have complained about rising property taxes, leading lawmakers at times to propose some kind of a cap in property values. But Kansas is wise to have a market-based appraisal system, because artificial caps cause arbitrary disparities in home property values. Otherwise, a property that hadn’t changed hands in many years would be valued out of line from properties with recent sales.

The problem has been not with property values but with local governments that take advantage of tax escalation from inflation. Too many county commissions and city councils make it their goal to maintain the mill levy so they can say they didn’t raise taxes. But a stable mill levy isn’t the same as level taxes, not when property values are rising.

To truly maintain property taxes, the mill levy should be reduced relative to the rising property values.

The Republican plan puts a flexible cap on property taxes and exempts new construction.

It’s a good approach – though it only works if taxpayers show up to dissent when local governments vote to waive the cap and take the tax windfall from higher property values.

It is good to see Brownback turn his attention to a tax that matters more to Kansans than income and corporate taxes. And given the likelihood that Brownback’s income tax cuts will put pressure on property taxes in the years to come, the property tax lid plan comes at a good time.

– The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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- 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
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"THIS JUST IN: ANOTHER DISASTER WARNING."

# Narrow choice in foreign policy debate

The third presidential debate between President Barack Obama and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney highlighted the frightening similarities between the two candidates on foreign policy issues.



Andy Heintz

### • Wildcat Ramblings

Although, probably to the benefit of my mental health, I wasn't able to watch the entire debate, the parts I did catch left me gloomy.

Obama and Romney seemed to be vying for the label of “Most Hawkish Candidate.” So, instead of a debate that offered Americans two competing visions of what our country's role in the world should be, the public got two candidates trying to out-macho each other.

Obama and Romney, much like their vice presidential underlings, emphasized how in tune they were with the right wing Netanyahu government. Romney, however, despite the ample support Obama has given Israel in the form of military aid, didn't think the president had displayed the proper amount of fealty to Israel. Obama took pains to correctly point out the falseness of this characterization.

Perhaps I was busy doing something else, but I didn't hear either candidate criticize the Netanyahu government for its human rights abuses – which have been documented by Amnesty International and the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem – against Palestinians. The bipartisan silence over this important topic was disappointing to see. Of course, the U.S. is right to support Israel's right to self-defense against terrorist attacks conducted by Hamas, but our elected officials are guilty of cowardice when they ignore the suffering Israel's policies

have caused Palestinians.

Both candidates also took similar stances on Iran. Romney and Obama both support crippling sanctions – which are aimed at thwarting Iran from allegedly trying to build a nuclear weapon. Yet neither candidate discussed the harm this policy is causing ordinary Iranians or the criticism it has received from the pro-democracy movement in that country.

Sanctions should be aimed at members of the Iranian regime, not the population. While it's probably true that some sanctions on regime members are bound also to negatively affect the population, sweeping sanctions that deprive ordinary Iranians of food and medicine are morally lamentable and strategically wrongheaded. The pro-democracy movement in that country will have a much harder time facilitating change from within if they are being forced to use all their energy just to survive.

Another disturbing policy that both candidates championed was the use of drone strikes, despite the unpopularity of these strikes – which target terrorism suspects in places like Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan – not only in

Muslim majority countries, but also, according to an international polling survey by the Pew Research Center, in countries like Japan, Brazil, Spain, Germany, France, Mexico and Italy.

Drone attacks that are employed in areas where children and other civilians either are or might be present – as opposed to when intelligence is, to the greatest extent possible, confident that there are just terrorists in the vicinity of the proposed strike – should be considered war crimes. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports that from June 2004 through September this year, available data indicate drone strikes have killed 2,593 to 3,378 people in Pakistan, of whom 474 to 881 were civilians, including 176 children.

The constrained nature of the third presidential debate further illuminates why alternative voices, perhaps outside the two-party system, need to be included in mainstream discourse. I don't think either candidate is an evil person – heck, I have voted for Obama twice – but their foreign policy stances represent a long-standing bipartisan consensus that desperately needs to be challenged by people with dissenting views. If this doesn't happen, the new boss will continue to be the same as the old boss.

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).

# Cold football game takes nylons?

My daughter complained about her nylons twisting.

“I feel sorry for you because you have to wear those things,” I said.

She rolled her eyes. “Dad, you don't know the half of it.”

I smiled. I remembered back to the final high school football game of the regular season. As we ended practice, Coach called us together for a team meeting.

“Men, we are in for a tough game tomorrow. Adding to the challenge, the weather report predicts snow. I want you to dress warm. You will want to wear a pair of your mother's nylons. Just make sure it is one of her older pairs and not a new one. We don't need any mothers mad at us again.”

I laughed, thinking he was teasing us about wearing nylons, but no one else even smiled. When coach finished, we went to the locker room. I asked some of the other guys if Coach was serious about the nylons.

Lenny was first to reply. “Of course he was. Nylons help keep the moisture away from your skin so you don't freeze as much when all of your football gear gets wet. And he was serious about asking your mother for an older pair, too. Last time I took a pair of my mom's new ones, and Coach got an earful.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because they were too baggy and torn for her to wear after that.”

I watched the others for signs that Lenny was trying to pull a fast one on me, but no one seemed the least bit interested in our conversation.

I still didn't trust him. I could remember Lenny talking Sam into wearing a supporter

## Other Opinions

### • Daris Howard Life's Outtakes

over his head for a nose warmer at the previous year's first track meet, claiming it would enhance his performance. I was sure he was taking advantage of my inexperience. However, I decided I would bring a pair and watch to see what everyone else did.

I considered every way I could think of to ask my mom for a pair without sounding stupid. I considered going without, but the thought of being soaked by wet clothes didn't thrill me. Finally, I just came out and asked her if she had an old pair of nylons that I could have.

“What do you need them for?” she asked.

“Oh, just something at school,” I replied.

She found an old pair that had a run in them. I told her I was sure it would work, though I really had no idea what I was doing.

Once at school I made sure to keep them hidden. I decided to wait to pull them out until I made sure everyone else was really wearing some, too.

It finally came time to get ready for the game. I watched as Lenny whipped out a pair of nylons and started to wriggle his way into them. Lenny's mom was small and slender. Lenny was about the size of a small, fat truck. Seeing the nylons stretch around him helped me see why his mom would have been mad when he used her new pair.

As others began putting some on, I took mine out of my locker, and self consciously started the process. The hair on my legs rolled and pinched as I tugged and pulled, and when they were finally in place, they made my legs itch. It made me grateful I wasn't a girl having to wear them all of the time.

When Lenny turned to look at me, he said exactly what I was thinking about him. “Howard, you look like an absolute idiot.”

“After all of this we better win this game,” I grumbled back.

My daughter's words brought me back to present. “Dad, you men should have to wear some just so you know what it's like.

I smiled. “Yeah, I guess we should.”

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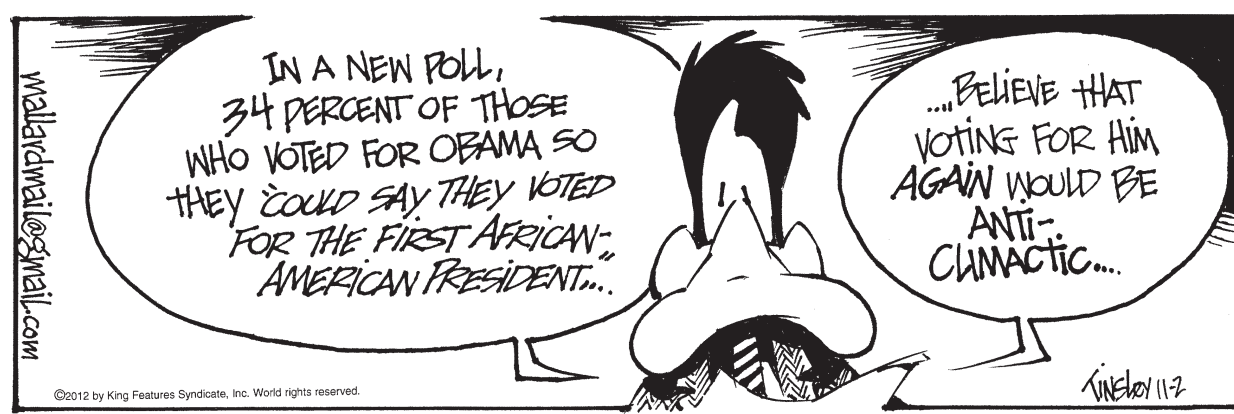
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