

Free Press Viewpoint

Now it's time to fix tax system

When the dust clears from Tuesday's election, it'll be time for Kansas government to get back to work.

A couple of things must be done next spring, before our citizen-legislators go home to their jobs and farms and businesses.

One is to fix the income tax system, which the last Legislature left badly broken. It's fashionable to blame Gov. Sam Brownback for this, since he's the one who proposed eliminating or slashing the state's income tax.

In truth, however, what passed wasn't the governor's program at all. It included most of the cuts he wanted, it's true, but none of the balancing changes, including closing many popular "loopholes," or tax breaks.

The result was a mishmash of cuts without balancing revenue "enhancements" that would have made the changes more or less "revenue neutral," as the governor had proposed.

Instead, the liberal-dominated Senate passed drastic cuts on the premise that the conservative-controlled House would negotiate later. Instead, the House slam-dunked them to the governor, who signed them. Senate leaders said they'd been double-crossed, but House leaders claim they'd made no promises.

Afterward, the nonpartisan Legislative Research Council estimated they could leave the state \$2.5 billion short over the next 10 years, the source of many statements about "the governor's tax cuts." So far, however, the biggest cuts to schools and other programs have come under former Democratic governor, Mark Parkinson, and not on Mr. Brownback's watch.

Of course, that \$2.5 billion estimate assumes the cuts won't have the projected impact of boosting the state's economy, as the governor claims. It's hard to blame him for a rogue tax plan shoved through the Legislature by opposing forces in the Senate. He did sign it, however, and for that, he'll have to bear part of the burden.

None of the supposed dire consequences need happen, however, if men and women of good will take their seats in the new Legislature two months from now. The tax plan can and should be fixed both to make it closer to what the governor proposed to stimulate the economy, and to avoid any future shortfall. Many legislative leaders agree.

And now that the battle for control of both houses is over, or nearly so, maybe everyone can get busy and make the tax code more sensible. It will take the entire session, the way our Legislature works, to make a decision on this divisive question, but it must be done.

Before anything else, however, the parties will have to caucus and organize for the session. The betting is the conservative Republicans will hang onto control of the House, electing a new speaker, while their compatriots form a new majority in the Senate. Voters still have a say on that, of course, and it's doubtful the governor will be able to summon a majority at will. Kansas Legislators are too independent for that.

But perhaps, with the fight behind us, those who are elected this fall will find ways to work together for the common good of the state, unlike the last session, where partisanship was everything.

Then maybe we won't have a repeat of the tax mess this time. — Steve Haynes



Enormous squash means 'grate' effort

I love to cook, and when I get the chance, I cook up a storm.

I especially love to bake, but with just two of us in the house and both of us on kind of a permanent diet, I don't get much opportunity.

Still, when Steve brought home eight enormous yellow squash and zucchinis this summer, I accepted the challenge.

I packed the squash up and took it to Colorado, where I have (or at least I take) more time to enjoy working in my kitchen.

While I normally leave the peel on when fixing a stir fry or sauté with my small squash, these babies had skin as thick as paint on a 100-year-old house. They had to be peeled. They also had to be seeded. But after peeling, halving, seeding and chopping them into reasonable size pieces, I still had a lot of squash.

I grabbed a Salad Shooter. You remember Salad Shooters. They were all the rage about 20 years ago. You just put your carrots, cucumbers, radishes or whatever in the tube, push the on button and point the gun-like appliance at your salad and neat slices or strips of vegetable would cover your lettuce.

I've never tried that, but this little gizmo is great for grating carrots, onions and celery for spaghetti sauce. It's also good for grating zuc-



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

chini and yellow squash that has been cut up into strips that will fit into its little chute.

Before long, I had a bowl full of shredded zucchini. Six squash later (I gave one to a neighbor), I had 10 bags of squash all measured out in two-cup increments.

This week, I grabbed two of those bags out of the freezer, let them thaw on the counter and prepared to make zucchini bread for friends. I was also going to make a low-sugar loaf for Steve.

I'm not sure what I did wrong, since I've made this recipe dozens of times without mishap. I think I mismeasured the flour in the first batch. When I opened the oven door, the two loaves had fallen. Each one had a crater in the middle.

I had all the ingredients for the low-sugar variety measured out, so I went ahead and made

the next two loaves with great misgivings and an additional two tablespoons of flour. They came out great.

Now, I had a dilemma. I ended up taking one of each loaf to friends we were going to dinner with. Steve and I ate the second low-sugar loaf, but I still had one rather mishapened loaf left. It was cooked through, but it looked weird. I finally cut it into squares and took it to a church social. Everyone thought it was great.

I think I've given the recipe in this column before, so I won't repeat it. However, if anyone wants to try it, e-mail me at c.haynes@nwkanasas.com and I'll send it to you. The amount of flour you put in is up to you.

The low-sugar version is made by substituting Splenda-sugar blend for half the sugar and adding a bit more flour to make up for the lack of bulk, since sugar blend only takes up half as much space as real sugar.

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@nwkanasas.com

Startup Act 2.0 should be priority now

In Washington, conventional wisdom says nothing gets done during an election year — and thus far Congress and the president have proven that correct. With more than 23 million Americans unemployed, elected officials have been more concerned with keeping their own jobs than with getting Americans back to work.

But, in the waning days of a campaign season ripe with partisan division, there is a glimmer of hope. During the second presidential debate at Hofstra University, Gov. Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama found common ground — agreeing that highly skilled, entrepreneurial immigrants create jobs for Americans.

"We should give visas to people ... who graduate with skills that we need. People around the world with accredited degrees in science and math, [should] get a green card stapled to their diploma," Gov. Romney said.

"They provide us innovation, and they start companies like Intel and Google, and we want to encourage that," President Obama added.

Perhaps the candidates agree because three-quarters of Americans already support allowing STEM graduates (science, technology, engineering, math) with master's or doctorate degrees to stay in the United States, where they can start businesses and employ Americans. Voters understand that entrepreneurs — both American and foreign-born — and the businesses they build are responsible for creating nearly every net new job in the United States since 1980. But for all the agreement, Washington has been unable to pass legislation that welcomes talent from abroad and helps the entrepreneurs who create an average of 3 million jobs a year.

With two months left in the legislative calendar, the lame-duck session this winter offers our last chance to keep 2012 from being another missed opportunity. Once the election is behind us, the President-elect should work with Republicans and Democrats to do what wasn't done in the JOBS Act. Passing legisla-



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

tion to jumpstart the economy and create jobs through a dose of entrepreneurship, innovation and free markets cannot wait until after Inauguration Day.

The good news is the solution has already been introduced and is ready for a vote tomorrow. It's called Startup Act 2.0.

This is the strongest, most comprehensive jobs bill on the table, and it's the only approach to high-skilled immigration reform with real bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. By contrast, the STEM Jobs Act had only one Democratic co-sponsor when it was brought up for a failed vote in the House.

Startup Act 2.0 provides new opportunities for highly educated and entrepreneurial immigrants to stay in the United States, where their talent can fuel economic growth and create jobs. By making new visas available for foreign students who graduate with an advanced degree in one of these fields from an American university, the bill will provide a much-needed way for fast-growing startups and businesses in America to get the talent they need to continue to grow and create jobs.

It also creates an Entrepreneur's Visa, something other countries have already created and immigration experts say is key to attracting foreign talent. This new visa would allow foreign-born entrepreneurs already legally in the United States to stay here if they are able to raise \$100,000 in capital to start a business and hire at least two American workers.

Recognizing that job-creating startups need more help than just access to talent, the bill also addresses government regulation, makes common sense changes to the tax code that

will help facilitate investment in startups and accelerates the commercialization of university research. A comprehensive approach focused on unleashing the entrepreneurial power of individuals will provide our economy with the jumpstart it needs.

Other countries recognize the importance of entrepreneurs to their nation's economy, and while America's elected officials have been busy campaigning, these nations are aggressively attracting and supporting the highly-skilled individuals needed to generate more companies and create jobs. Since the beginning of the current Congress in January 2011, at least seven countries have adopted new laws to attract and better support entrepreneurs from around the world — and the United States is falling further behind.

We've heard excuse after excuse as to why nothing can get done until after the election, but Election Day will soon be behind us and not acting should not be an option. This bill is a rare opportunity for bipartisan agreement during the lame duck session. It is the only proposal that contains jobs and high-skilled immigration provisions supported by both Gov. Romney and President Obama. For the sake of the American economy, the man elected on Tuesday should turn talk into action and support the passage of Startup Act 2.0.

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. To sign up for his weekly newsletter, go to moran.senate.gov.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

