



Free Press  
Viewpoint

Lesson to learn:  
live within income

Call it sustainable government.  
That’s what this country, heck, what all the “developed” nations, including most of Europe, need to learn.  
Just as we need to learn to live within our energy means, the world needs to learn to live within its income, trimming government spending and “entitlement” programs to fit revenue and sustainable growth.  
Most U.S. states could be added to the list, Kansas among them, though Kansas certainly is no California in terms of debt or spending or excess growth.  
Still, our state has seen its budget grow far faster than the economy in recent years, driven by those federal “entitlements” that everyone likes to blame things on.  
After coming into office with the state treasury empty after budget cuts and revenue shortages, Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback claims to have turned things around. Under his leadership, the Legislature produced a balanced budget with a \$700 million ending balance, giving the state a cushion.  
That in itself was an accomplishment.  
However, the governor has more far-reaching ambitions. He wants to make the state more friendly to businesses that could bring in new jobs. A big part of his plan was to lower taxes and eventually, to eliminate the state income tax.

He and the legislature made a big start on that plan this year, eliminating state taxes on most small-business income and slashing tax rates for most Kansans. The Legislature, without a doubt, botched this plan when it got to the Senate. Senators agreed to pass a version that included all the cuts proposed, but none of the revenue-producing changes.  
The result could be a budget gap of up to \$700 million a year over the next few years, state experts predicted, though that gap keeps shrinking as the state’s economy improves.  
The governor’s enemies were quick to claim the tax cuts would lead to cuts in schools and other state programs, and hikes in local property taxes. That hasn’t happened yet, of course, but everyone agrees the tax bill passed is badly flawed.  
The governor launched a campaign this week to re-establish balance in revenue, where he proposed ending some deductions, including on home mortgage interest, to offset tax cuts.  
Another alternative is to keep a “temporary” sales-tax increase passed a few years ago in place of the higher income tax. Many argue this would hurt low-income Kansans, but another argument is that sales tax actually hits the wealthy hardest because they buy more. There are ways to get out of the income tax if you’re rich, but the sales tax applies to everyone.  
There’ll be opposition to any solution. The very conservative will oppose any tax or revenue increase, hoping to slash government more. But the state does need good schools, colleges, roads and services, and it must have prisons, regulations and the like.  
In the end, we need a solid compromise that makes the state run the way people want it to. That’s critical to the governor if he wants to run for higher office again – and many believe he wants to be president. To do that, he needs to make a success of his fiscal program. Budget Director Steve Anderson believes it could be a model for other states, and it might, if it works.  
A solution is important to the rest of us, too. And as in Washington, a reasonable approach that will work is what we need in Topeka. – *Steve Haynes*

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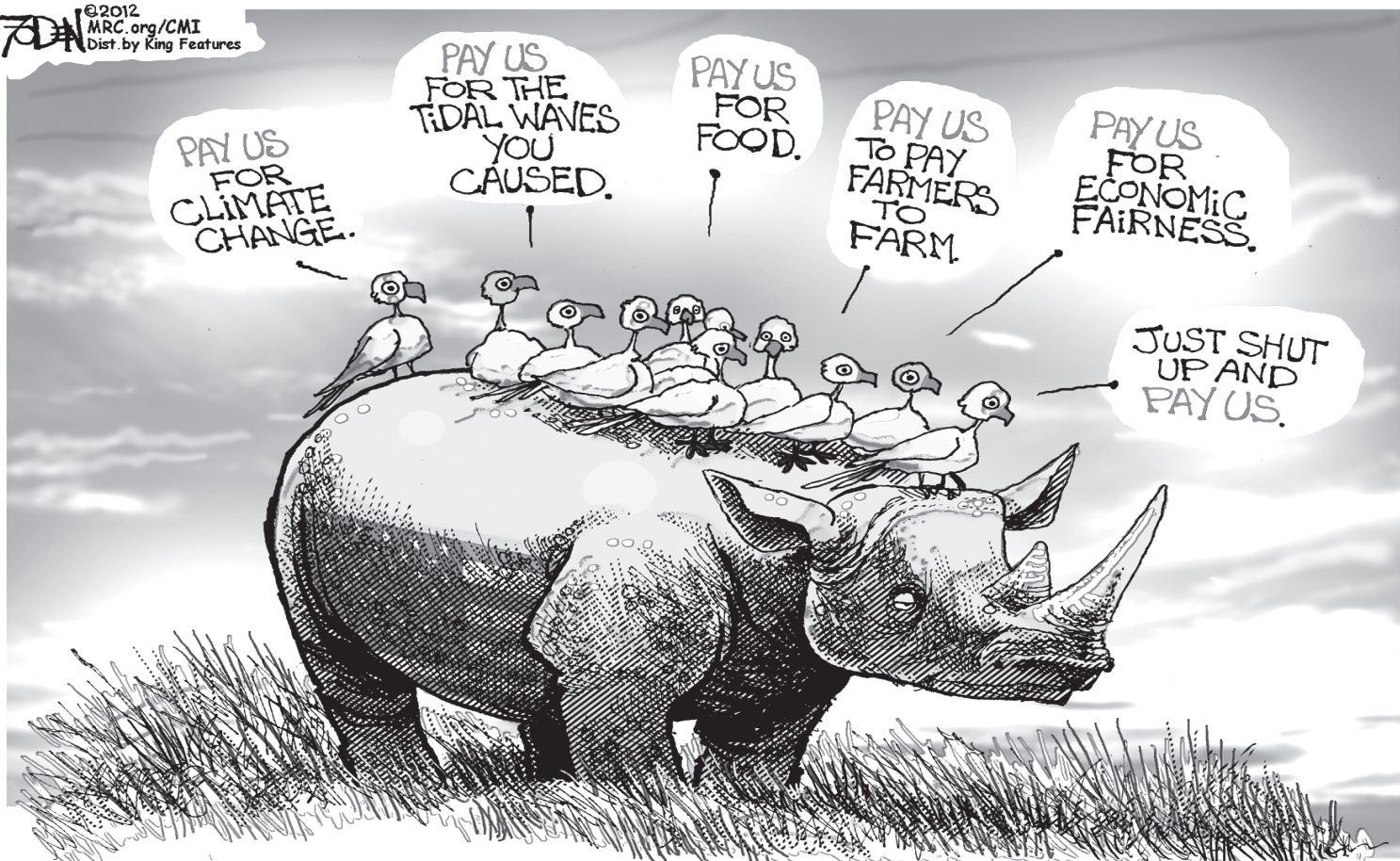
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HOW THE UNITED NATIONS REALLY WORKS.

Beady-eyed alligator greets the season

As I put up the Christmas tree last week, I came face to face with a head with beady little eyes and lots of sharp teeth.

Nope, it wasn’t one of the cats. They were both decorating the furniture.

It was the alligator. The alligator that went missing three years ago.

I guess I should backtrack a little on this one.

I’m not sure where I got him. He’s about 18 inches long and looks just like the small alligators they let you hold at animal preserves. Since he’s plastic, he doesn’t eat much and shouldn’t be able to get away.

But he did – get away that is.

Three years ago, Barbara was helping me clean. She would come in, clean the house and hide the alligators – the one that went missing and his much smaller little brother.

I’d find one or the other of them in the pocket of my robe, made into the bed, hiding in the bathtub or crouching in a large potted plant.

Sometimes it would take several weeks to discover where the gators were hiding.

Then Barbara got a full-time job with ben-



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

efits at the state prison in Norton. I found the small alligator in a pot in the kitchen, but the larger one was AWOL.

This wasn’t a big deal. It was, after all, a plastic alligator. It had no great emotional or monetary value, but we would wonder now and then where it was. I searched a few times, but to no avail.

Now, each year since Steve’s mother died, I’ve dragged her artificial Christmas tree from the basement to the living room. It’s starting to show its age, but it’s also a family heirloom. Each year, at the end of the season, I remove the tinsel and ornaments and drag the tree, with its contingent of lights, back to the basement.

There it sits in a corner with odds and ends

of furniture destined to go to the repairman.

Two years ago, a friend brought us a real piñon pine from Colorado. We were thrilled and got out the old tree stand. We had always had real trees when we lived in the mountains, cutting our own each year.

Last year, the friend brought another tree and again there was great rejoicing and the old artificial tree stayed in the basement another year.

Well, you guessed it.

Barbara hid the alligator in Grandmother Barb’s tree. It was sort of fitting, I thought.

Now, the old faithful tree is trimmed and sitting in the living room. The alligator and a cat are under the tree and I’m keeping my distance.

There’s a lot of beady eyes and teeth under that evergreen.

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 @ nwkansas.com

Tell your story, farmers and ranchers

Helping consumers and our customers understand agriculture is vital to the future of the industry and the high-quality, affordable food Americans enjoy.

How do farmers help their customers understand their profession?

It begins with the commitment to tell your side of the story whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. Whether farmers talk to grade-schoolers, members of service clubs, fellow church members or state legislators – practice the art of relationship building between rural and urban, between farmer-stockmen and consumers of agricultural products.

The holiday season is also a perfect time to tell others about the farm and ranch story. Whether we know it or not, today, many consumers are one, two or three generations removed from the farm. But just about everyone has a lawn, garden, flowers, plants or shrubbery. These same consumers enjoy, and some cherish, their ties to a father, grandfather or great-grandfather who tilled the soil.

Today’s foodies have a strong desire to know about how their food is grown. Many of them want to meet and know the people who are furnishing their families with the food they eat.



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

How do you initiate a conversation about farming?

It’s easy to find common ground with urban cousins. Begin by noting that the fertilizer they buy for their garden or lawn is no different from what you, as a farmer, put on your crops. The rose dust, herbicide or insecticide used to control scab, dandelions or mosquitoes is similar to the plant protection you use.

Sometimes the common denominator revolves around nutrition. A good analogy could be the parallel between a person’s need for healthy food and a plant’s need for a well-balanced diet.

It’s easy to move from nutrition to some of the more difficult challenges facing agriculture.

One such hot topic is groundwater contamination. Today, many people are concerned

about chemical runoff into lakes and streams.

As a farmer-stockman, you cannot afford to overuse these expensive crop inputs. Let them know that. More than anyone else, you are concerned about the land where you and your family live and work. Tell them your family eats the same food they eat and you wouldn’t dream of endangering your loved ones.

Public understanding of how a modern farmer manages his operation is only half the challenge. Perhaps equally important is the need to be sensitive to the concerns of the community. Listen to what they have to say. Hear them out and also, talk to them about your continuing commitment to ensuring you grow the healthiest food possible.

Remember that people – most of them living in towns or cities – are the ones who call for regulations and new laws. It is this same public that will enforce them. In the end, ironically, it is the public that will suffer if the laws have a negative effect on our food production and consumption system.

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.

Seniors need license to hunt, fish

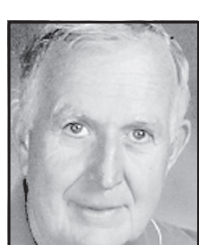
A bill passed last year requires Kansas resident hunters and anglers 65 to 74 to buy hunting and fishing licenses once more.

Before this law, residents 65 and older were exempt from fishing and hunting license requirements. However, hunters and anglers 65 and older are our fastest growing age group, and changes were necessary to ensure federal aid is not lost and to avoid budget shortfalls.

I feel that it is a small price to pay to ensure that my grandchildren will have the same outdoor opportunities that I enjoyed.

Kansans who already have a lifetime license will not be affected by the new law – their license is good for the rest of their life.

Next year’s licenses will go on sale Friday



Ward Cassidy

• Legislative News

and they will be valid for the remainder of this season and all of 2013. The best bargain is the Senior Lifetime Pass, a combination hunting and fishing license good for the rest of the holder’s life that will cost \$42.50, including vendor and issuance fees. Residents 65 and older can also opt for an annual fishing or hunting

license at half the regular price, \$11.50, or an annual hunting and fishing license for \$20.50. Residents 75 and older are exempt.

A question I have been asked lately is whether the state is releasing mountain lions. I spoke with the head of the Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, Secretary Robin Jennison, and asked him if the state has ever been involved in the releasing of mountain lions to control our deer population. He said that has never happened, but a few private owners have illegally released mountain lions in the state.

Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, a retired school principal and teacher, is the state representative for the 120th District. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

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