



## Other Viewpoints

### State budget plan remains unrealistic

To pay for last year's income-tax cuts and some new ones, Gov. Sam Brownback wants to eliminate the mortgage interest deduction and break a promise that a sales-tax hike would be temporary. Both ideas flopped last session, so the governor's proposal is asking a lot of his friends in newly high places in the Legislature — too much to be realistic.

Last January, Brownback made a play for the \$162 million in revenue lost annually to the mortgage interest deduction, only to see the plan die on arrival in the conservative-controlled House. The Kansas Association of Realtors cites polls saying 63 percent of Kansans oppose eliminating the deduction as part of a bigger plan to cut state income taxes.

Yet the plan showed up again Jan. 16 in the governor's two-year budget proposal. His administration will argue the offsetting benefits to homeowners of the state income tax's "glide path to zero," but is that a fair trade?

As for Brownback's renewed wish to extend the statewide 6.3 percent sales-tax rate beyond July 1, when it's scheduled to drop to 5.7 percent: House Speaker Ray Merrick, R-Stilwell, calls it a "tough sell," as many lawmakers had campaigned against the increase.

Budget director Steve Anderson will need to find more compelling reasons to keep the higher sales tax than one he tried Wednesday on lawmakers: "Do we not want to tax the drug dealers of the state? This is how we get at that money. They do spend."

Brownback's budget will invite other fights as well. And it ignored last week's court order that the state increase per-pupil base aid for schools to \$4,492 from the current \$3,838 to comply with the state constitution. Instead, Brownback's budget would increase the base by just \$14 for fiscal 2015, while putting casino revenue toward teachers' pensions and targeting elementary reading via grants. But then the governor made it clear in his State of the State address that he would rather change the state's constitution and judicial-selection process than restore the per-pupil funding slashed during the downturn. It will be up to Brownback to explain how flouting the courts and constitution on such an essential state service as public education is "maintaining the state's core responsibilities," to use the governor's words.

Both this year and last, Brownback has deserved credit for offering budgets that cut taxes and allow for healthy reserves while remaining balanced — which is more than can be said for the tax plan that passed last spring and will open a \$267 million budget hole for fiscal 2014. But Brownback would balance his 2014-15 budget mostly by raising taxes, a plan unlikely to find favor among the conservative legislators he helped elect.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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NEWS SHOCKERS!

### New American radicals look normal

Meet the new radicals in American politics.

They aren't pot-smoking hippies from San Francisco or Boulder, Colo. Nor are they long-haired angry young men and women burning American flags and sporting Che Guevara apparel.

These radicals don't look radical at all. In fact, much like Kansas itself, everything about them screams normal. The notion that they would do anything wild or out of the ordinary seems preposterous on its face. They are too down-home, too authentic, too homespun, too — well, Kansas — to journey out to Edge City (borrowed from the book "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test" by Tom Wolfe) where political purity unfettered by nuance reigns supreme.... An intellectual wilderness where ideological certainty is celebrated and self-doubt is discouraged.

Such bouts of moral recklessness aren't supposed to happen to conservatives. They are supposed to bring themselves to a screeching halt long before they reach the precipice. Edge City is not their natural domain. It's a haven for those hipsters on the left who, with their "let-it-all-hang-out" hedonism and amoral relativism, lack the morals and self-discipline to resist the allure of radical ideas. These are the folks who are most likely to cotton to the latest radical theories or flaky new age trends.

But, for whatever reason, the unthinkable has happened. The salt-of-the-earthers have



Andy Heintz

#### • Wildcat Ramblings

revolted. That ordinary-looking white guy with the no-frills haircut, bland accent, modest clothes and keen grasp of small-town mentality has happily pitched his tent in Edge City, where reason is mugged by ideology. Three of these 100 percenters — Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.) and Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.) — are so brimming with ideology that they voted against raising the debt ceiling.

"While some may say it is irresponsible to not raise the debt ceiling," Moran wrote in a column that ran in the *Colby Free Press*, "our nation finds itself at a point of such indebtedness that it's more irresponsible to raise the debt ceiling without significant reductions in spending. There is no flexibility here — our nation's future is at stake."

Now, Moran has always struck me as an affable guy, so I feel kind of bad criticizing him, but his comments are pure craziness. Moran makes perfectly clear that he's not afraid to wreck the economy to get the government to

function in a way more to his liking.

In his book, "Do Not Ask What Good We Do," about the 2010 class of House Republicans, Robert Draper writes about a time when an economist who once served in George W. Bush's Treasury Department explained to House Republicans what would happen if they didn't agree to raise the debt ceiling in the summer 2011. Here's just a portion of what the House Repubs were told:

Draper paraphrased: "As a factual matter ... it would be impossible to pay the troops in the field and all Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits at the same time. Institutions such as federal prisons would simply have to be shut down. The average American's home mortgage rate would skyrocket."

Is trying to make some kind of point about fiscal responsibility worth these drastic consequences? Moran, Huelskamp and Yoder think so.

Someday I hope Republican voters realize that the black president with the funny-sounding name is the moderate and Moran, Huelskamp, Yoder and their political comrades are the real radicals.

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).

### Take a lesson from Lincoln: compromise

This past month, residents of Kansas' 1st Congressional District were treated to a stark juxtaposition in political styles. On the big screen Abraham Lincoln, played by Daniel Day-Lewis in Steven Spielberg's movie "Lincoln," cajoled, maneuvered, pleaded to both the higher and lower instincts of others, and yes, compromised, in pursuit of passage of the 13th Amendment.

Meanwhile in the present, 1st District Rep. Tim Huelskamp, proud of the fact that he does not compromise, was removed from his Agriculture and Budget Committee assignments by the Republican House Steering Committee. It's worth examining the differing approaches to "principle."

In case history has sanitized Lincoln's reputation as someone above the frequent horse-trading of the political process, Spielberg presents a compelling case to the contrary. Lincoln went so far as to keep Congress in the dark about the status of peace talks with the South, feeling that a peace treaty prior to such a definitive statement eliminating slavery would set the country up for failure and a future war. Lincoln clearly regarded compromise in pursuit of his principles as a necessary part of the game.

Admittedly, it's a little unfair to compare a second-term congressman to arguably our nation's greatest president. A better comparison is to examine Huelskamp with Lincoln's congressional ally and critic Thaddeus Stevens, the fiercely anti-slavery congressman from Pennsylvania who played a prominent role in the amendment's passage.

Congressman Stevens' commitment to the principle of racial equality was never questioned by his peers. Yet at a crucial moment in the debate he surprised others by dropping his insistence that the amendment deal with mat-



Alan Jilka

#### • A Voice of Reason

ters beyond the elimination of slavery. Stevens decided to compromise and leave issues such as the question of voting rights for Negroes for another battle.

The "principle" for which Huelskamp claims to stand up is murkier. He says he's concerned about the federal deficit, arguably the biggest issue of our time, yet refuses to consider revenue-increasing measures. And he won't admit to being a pawn of anti-tax groups such as the Club for Growth, which took credit on their website for delivering his 2010 primary victory. But we can rest assured he won't vote for any tax increases, no matter what the situation.

And he hasn't changed his "principles." As a state senator, Huelskamp was never one to compromise in the interest of his own constituents. In 2003 he was removed from the Senate Ways and Means Committee by fellow Republicans. He never voted for a final budget in 14 years in the state senate, and vigorously opposed both highway bills that passed during his tenure, despite the efforts of his district to have U.S. 54 widened to four lanes. That stretch of two-lane highway running through his district had, and has, one of the highest accident and fatality rates in the nation.

Huelskamp has worked furiously to spin his latest political setback to his advantage by saying that House Speaker Boehner keeps a scorecard of votes, thereby penalizing those

who stand up for principle. Boehner denies the existence of such a scorecard.

Congressman Lynn Westmoreland (R-Ga.) suggested in a *Politico.com* article another reason for the Steering Committee's action. "It came down to the 'a-hole factor.'" According to Westmoreland spokesperson Leslie Shedd, "it had to do with (his) inability to work with others."

As a result, Huelskamp and his constituent farm groups now have little leverage to influence the ag legislation that is so crucial to his district, a fact lost on those who gave him a standing ovation at the recent 1st District Republican Convention.

Criticism of Huelskamp has recently come from an unlikely source, former Kansas House Speaker Mike O'Neal, now head of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce. O'Neal was recently quoted as saying, "Principle is important, but ... at the end of the day, something has to get accomplished. You can be irrelevant if you say there's not a set of circumstances where you'll compromise."

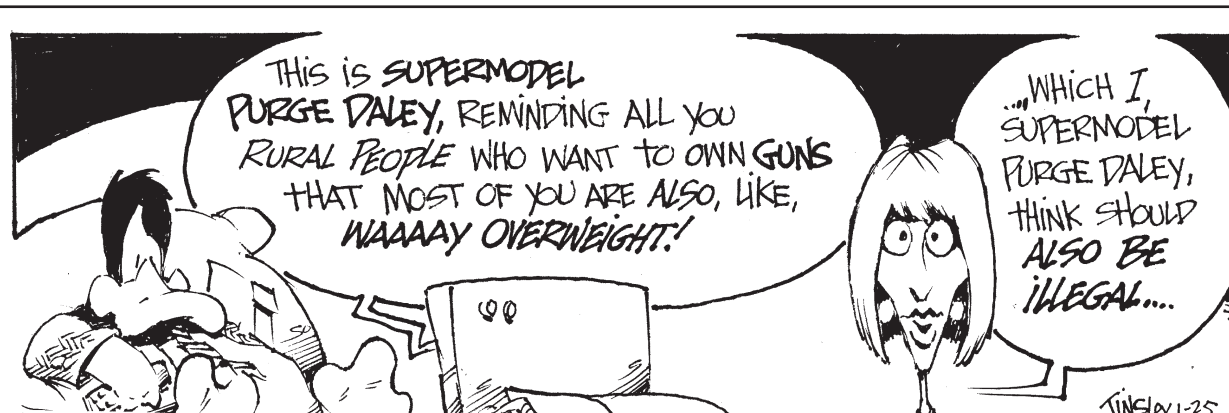
As Congress returns and tackles the great issues of our day, Huelskamp looks increasingly irrelevant in the debate.

Alan Jilka is a former Salina city commissioner and mayor. He was the Democratic nominee for Congress in the 1st District in 2010.

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### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley



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