

commentary

from other pens...

Tax, spend debate has trillions in the balance

The tax-and-spend debate, in Washington and in Topeka, has an element of the unreal about it.

In Congress, they are talking seriously about a trillion-dollar tax cut, less than what the president wants, but a lot more than seemed possible just a few months ago. That sounds pretty good until you realize that the nation expects to have a \$3 trillion surplus.

Democrats want to spend a whole bunch of that money, as much \$2 trillion, for new programs and paying down the national debt. Realistically, it looks like they might get to spend \$1 trillion, with another trillion going to pay off the debt. Congress will fight all year over how to carve the “new money” up, but everyone wants to leave Social Security untouched.

President Bush wants to give at least \$1.6 trillion back to taxpayers who earned it. He wants an across-the-board cut aimed at promoting economic growth by getting big taxpayers to invest in the economy instead of paying taxes. Democrats, as usual, want to sock it to the rich.

And as usual, the great middle class won’t see much difference in their paychecks, an estimated \$1,600 a year. That is only about \$30 a week, but any cut would be better than an increase.

Which is what Kansas taxpayers can expect if the teachers’ union and school lobbies get their way. A group of big-spending legislators want to raise the sales tax .6 of 1 percent over the next three years, earmarking the money for schools. They would raise the per-pupil base the state allows school districts to spend by \$90 this year, rather than the \$50 the governor has proposed.

The tax increase is greatly unpopular, despite the teachers’ lobbying power, and is unlikely to pass. Without an increase, people at the Statehouse are talking about another “tight” budget year, with little new money to be spent. Nonetheless, state spending probably will top \$9 billion for the first time this year, according to a thoughtful piece by John Hanna of the Associated Press.

That points out the reality of government, state and national, and that is growth. Government grows year in and year out. It grows not like the rest of the economy, according to what it produces, but just according to how much pressure there is to spend.

And that is the real reason why we need tax cuts in our boom economy — not to stimulate more growth in business, but to limit the growth of government. Kansas will top the \$9 billion mark in a “tight” year, even though the Legislature cuts taxes four years in a row. This year and last, there was room for growth even after the cuts. Without them, though, spending would be much higher.

The same is true at the federal level. Unless we cut taxes and give some of this money back to the people who own it, the spenders will get ahold of it. And it’s not their money; it’s ours.

Good sense, common ethics and fair play all demand that when government takes in more money than it needs, it should give it back. Not just find new ways to spend.

And that’s what should happen this year. — *Steve Haynes*

Letter Policy

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Tough to hide out in the big city these days

I’ve always said you couldn’t go anywhere without running into someone you know — or someone who knows someone you know.

We went to the Colorado Press Association convention last weekend, the 20th straight year we have attended the convention. Every year there is at least one surprise.

This year, there was a lawn and garden show going on at the Denver Convention Center, which is just six blocks from our hotel. Since I didn’t have anything special to do on Friday afternoon, a friend and I headed for the show.

My friend Mary was off checking on landscaping ideas for her new home while I was aimlessly wandering around when I heard a voice behind me.

“Boy, someone from *The Oberlin Herald* should write about all this,” the woman said.

I turned around to see La Vern and Carolyn Burtis from Oberlin standing behind me grinning like crazy.



cynthia haynes

• open season

Since Carolyn works across the street from our office, I see her almost every day. But not usually in the middle of Denver.

I was, however, ready for her, since this sort of thing has happened to me before.

“This is why you can’t ever have an affair,” I said. “No matter where you go, someone will know you.”

As I finished this little speech, I noticed that a woman standing behind the Burtises was a little bug eyed. I’m not sure who she thought was having an affair, but it looked like she was planning to stay around a bit longer and find out, if she could.

Motherhood is expensive career choice

Mothers are the saintly caregivers whose selfless virtues are praised by everyone from politicians to popes. It is such a lofty position, with such important responsibilities, that a mother’s sacrifice is taken as a given. Motherhood, we all know, is its own reward.

So for women to discuss money in relation to motherly duties would be, well, crass. A mother’s love is priceless, as we all agree. Frankly, any woman who tries putting a dollar value on motherhood casts suspicion on her maternal credentials.

Thus, women rarely even think about the economic cost of motherhood, much less talk about it. We don’t discuss how we diminish our long-term earning capacity by leaving the workplace for 10 or 15 years, earning lower salaries than women with no children and losing out on Social Security and pension benefits. We don’t discuss how, in the year 2001, the income of the primary breadwinner remains the exclusive property of the spouse who earns it. We don’t discuss how we are more likely than men to be poor in old age or after a divorce because we forfeited economic independence for “the most important job in the world.”

In a time when childless women earn nearly as much as men, mothers still lag far behind. The pay gap between mothers and non-mothers under age 35 is now wider than the wage gap between young men and women. This is the unfinished business of the women’s movement, says journalist Ann Crittendon in her new book, “The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued” (Metropolitan Books, 2001).



joan ryan

• commentary

“One could say that motherhood is now the single greatest obstacle left in the path to economic equality for women,” Crittendon writes.

It’s not that we didn’t know that motherhood cut short or set back most of our careers. We knew we were making a trade-off. It was, as employers always like to point out, our choice. But I doubt most of us calculated the actual economic consequences of the trade-off or questioned our responsibility to bear the costs alone.

Crittendon, a former New York Times reporter, does both.

A couple with a combined annual income of \$81,500 will lose \$1.35 million if they have a child.

The lost income is primarily in wages foregone by the primary caregiver. This book doesn’t seek recognition for what mothers do. It seeks remuneration. A mother’s work should be counted for what it is: real labor that benefits the economy by providing the next generation of educated worker-citizens. Mothers should have a right to the benefits that other workers enjoy. They ought to be entitled to half their family’s income and assets.

Yet in 47 of 50 states — California is among the three exceptions — mothers have no guaranteed legal right to half the family’s assets. A married

It turned out that the Burtises were at the show on a whim also. They had been passing through and decided to see what was up, especially since La Vern has been doing a lot of landscaping at the Good Samaritan Center, where he works.

I didn’t have a chance to tell them how Steve had been interviewing a cute young ad salesman in a town about an hour from where we lived in Colorado once years ago. While they were sitting at a restaurant eating and discussing the job, no fewer than three folks from our little town walked by with raised eyebrows.

I was the one doing the eyebrow bit one New Year’s Day a dozen or so years ago when I stepped off an elevator in Denver and came face to face with a publisher I had known for years and the lady he was escorting. It was early morning, he didn’t live in Denver and the lady was not his wife.

Well, maybe he was just interviewing a new ad salesman.

mother is a “dependent,” and a divorced mother is “given” what a judge decides she and her children “need.” Courts in many states are allowed to ignore the value of her caregiving, as if her work at home counted less than a husband’s paycheck.

In the United States, we view discrimination in the workplace through the lens of gender. “But,” says historian Susan Pederson, who is quoted in the book, “what’s really going on is a disadvantaging of mothers in the workforce.”

Crittendon’s book breaks new ground in its detailed analysis of how heavy an economic burden we expect mothers to carry. But the topic itself isn’t new. The National Organization for Women addressed it at its inaugural conference in 1966. The group’s founding statement recognized that mothers too often “retire from jobs or professions for 10 to 15 years to devote their full time to raising children only to re-enter the job market at a relatively minor level.” More importantly, the NOW statement questioned the assumption that each woman, rather than society as a whole, is supposed to bear the full financial responsibility of raising a child. Thirty-six years later, the assumption stands.

This is a topic in which both conservatives and liberals ought to find common ground. Real reform in the courts and in the workplace would reduce the economic risks for those who choose to stay home and allow mothers who work the flexibility to be responsible parents and upwardly mobile employees. I’ve got just the slogan: Let’s put the value back in family values.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Send comments to her in care of this newspaper or send her e-mail at joanryan@sfgate.com.

Cheat-off crowd should be audited

To the Editor:

If the cheat-off crowd kept \$80,000,000, returned it on a rotating 30-day basis, that’s a lot of free interest! It is a violation of everyone’s right to own and be secure in their property! Slavery of those forced to seize the fees is a violation of the Constitution, which forbids a state religion, hath no grounds for mandatory unions against anyone’s conscience.

It is a crime to believe “U” can spend your money more profitably than the cheat-off crowd (who can’t survive on voluntary support!).

Taxing any animal more than once is unfair and illegal; as is allowing those to vote who know they would be exempt from paying tax (traders). Hath no proven merit!

If they promoted beef in Japan (who bought beef from Australia), what good doeth it for those who want to spend their advertising on a niche (natural or branded beef market)?

The cheat-off crowd should be audited and subpoenaed to show how many they have in the non-compliance department, what it hath spent? How many and who they have persecuted, (The constitution forbideth excessive fines and cruel and unusual punishment.)

“Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” II Timothy 2:7.

Frank Sowers
Benkelman



To the Editor:

It was not the intention of the Goodland Arts Council board to single out Evie Stout’s signature to appear on our letter supporting the arts which appeared in last Thursday’s paper. Neither was it our intention to indicate that Mrs. Stout had written the letter. Her signature was one of 39, including those of the members of the board and other friends of our community program.

We appreciate the broad base of interest and support we receive from the people of Goodland and Sherman County.

We regret the misunderstanding created by the presentation of our letter.

Gracia Maricle
President, Goodland Arts Council

Editor’s Note: The decision to reduce the list of names was made by *The Daily News* in the interest of getting the letter into print, and was done without the knowledge of the authors. We did not intend to upset or slight any signatory, only to keep the letter from being held for space, and so used the first name which appeared.

from our readers

• to the editor

berry’s world

