

ETA @2001 FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM
HULME

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Money for schools: How much is enough?

Schools . . . the issue of the hour, the day, the year, in Kansas. Gov. Bill Graves waits until near the end of the legislative session to throw out his plan for schools. The governor wants to more than double the increase he proposed at the start of the session, from \$50 per pupil to \$110.

To do that, he'll have to persuade the House to increase both the fuel tax (by 2 cents) and the sales tax (by .2 of 1 percent).

Speaker Kent Glasscock, who like a lot of people would like to be governor after Graves, says he's not sure the conservative lower chamber will bite.

Of course, nothing ever gets done until the end of the session in Topeka, at least not anything important like school finance. The governor probably just saved his proposal from languishing in committee for weeks.

But the Legislature is going to have to make up its mind about schools. Does the school system really need that much more money, or does it just sound good?

We're still not betting on a tax increase.

Why the gasoline tax? To free up some of the "mandatory transfer" money the Legislature promised from the general fund to pay for the current 10-year highway program.

After you remove colleges and universities, public education and roads, there isn't much left of the state budget. And it's always a fight to see which of the Big Three will get the lion's share of the pie.

The Legislature shifted money from the general fund, where education usually has first claim, to pay for the "out" years of the highway plan it passed last year. Now schools may get some of that back.

Part of Graves' plan that probably won't fly: All-day kindergarten, which has not caught on as an issue. For one thing, though the governor is behind it, there is no major push for the change, it's expensive and there's been no showing that it will really help children.

Maybe it's just one more step toward a fully regimented childhood, where kids go to school year-around and parents work day and night to pay for it.

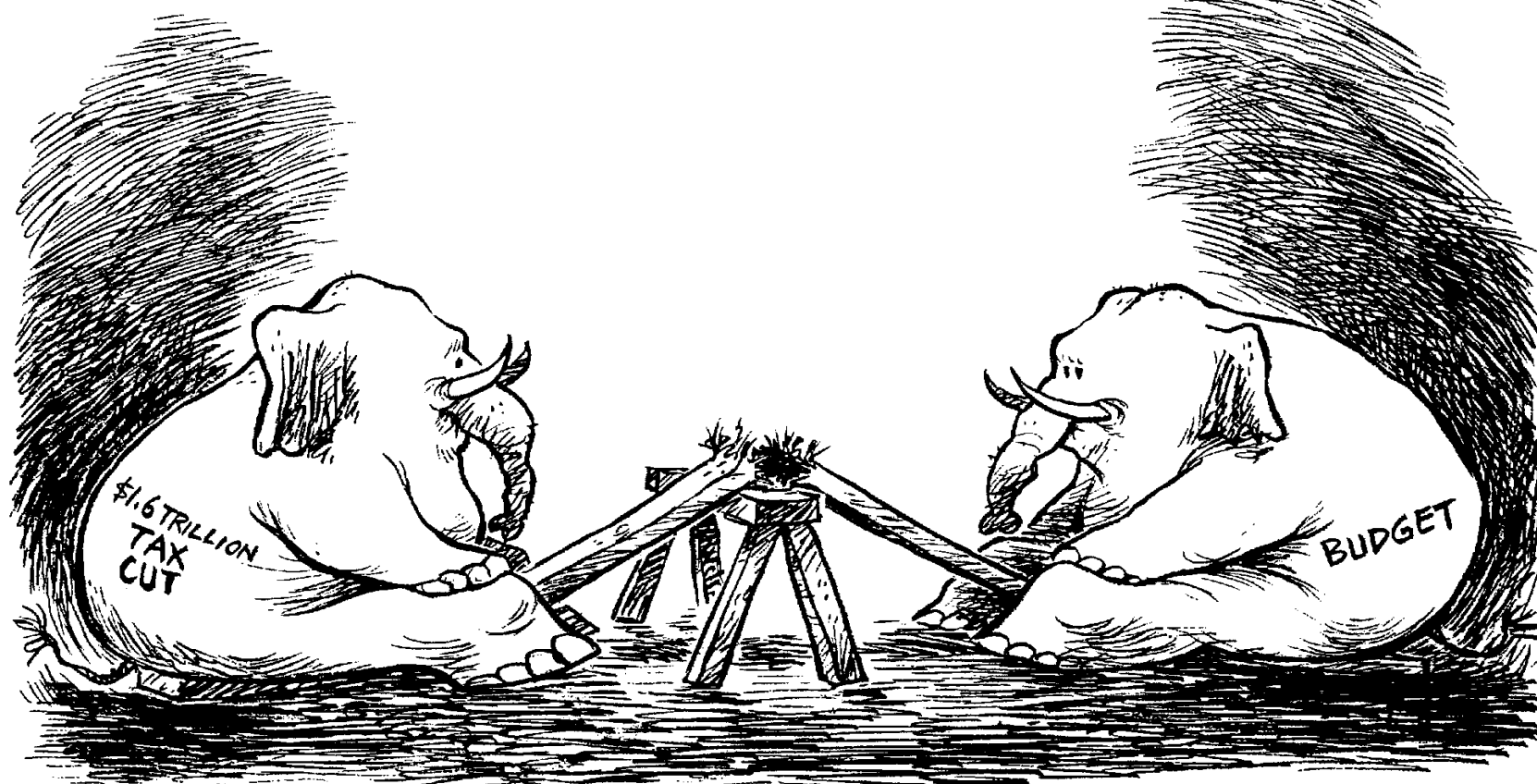
Is that where we want to go?

Left with the crust in Graves' priorities: Higher education. Colleges have been told to tighten their belts again this year. Most have announced hiring freezes while watching the Statehouse debate on how much to increase K-12 budgets.

The professors cannot be happy.

And in the wings, the "medium-size" school districts, led by Salina and its superintendent, Gary Norris. The medium schools (most all of them smaller than the urban districts and larger than Class 4A) want a much bigger share of the school pie. They chaff at the extra money going to urban and rural schools and want a lot more for themselves.

The mediums have been suing the state and have no plans to back off. They say the Graves plan is nice, but not enough. Stay tuned. — Steve Haynes



Education is important, but not the only issue

All but a very few select committees will be allowed to meet starting Wednesday to the end of our 2001 session. We will meet for about two weeks in April and May to finalize actions on bills passed by both the House and Senate. Everything is focusing on achieving "compromise" on the differences in bills passed in both houses.

You have heard "ad nauseam" that education is the single most important issue of the session and that may be true. However, we still have to get the Governor to sign onto the KAN-ED proposal that has changed considerably in the last week. The deployment of that technology is critical to my district.

School finance and increases in the base state aid is also critical for us. We also need to assure our water rights and do all we can to empower our local business to be successful in the changing economy we are beginning to experience. Education is one of the most important but not the "single" most important.

I reluctantly supported an \$11 billion road program and initiative last session because the large majority of my district wanted me to do anything to enhance our roads and create better access to our towns. I and others (Senator Clark, Rep. John Faber and Rep. Ralph Ostmeier) have been doing all we can to help eliminate the problems created by closure of K-27 through Goodland. Days and days of meetings have been held during the last one and a half years both publicly and privately with Department of Transportation officials and lead-



Jim Morrison

capitol review

ers in the counties involved with the road program. All that can be done is being done to make that road project as painless as possible for businesses dependent on traffic on K-27. Part of the reason for providing my vote to the Department of Transportation's and Governor's road program hinged on a statement to assure me that total closure of K-27 or a proper bypass would be made to "keep the traffic flowing." We may not see that assurance fulfilled. I am frustrated just as you are.

I am having all sorts of problems finding support for a measly \$100+ million to help our schools. Eleven billion dollars for roads and only \$100+ million for schools? Something seems wrong with that picture.

Again, I restate that education is the most important issue of the year. At least according to our Governor and a majority of the members of the legislature. We are talking a bit over \$100 million out of a \$9 billion state budget? Jimmy (me) is not a happy camper about that. We need to put our money where our mouth is and fund education and let our teachers teach. How can we say education is the most important issue when it is not funded?

Sure will be interesting to see what projects receive the most funding this year. That will point to what the Executive and Legislative branches really believe are most important.

I am very impressed with the quality of teachers in the schools I have visited. When permitted to do what they do best (teach), reduce their paperwork requirements and "busywork," classroom learning rises accordingly. It is my hope this year represents the beginning of a more supportive rather than punitive support for educators and our educational system. My education chairman, Rep. Ralph Tanner, passionately believes education is not being fairly treated. I agree.

Looks like we will get \$50 million more for emergency loans for farmers (total of \$100 million) but that is still only a drop in the bucket of what we need. Agriculture issues are beginning to be taken more seriously than in the past. That bodes well for us in the farm areas of Kansas. I also believe that we will be better treated with our declining enrollment, water issues, economic problems and receive fair treatment from the legislature.

If you desire more information or have comments, suggestions or whatever please contact me. I do appreciate hearing from you. It is not important that you agree with me or me with you. I need to know your thoughts and arguments to better represent your positions on issues before me. Thank you very much for your support and confidence. I will continue to work hard on your behalf.

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All our students deserve more recognition

Wow! The people who didn't get to go to the Junior and Senior High concert Thursday really missed a great night of entertainment. Unfortunately, these young people don't get the recognition they deserve.

Athletics are great, but the music these young people are learning and the instruments they are learning to play will be with them long after any of the sports players (the few who actually play beyond college) are battered and retired.

However, I have to say: I think Charlene Mangus made a very good point. Why can't our school district (and the athletic department) give equal treatment to all of the students who participate in any extracurricular activity? If the cheerleaders get a free trip why not the school (Pep) band?

Both the music and the athletic participants can get scholarships for college; however, so few athletes can go beyond college with athletics (pro-ball as-it-were). The same could be said for the young people who are in the band and choir but, if they choose to, people in the band and choir can play their instruments and sing long after the athlete has lost his or her ability to play the game. I want to point out that the band (and choir) directors are underpaid and work hard and long to get to where they are — as are all our teachers.

Please! Understand! I'm not knocking athletics, I'm just saying why can't the band get the same privileges? I think athletics are wonderful. In all fairness though, not everybody has the ability to participate in sports, nor does everybody have the ability to participate in band. You have to go with your talent.

Thursday's concert was only two hours, but they were great. We heard the Jazz band (wow!), then (too short a time) with the choir, then the junior high and then the high school bands. I'm afraid that some people don't realize how hard these young people work to learn how to play an instrument or to train their voices. The money that can be made in music can be good, too. Personally, I think pro ball players are paid way too much. Why can't teachers get better pay?

I have the pleasure of personally knowing several of these young people. Not excluding my own talented son, who is a member of the elite clarinet section of the Junior High school band, but also, I know three girls who, not only sing like angels, but at least one who can play more than one instrument. The ability and effort to play one instrument is something, but to be able to play two or more is real dedication to music and art. These young people deserve the same treatment and recognition as the athletic participants do. They definitely deserve more recognition than they get now. The



from our readers

to the editor

band had no recognition in the Junior High School year book last year. Why? Will that be corrected this year?

One last thing: Aside from the cost of the trip the band took, there is also fatigue from lack of sleep and rest they (the Pep band) were kept from because they couldn't get the rest they, too, needed, in transit. All the participants should be given equal treatment. Yes, I am partial to the band, but fair is fair.

I also think there should be equal billing (advertising) for concerts as well. (What say you paper) I believe people other than Mom and Dad, Grandmother and Granddad, would enjoy these concerts. These young people do a wonderful job of entertaining us. The concerts in the park in the Spring are great too. I certainly hope we get one this year.

Ron Asbury

Goodland

Dear Editor,

The article about me in the Friday, March 9, Goodland Daily News does not accurately say who I am and I think everybody who knows me can prove it.

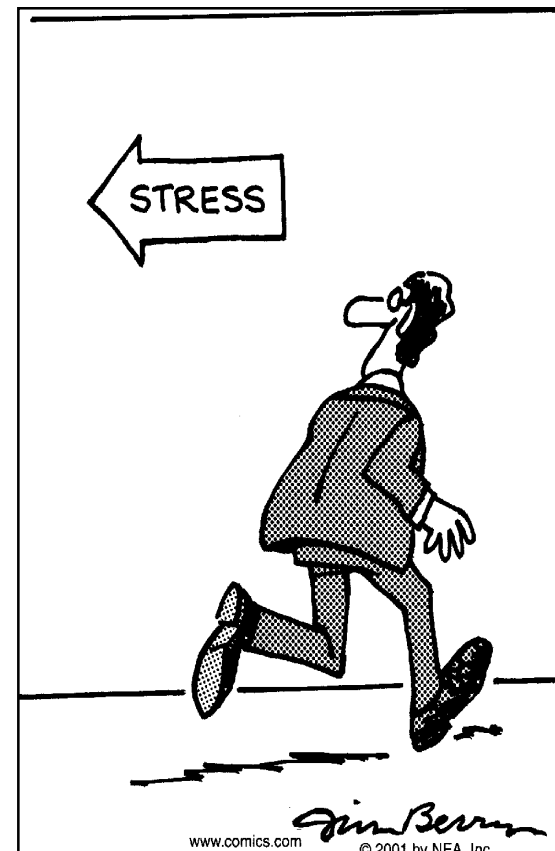
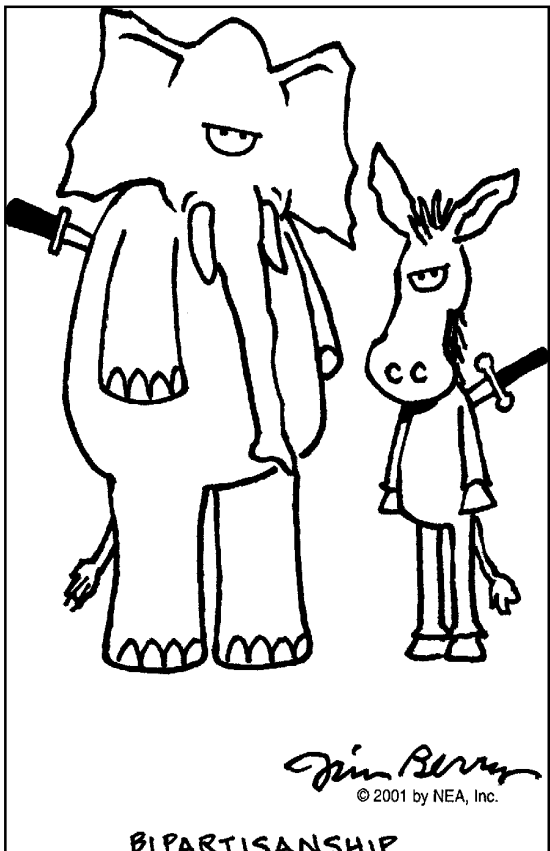
I do think Goodland is different from my home in Italy, but that doesn't mean it is bad or that I don't like it. I'm enjoying every single day of this year, and I'm not homesick. I like living in Goodland and most of all I like living with my family here. We have a wonderful time together and the picture with the article shows it.

I never, ever said I'd rather be there than here and I think that, if I could go back, I would make the same choice, no matter where they would send me. My concern is that, although I see my life in Italy, that doesn't make Goodland a bad place.

My stay here has been a very positive experience. I would like to thank all the people who have made this possible and the friends that know me the way I am.

Cristina Bertelli
Goodland

berry's world



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