

commentary

from other pens...

Expanding gambling is simply a bad idea

The Topeka Capital-Journal on expanded gambling:

You pass by a blackjack table. You impulsively stop and think about putting down a \$100 bet. Just before you do, something in the back of your mind tells you it's a bad idea. Chances are, it probably is.

Yet, that's pretty much what the Kansas House has done by approving a bill Saturday that would expand gambling in the state by allowing slot machines at the five pari-mutuel tracks here plus one undetermined "at large" site.

You really have to wonder if it's a good idea, whether there was enough open debate about it — and if lawmakers realize just what a can of worms it is that they may be opening.

Once opened, the can will be next to impossible to close, too...

So, after having passed a \$4.4 billion budget that cuts what it reasonably can, lawmakers are still staring at a nearly \$300 million shortfall.

It appears as if House members are proposing what they think is an easy way out — while oddly eschewing sure-thing revenue producers...

This bill should not become law because it will help the state out of its financial problems. It won't. The only way this bill should become law is if it's a good idea — in either good times or bad.

That's debatable. But at this point, the debate hasn't really taken place. Nor are slot machines the way to get yourself out of a \$300 million hole.

The Manhattan Mercury on need for tax increase:

Ever so briefly, the Legislature's approval last week of a budget seemed like the sort of step that might signal the beginning of the end of the 2002 Legislature.

After all, one would like to think that members of the House and Senate wouldn't have done that without at least some sense of how they would fund the \$4.4 billion spending plan. Then lawmakers spent the weekend talking around the problem avoiding responsible solutions...

Tapping reserves and the gambling bill both are ill advised, the former because it would make the state more vulnerable, the latter because legislators ought to know better than to increase the state's reliance on a funding source that will create as many problems as it solves.

Legislators' reluctance to raise taxes is understandable, particularly in an election year. But they should do it anyway. Their refusal to raise taxes ignores the role that the tax cuts the Legislature enacted during the late 1990s had in creating the situation the state now is in...

Restoring some of that revenue flow through a variety of modest tax increases remains the most responsible option for dealing with a crisis of historic proportions.

The Hutchinson News on grade system:

XF. It sounds like a cable television channel. ... But it's not.

It's an exclusive new grade at Barton County Community College, reserved for cheaters.

After an outbreak of cheating last fall, faculty and administrators no longer believed that an F was enough. Not after as many as 30 students cheated on their finals. ...

An instructional integrity committee and the Barton County faculty council set out to develop an interim policy for the spring semester. They borrowed the idea from Kansas State University, where it's been available to teachers for several years.

At K-State policy allows the school to remove an XF grade from an offender's transcript if the student completes a special ethics class. Faculty and administrators at Barton County don't know if they're willing to be that lenient.

"Maybe if students understand the XF grade and realize it is something that could follow them through life and create problems along the way, they'll think twice about cheating," said Jennifer Schartz, a faculty council member.

Young people make mistakes. But if colleges do not hold students accountable for their choices, they learn nothing.

Or, worse, they learn what high school sophomores learned last fall in Piper — that authority can be manipulated. ...



Planning daughter's big, small? wedding day

Nik ran from the room, holding his head and screaming. Steve just looked bored.

We were planning for the biggest day in a mother's life — her daughter's wedding.

The groom ran off in horror and the father of the bride slipped out the back door. Felicia and I had a great time.

Nik and Felicia plan to tie the knot in Augusta, Ga., on Labor Day weekend.

Because he is Jewish and she is Catholic, they decided to get married by a judge. We offered to give them a check and they could spend it however they wanted — big wedding, down payment on a house, nice honeymoon, whatever. His folks tossed in the money they would normally spend on a rehearsal dinner and flowers.

The kids opted for a small wedding, a barbecue for friends and a nice honeymoon, but Felicia had been fussing about the details for the last several months without getting very much done.

So, Steve and I hopped a plane for Augusta last week and while he and Nik were out pricing new and used computers, Felicia and I were planning the festivities.

The kids have already signed a contract on a nice little house, so Felicia is calling her barbecue a housewarming.

We divided the plans into three parts — wedding, party and trip.

The trip we left to Nik. They plan to spend two weeks in Italy, traveling to Rome, Naples and Milan. Half the budget was allocated for the trip.



cynthia haynes

• open season

The barbecue was easy. We figured out how much hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, slaw, chips, beer, pop and ice to feed 75 would be. We added in a little for plates, napkins, plastic ware and condiments. Friends would loan them chairs and the new house has a big deck and a large backyard.

The wedding was the tough one. The kids had already decided on small — just the immediate family.

Felicia wanted to check on the prices of an historic hotel just a few blocks from the new house. The Partidge Inn, now on the historic register, was a grand hotel in the early part of the last century.

We found that we could get the penthouse for a reasonable price. The suite comes with a huge deck, plus indoor areas for eating and chatting. Just what we wanted. The view of lush, green Augusta is stunning. (But no, you couldn't see the greens during the Masters from up there, and you couldn't afford the rent that week anyway.)

The ceremony could take place indoors or outside depending on the weather and the family could sit down to a nice dinner afterward. We planned for 15, although there will only be three grandparents,

four parents, one brother, two sisters, the happy couple and the judge, assuming he stays for dinner.

After dinner, everyone will retire to the chatting area to get acquainted. Since Nik's grandparents live in Washington, we have never met them. Nor have we met his sister, who is a television anchor in Miami.

Once we had a place for both ceremony and reception, we dealt quickly with dress, music and flowers.

The dress will be a simple silk sheath. The bride will have a bouquet of whatever is in season at the end of August in Augusta, and everyone else will have a corsage or boutonniere. Music will be provided by a compact disk player.

Table decorations will be flowers, preferably in pots that can be put out in the new yard after the ceremony.

We're kind of stuck on the photographer. A friend from Lawrence has offered to shoot the wedding but he's pricey, and even if he gives us a break, getting him and his wife to Augusta may be more than the kids want to spend.

On the other hand, Nik is a professional photographer and has done dozens of weddings. He can undoubtedly get a friend to do the job. Or, we can all bring a camera and take turns.

Felicia will still get stuck with most of the work setting up the wedding, but she says she feels better now that she has a blueprint. I bet she'll feel even better when the check arrives from Daddy to start paying for the shindig.

Peace quest of the bereaved

Yitzhak Frankenthal distilled the Israeli-Palestinian war, the most complicated of conflicts, to one simple truth:

"My son was killed because there is no peace between us and the Palestinians," he said.

Frankenthal is a 50-year-old Orthodox Jew who lives in Jerusalem. He wears a yarmulke, keeps kosher and observes the Sabbath. He believes completely in an independent Israeli state and a strong Israeli army.

But he is despised by many fellow Orthodox Jews. Some won't speak to him or be in his presence.

"There is a lot of hatred against me," he said yesterday during a visit to San Francisco to raise money. "Phone calls, faxes, e-mails. They say terrible, terrible things.

"I'm not talking about extremist Orthodox Jews. I'm talking about wonderful people. They are going a completely different way than I'm going."

Frankenthal heads a group of 750 bereaved Israeli and Palestinian parents whose children have been killed in the conflict. They believe if they, who have suffered the greatest losses, can sit together and work for peace, then anyone can. They are pushing for reconciliation through compromise and concession.

In that effort, they erected billboards in Israel and the occupied territories last fall reiterating the words of Yitzhak Rabin and Menachem Begin: "Better to have pains of peace than agonies of war."

Critics say Frankenthal is at best naive, at worst



joan ryan

• commentary

a Palestinian apologist and sympathizer. But Frankenthal has no love for Israel's enemy. His motives are pragmatic, not altruistic. When he founded the organization, he wasn't looking for closure or healing. He has not a drop of forgiveness for the Hamas gunmen who pumped three bullets into the head of 19-year-old Arik, who was hitchhiking home during a leave from the army.

"Bring me back my son and I will forgive you," he said.

He took sleeping pills every night for almost five years because visions of his son's final few minutes of life replayed in an endless loop inside his head. He is as angry today as he was that July day in 1994 when army officials arrived at his door to break the news.

Frankenthal works alongside Palestinians because he believes reconciliation is the only road to peace, and peace is his only protection against losing another child.

"When I talk to right-wing people who have lost their children and they criticize what I am doing, I say, 'Tell me what you think needs to be done.' Always you get a politician's answer not a human

answer. Or you get hatred and wishes for revenge.

"I try to explain that this is not going to bring their children back. We need to make peace. But they don't trust the Palestinians. Unfortunately, this view will just create more violence."

He emphatically condemns the suicide bombers but feels his own country feeds the hatred and desperation behind the abhorrent acts. "No one can live under occupation. I feel anger that we are not clever enough to see that we are paying the highest price for our behavior."

Two of his older children have served in the army since Arik was killed. A third is in the army now. His 16-year-old will join in a few years. They are the reason he continues his Quixotic quest, which has attracted respect but so far no results. It is another whisper of hope in the chaos.

But what else should he be doing?

"I know what I'm saying is not popular," Frankenthal said, unfazed by the intractability of the conflict. "But I'm not a politician. I'll repeat it 100 times."

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