

commentary

from other pens...

State budget crunch threatens education

The Topeka Capital Journal on higher education:

Kansans have some soul-searching to do. The state has had a great reputation for its educational system, not only kindergarten through grade 12, but for higher education as well.

The state boasts more community colleges than many larger states, and its public universities all are well-respected not only in Kansas, but across the nation...

The affordability of higher education in Kansas may be one reason the state has so many college graduates...

The fear in some quarters is that the state's traditional educational ideals may be sacrificed as the state wrestles with ever-increasing revenue shortfalls.

Candidates talk about not raising taxes, despite the growing deficit, but what about tuition hikes? As Emporia State President Kay Schallenkamp observed, raising tuition essentially amounts to a tax increase on students.

If higher tuition is the answer, then to keep higher education accessible to lower income students, the state must offset that with more financial aid...

Access to higher education has many benefits — some tangible, some not...

(Schallenkamp is) correct in saying that one thing the state can't afford to do right now is "damage" higher education.

Schallenkamp shouldn't be singing that verse alone. She needs a chorus of Kansans behind her.

The Iola Register on gubernatorial campaign:

Republican Tim Shallenburger's platform calls for the state to fund an "adequate education" for every student in Kansas and then let individual school districts pay for whatever extras their people want through local property taxes.

Shallenburger doesn't accept the Augenblick and Myers definition of "adequate." That study...called for an increase in the base of about \$1,000 to \$4,650. The Legislature should decide what "adequate" should cost, he said, but could use the A&M study as a guide.

Democrat Keith Sebelius accepts the \$4,650 figure, but says it should be reached over four years rather than all at once...

Neither Shallenburger nor Sebelius has advocated raising state taxes to reach the goals they set out for the public schools...

The goal of state funding was to equalize the quality of public education across the state to eliminate the disadvantage that the children in the poorer districts had...

(Augenblick and Myers) proposed different levels of funding for districts in different circumstances, as the current formula attempts to do. An average annual increase of about \$1,000 for each student was the bottom line.

Sebelius accepts that number, Shallenburger doesn't, but agrees that a calculation should be made and then financed...

Both are saying, in effect, "trust me, I'll find a way." At this reading, Kansas voters will be forced to decide whether the pig they buy will be in a Republican or a Democratic poke.

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We knew it was coming, but not when

We knew it was coming, but we'd wanted to put it off as long as possible.

Sunday morning dawned bright and crisp — very crisp. The thermometer on the wall outside read 30 degrees.

Out on the porch, there was ice on the cat's water bowl.

The garden was full of wilted leaves.

About the only thing left in the main garden had been the squash. The big, fat leaves were a dark green and covered with a white sheen. They would turn into a dark mushy mess as soon as the sun hit them.

Along the fence, morning glories, which have bloomed for more than a month, hung limp and sad, just blobs of purple, blue and green instead of bright flowers and leaves.

On the side of the house, the tomato plants had been hit. The leaves, which had so carefully hidden the red fruit all summer, were rolled up in little



cynthia haynes

• open season

balls and the red and green tomatoes we had missed picking were all there. They seemed to say that we're not as good at gardening as we think we are. If we were so good, we'd have picked them all before they died.

But, I'm not going to listen or look at those sad, dead plants.

Saturday afternoon, Steve went outside. He picked every ripe tomato he could find. All the squash — no matter how small — got pulled from their vines. The green peppers were plucked.

We were ready for you this year, Mr. Frost. We even brought in our potted plants. They're

busy dropping leaves and flowers and generally making a mess of my kitchen and front hallway right now.

Steve is a weather freak. He doesn't watch television. He checks the Internet. He shows me the highs and lows and is able to interpret the data.

It's all a bunch of colored swirls to me. I don't believe weather forecasts anyway. (That may account for the ice storm I tried to drive through last fall in Texas.)

I do believe in Steve. If he says there's going to be a hard freeze, I bring in the potted plants and get out my winter coat.

Well, fall is here. The trees are beautiful and the garden is gone. I still have a ton of green peppers to stuff and a small load of green tomatoes to cover and put down in the basement for ripening over the next month.

Summer may be over, but the leftovers are still with us.

Will Dem support help Bush with Iraq?

Polls show that Democratic voters are deeply skeptical of President Bush's Iraq policy, which means that the three potential 2004 Democratic presidential candidates supporting Bush do so at some risk — and deserve credit.

If Bush's policy turns out badly — which could happen in any number of ways — Democratic primary voters could well wreak vengeance on House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (Mo.) and Sens. Joe Lieberman (Conn.) and John Edwards (N.C.).

Edwards' aides say his mail is running "overwhelmingly" against war with Iraq. Party activists are equally hostile, reflecting their visceral distrust of Bush — and, probably, an aversion to using military force that still lingers since the Vietnam War.

Gephardt has been subjected to intense motive questioning by members of his own Democratic Caucus, with some charging he has "sold out" to Bush to help his 2004 chances — even though dovish primary voters likely will oppose his stance.

The other possible candidates — former Vice President Al Gore, Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle (S.D.), Sen. John Kerry (Mass.) and Vermont Gov. Howard Dean — are all hewing closer to mainstream opinion in the party.

This is most strikingly true in the case of Gore, who was an Iraq policy hawk in the Clinton White House but last month delivered a harsh attack on Bush, accusing him of practicing a "go-it-alone, cowboy-type approach to foreign affairs."

The latest CBS/New York Times poll shows that a majority of Democrats — 57 percent to 38 percent — favor taking military action to remove Saddam Hussein from power, but also strongly favor waiting longer to do so.

Seventy-four percent of Democrats — versus 54 percent of Republicans — believe that Bush should give United Nations weapons inspectors an opportunity to return to Iraq and get support from allied nations before acting.

Fifty-one percent of Democrats — versus 14 percent of Republicans — think that Bush is "moving too quickly," according to the poll.

Sixty-one percent of Democrats — versus 40 percent of Republicans — fear that war will increase the threat of terrorist attacks on the United



morton kondracke

• commentary

States. Sixty-two percent — versus 41 percent in the GOP — expect a "long and costly involvement."

Sixty-three percent of Democrats — compared with 30 percent of Republicans — said Congress was "not asking enough questions" about Bush's policy, and 55 percent — versus 17 percent in the GOP — doubted that Bush really wants to work through the United Nations.

On other questions, the poll showed that 72 percent of Democrats think Bush is "too quick" to resort to military force to solve world problems, and 75 percent doubt he has a "clear plan" for Iraq policy.

Democrats also are opposed to Bush's doctrine of pre-emptive action against enemies. By 59 percent to 37 percent, voters said the United States should not attack another country unless attacked first.

A majority of Democrats in the House and Senate are expected to support authorizing Bush to go to war with Iraq, possibly reflecting the fact that 67 percent of all voters support the policy, including 65 percent of independents.

But, also reflecting the attitudes of their party base, most also are expected to support resolutions limiting presidential authority — either by requiring Bush to return for a final war authorization after seeking U.N. support or authorizing only working through the United Nations.

Many may vote for more than one option, which represents a "yes, but..." stance that seems to encapsulate rank-and-file Democratic thinking.

Daschle and Kerry, among the presidential contenders, have been the most wedded to "yes, but..." statements. Gore could be put in that category, too.

But even Lieberman — and, certainly Edwards — also has indulged in "yes, but..." rhetoric, criticizing the approach Bush has used in getting to his policy.

Edwards told me he became convinced through his work on the Intelligence Committee that "for Saddam Hussein to acquire nuclear weapons is unacceptable" and that "there is too much uncertainty" about when that could happen to risk inaction.

Still, Edwards on Monday made a speech blasting Bush in almost Gore-like terms, accusing him of "arrogance without purpose" toward potential allies and likening Attorney General John Ashcroft's detention of terror suspects to the policies of "dictatorships like Syria and Burma."

Edwards evidently felt the need to reassure Democratic activists, among others, that he wasn't wholly in Bush's camp.

He and other Democrats also are claiming credit for "pushing" Bush to consult the United Nations and Congress before acting against Iraq — though Edwards gave Bush no credit for adopting that stance.

By contrast, Lieberman has been much milder and constructive in criticizing Bush. In a speech Monday he said Bush is not doing enough to secure peace in Afghanistan and plan for a post-Hussein Iraq.

Overall, though, Lieberman's stance has been more "yes, and..." than "yes, but..." He was ahead of Bush in calling for Hussein's ouster and is the author of measures to expand aid to Afghanistan and build democracy in the Muslim world.

Lieberman, Gephardt and Edwards deserve credit for risking their presidential hopes to support Bush. And, if Bush's Iraq policy succeeds, they should get credit from fellow Democrats for leading their party in the right direction.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

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