

# commentary

from our viewpoint...

## Budget woes shift burden downward

As the Legislature thrashes about looking for ways to balance the budget without "raising taxes," they seem to have decided that the people will not notice if they shift the burden down to the county and city level.

The ultimate answer is to bite the bullet and raise taxes, or continue to suffer the service cuts which are being announced, including those of the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, which is closing offices across the state, including most in north-west Kansas.

These will not be the last we hear of as the strings tighten in Topeka. The knife will fall in a number of other areas and even with the idea of having people pay their property taxes 45 days early, there is \$150 million to be found.

For Sherman County and Goodland, this will be about \$450,000 this year, and could nearly double next year. One of the problems the state created with the slight of hand of former Gov. Bill Graves was the cutting off of the transfer payments the state is supposed to make from taxes that are collected in each county and city. The governor's action was not taken until after the counties and cities had set their budgets, and were out of options to address the loss of money.

We have not mentioned schools, but they are facing similar problems as the state wrestles with the budget shortfall created by a combination of bad economic times and some tax cuts that looked good at the time, but gave away part of the base the state depends on to keep things in balance.

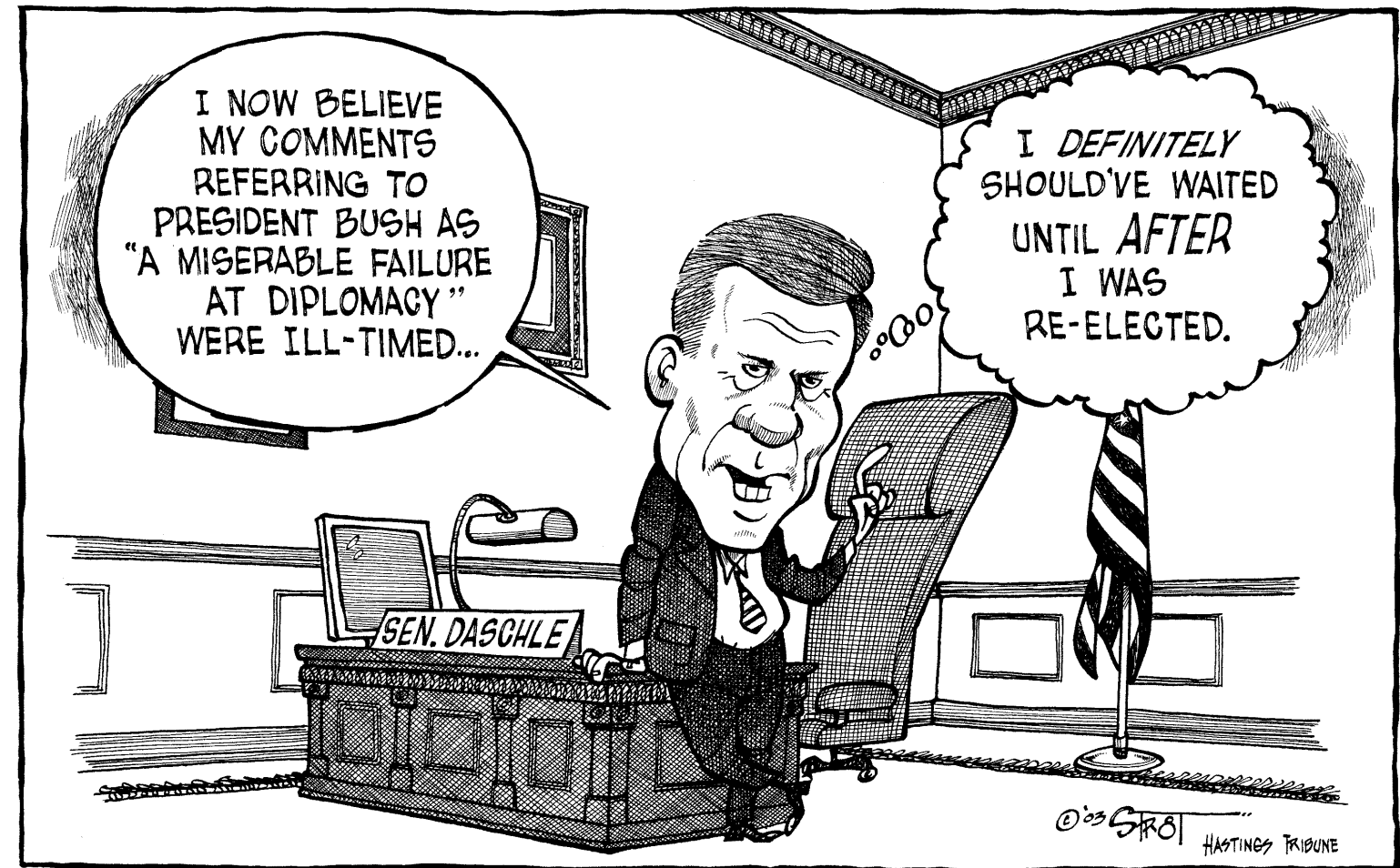
The state says there is no way to balance the budget except to cut the money given to the counties and the cities. This ball comes rolling downhill at a pretty good clip, and the counties and cities are crying foul at the size of the cuts the state is taking.

It is not going to be a fun time either to be a taxpayer or to be in office, but these are times when true leaders need to step forward and honestly say what needs to be said — that the choices are not good, no matter what level you are looking at.

There are not a lot of options for either the city or the county to raise money for services like roads, but it may be time to look at raising the sales tax for that specific purpose. Much of the money from the state the city and county are losing is what they use to maintain the streets and county roads. It would take at least 10 mills of property tax to replace the money the state has cut, or about a one-half of 1 percent sales tax increase.

This could be the beginning of a spiraling down of the ability of the state government to meet the many obligations it has taken on over the years, but at the same time the lower level governments are expected to step in and take up the load.

The best answer is patience, and surely things will turn around. I keep telling my kids the same thing, but I know that sometimes that turnaround has to be primed like a pump. — *Tom Betz*



## ‘Rolls Royce of vegetables’

The City of Stockton, California, wanted to start a festival to support community projects, charitable groups and service organizations and being in the center of asparagus production they decided on an asparagus festival. The first festival was in 1986 and is always held on the fourth weekend in April. “The Asparagus Festival Cookbook” Revised by Jan Moore, Barbara Hafley, Glenda Hushaw & Jacqueline Zupo is an outgrowth of that festival. Asparagus contains significant amounts of vitamins C and B6, thiamine, potassium, folacin and is high in fiber and low in salt.

### Dierdre Fitzpatrick’s French Breaded Asparagus

1 pound fresh asparagus, cooked  
1 egg  
1 tablespoon cold water  
1/2 cup fine bread crumbs, dried  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese  
1 teaspoon paprika  
vegetable oil for frying  
Beat egg and mix with cold water. Mix crumbs, salt, cheese and paprika together. Dip asparagus in egg mixture then in the crumb mixture. Chill for 1 hour. Fry in hot oil until golden brown.

### Jan’s Favorite Asparagus Soup

3 chopped onions



## pat schiefen

### • postscript

1/2 cup butter or margarine  
1 gallon water  
4 beef bouillon cubes (or more to taste) or use onion soup mix for the previous ingredients  
1-2 pounds asparagus, sliced diagonally into 1/8 inch pieces  
Grated jack or Parmesan cheese to garnish  
Sauté onions in butter until it begins to brown. Add water and bouillon cubes. Bring to a boil; add asparagus and cook about 3 minutes until barely tender. Serve with or without garnish. Serves 6-8.

### Rollled Steak Stuffed with Asparagus

2 tablespoon each horseradish and minced garlic  
3-4 pounds flank steak, butterflied  
1 pound asparagus spears  
Spread horseradish and garlic on the steak. Arrange spears in a single row over the spread. Roll tightly and tie. Roast in 350 degree oven for 1 hour. Remove from oven and let stand 10 minutes before slicing. Serves 6-8.

### Bread and Butter Asparagus Pickles

1/3 cup salt  
3 cups distilled vinegar  
2 cups sugar  
2 tablespoon mustard seed  
2 teaspoon each turmeric and celery seed  
1 teaspoon each ground ginger and pepper-corns

5 pounds asparagus, cut into 1 inch pieces  
10 small onions, thinly sliced  
Bring salt, vinegar, sugar, mustard, turmeric and celery seeds to boil with ginger and pepper-corns. Add asparagus and onions and bring to another boil. Pack hot into hot jars, leaving 1/4 inch head space. Remove air bubbles. Process 15 minutes in boiling water. Yields 4 to 5 pints

### Asparagus Rice Casserole

1 1/2 cups each water and chicken stock  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 pound asparagus, cut into bite sized pieces  
2 tablespoon melted butter  
1 chopped small onion  
3 minced cloves, garlic  
1 cup uncooked long grain rice  
1/2 cupe each diced red bell pepper and grated Parmesan cheese

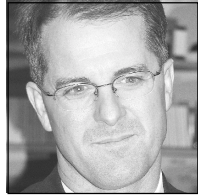
Mix all the ingredients together and then pour into a 2 quart casserole and cover. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes. Stir and bake another 10 minutes. Serves 4.

## Nigeran 419 scam expanding

Dear Attorney General Kline:  
I recently received an email from a public employee in a foreign country who asked me for help transferring some money left over from a ‘public contract’ out of that country for investment in the US. I put the letter aside and forgot it, but yesterday I received a similar letter (this time in the mail) from the widow of a former dictator, asking for my help and my bank account number. Are these for real? It sounds like a scam to me but what should I do?

Dear Kansas Consumer:  
What you are describing is one of the hundreds of versions of what is known as the “Nigerian Scam”, the “Advance Fee Scam”, or the “4-1-9 scam” (named for Nigeria’s telephone area code).

Here’s how it works:  
Letters or faxes from foreign countries like Nigeria (where the modern version of the scam originated) or Ivory Coast, or emails from free email accounts are sent out, asking for the recipient’s help in getting a large amount of money out of the country. The writer could claim to be a public employee, a family member of a deposed leader, of a person who has access to some hidden wealth, but what they want from you is the same: permission to transfer a huge sum of money into and out of your bank account, leaving you a hefty percentage of the money for your help. The promise is that with very little effort on your part you can become a multi-millionaire. The scam is predicated on finding people who are willing to release that information in exchange for a promise of easy money, and free email has made the scam incredibly profitable for its perpetrators.  
Let’s say that Joe Public receives a letter like this and follows the instructions. What usually happens is that Joe gives out his phone number and bank information and waits patiently



## phil kline

### • attorney general

for a few weeks. Then he receives a phone call from someone who tells him there has been a delay in the process, maybe some paperwork has been lost, maybe a corrupt official needs to be bribed. Joe is asked to put up a few thousand dollars to help smooth the process. Joe reasons that a few thousand now will pay off into a few million soon, so he agrees and the money is transferred out of his account. Then Joe waits a few more weeks and receives another call. Now there’s a different problem, but it has the same solution: Joe’s money. The cycle will run until Joe won’t or can’t pay any more, and then there will be no more phone calls. Joe has been scammed. If he’s lucky, he quit early, but there have been several cases where victims traveled to Nigeria to meet with ‘officials’, only to find that they entered the country illegally and must pay a large bribe to go home.

This scam has been working on people, via letters, faxes, and email for more than 70 years. In its original incarnation, dating to the 1920s, it was the scion of a wealthy family being smuggled out of Spain who needed aid. Promises of vast riches were showered on those who would help, only to find that money was needed up front to make things happen.

Eventually, the victim was cleaned out and the only thing smuggled out was their hard-earned money.

Several recent forms of the scam target religious organizations from people who claim that someone has left them a fortune, or to in-

dividuals from someone claiming they’ve won a foreign lottery. The result is the same: The victim is asked to put some money up front and the scammer eventually disappears with it.

According to the US Secret Service, 4-1-9 Scams steal hundreds of millions of dollars each year in the United States alone, on top of losses in Britain, Canada and other countries. In response to the seriousness of the scam, the Secret Service established “Operation 4-1-9” designed to target Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud on an international basis. The Financial Crimes Division of the Secret Service receives approximately 100 telephone calls from victims/potential victims and 300-500 pieces of related correspondence every day. Secret Service agents have been assigned on a temporary basis to the American Embassy in Lagos to address the problem in that arena. Agents have established liaison with Nigerian officials, briefed other embassies on the widespread problem, and have assisted in the extrication of U.S. citizens in distress.

If you have been victimized by one of these schemes, please forward written documentation to the United States Secret Service, Financial Crimes Division, 950 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20223, or telephone 202-406-5572.

If you have received a letter, but have not lost any money to this scheme, please fax a copy of that letter to the Secret Service at (202) 406-5031.

*Attorney General Phill Kline offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Phill Kline, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th Ave., 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310.*

### garfield



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