

from our viewpoint...

## Sales tax won't solve school problems

Gov. Mark Parkinson's call to raise the state sales tax by one cent could be a broad way to solve the immediate state budget problems, but he is asking for it to be a temporary increase for three years and that will not solve the school problems in Goodland.

Getting a Republican controlled legislature to consider a tax increase will be tough enough, and most of the leaders are already saying they do not want to raise taxes in an election year.

A poll conducted by a Wichita television station shows public support for a tax increase to stop further cuts in state services, and public support for increasing the cigarette tax by 70 cents. The poll shows public support for banning smoking from public places statewide.

Raising taxes is always a hot button issue in the legislature, and the current budget problems will make it an interesting session to watch as the Republican leadership tries to find a way to balance the budget and keep the citizens from revolting if the budget cutting knife goes too deep.

For the Goodland School District the actions in Topeka will not solve the school building issue, and with the negative decision on Monday the board is back to square one.

After more than three years of public input, having an architect examine the buildings and recommendations from Superintendent Shelly Angelos about which school to close the board remains divided and unable to reach a consensus decision.

At a special meeting in December it appeared a consensus had been reached with four board members indicating support for the recommendation to close North Elementary as the first step in consolidating the classes into three buildings.

That option was tied on a 3-3 vote on Monday, but with Board Member Gary Slough's abstention the vote was tipped to 3-4 and the motion was defeated.

Closing any school is an emotional decision and we understand the reluctance of the board members who are pulled in many different directions on what ought to be done.

The bottom line is the school district cannot afford to operate all the present school buildings, and keeping them open will leave little choice but to cut staff and programs at all the schools.

Even if the state legislature is able to find a consensus to raise the sales tax that will not trickle down enough to save the Goodland School District.

Whatever the final decision making the changes in the buildings and staff will take time, and every delay makes that more difficult.

We felt the recommendation made by Angelos was well thought out, and would be the best for the students in the schools. It was disappointing to see the school board fail to come to terms with this issue, and we hope they find a workable solution soon.

The devastation caused by the earthquake in Haiti draws at the heart strings, and our prayers go out to the people who were hurt in the quake and the many thousands trying to rescue people and bring relief.

This is the second time two Presidents Clinton and Bush have come together to lead an international relief effort. The first time was for the tsunami in Thailand when Clinton and the elder Bush joined forces. This time it is Clinton and the younger Bush who are answering the call. — *Tom Betz*

## The Goodland Star-News

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## Session challenging, economy top issue

This session may be a very challenging one... but as the Governor reminded us... this is the best time to be a legislator and to take on the challenge to preserve the progress our ancestors have made for Kansas over the past 150 years!

### Last Week at the Statehouse

This is my 18th session and it progressing much too slowly due to no one really knowing how to tackle the economic problems we have before us. It is good to see everyone as we return and to start the relationships that are so critical to getting important bills passed.

### Selling State Assets?

I would like to have my committee, the Government Efficiency and Fiscal Oversight Committee, study and debate the possibility of Kansas selling some of its assets including buildings, land and specific items like computers and other office equipment. I would like to study if there is any benefit to "Decentralizing" Kansas Government.

Last Thursday I received information from a survey conducted by KWCH-TV Wichita. A total of 56 percent responded the state sales tax should be increased in order to prevent further cuts. A total of 71 percent said too many organizations were exempt from sales taxes, 56 percent supported an increase in cigarette taxes and 65 percent supported banning smoking in public places in Kansas.

### KATE'S LAW (AUTISM)

Last session, Rep. Nile Dillmore (D-Wichita) made a motion to move HB2367 out of the conference committee and have it considered when we returned on April 29. It would provide for an insurance mandate for the treatment of autism. It passed. However, it was never debated on the House floor. The key is early intervention and treatment. I am hopeful we



## jim morrison

• capitol review

can address "Kate's Law" during this session and help these children, ultimately reducing the costs in our schools and social services budget while improving their independent functioning and giving them a chance for a productive adult life.

### Earned Income Tax Credit

You may qualify for Earned Income Tax Credits. The Earned Income Tax Credit is a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate-income working individuals and families. Congress originally approved the tax credit legislation in 1975 in part to offset the burden of social security taxes and to provide an incentive to work. When the tax credit exceeds the amount of taxes owed, it results in a tax refund to those who claim and qualify for the credit.

To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they did not earn enough money to be obligated to file a tax return. The tax credit has no effect on certain welfare benefits. In most cases, tax credit payments will not be used to determine eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, low-income housing or most Temporary Assistance for Needy Families payments.

The federal adjusted gross income limits for qualifying for the credit for tax year 2008 (which are adjusted annually for inflation) are as follows:

- For married filing jointly with more than one qualifying child, \$41,646
- For single with more than one qualifying child, \$38,646
- For married filing jointly with one qualifying child, \$36,995
- For single with one qualifying child, \$33,995
- For married filing jointly with no qualifying children, \$15,880
- For single with no qualifying children, \$12,880

"Earned income" basically means salary income. A claimant cannot file "married filing separately" and get the tax credit. A claimant cannot have investment income in excess of \$2,950.00 and get the tax credit. A claimant must be between the ages of 25 and 65 and cannot be claimed as a dependent by anyone to qualify for the tax credit.

Detailed info on this credit is available on the IRS website, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). The Kansas tax credit is 17 percent of the federal earned income tax credit.

### KEEPIN TOUCH

It is a special honor to serve as your state representative. I value and need your input on the various issues facing state government. Please contact me with your comments and questions. My office address is Room 274-W (Same office but changed the number), State Capitol Building, Topeka, KS 66612. You can reach me at (785) 296-7676 or call the legislative hotline at (800) 432-3924 to leave a message for me. Additionally, you can e-mail me at [jim.morrison@house.ks.gov](mailto:jim.morrison@house.ks.gov) or [jim@morrisonfamily.com](mailto:jim@morrisonfamily.com) or [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org). You can follow the legislative session online at [www.kslegislature.org](http://www.kslegislature.org).

## A few more Thumbs Up to deliver

**Thumbs Up** to the Cowboys, good show!; to the personnel who arrive early and stay late to ready Max Jones Fieldhouse for whatever sporting activity is taking place, and then turn off the lights when it's all over; to the men and women who drive our district's school buses. Yours is truly a mission all it's own.

-td-

Trying to decide what school to close has to be one of the toughest decisions a school board member has to make. Taking a school out of operation is akin to bidding farewell to the first child in your household who has reached the age of independence and gets into his/her car to begin a journey in a different setting. Tough! So, while our school board continues its struggle with that decision, give them room and all the time they need. Doubtless no one in the community really wants to see that done, but we all understand finances — there's that word again *MONEY* — rules the roost.

-td-

"Mr. TD, old friend, I am with you on the Kay Melia thing. I miss him too." "In the case of the Melia family, the words of an old song come to mind, 'You can't have one without the other.'" "Did you kid sister ever serve in Congress?" "Keeping a secret for 20 years has to be some kind of record!" (You can offer brief comments on anything in my columns by emailing [tad1@st-tel.net](mailto:tad1@st-tel.net), or by calling 890-2475 or 899-2338. Thanks.)

-td-

All eyes are on the Massachusetts election tonight. This election is to fill the seat left vacant by the death of U. S. Sen. Ted Kennedy. There are three candidates: Joseph Kennedy, an Independent, no relative to the Kennedy clan; Democrat Martha Coakley, state attorney general who has the endorsement of the Kennedy family; and Republican Scott Brown, state legislator. If the state goes Republican in this U.S. Senate race — and that hasn't hap-



## tom dreiling

• time out with td

pened since the discovery of sun rises — the Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate will be in turmoil; their 60-vote cushion will be short one. Tune in tonight for the returns. This result will be big, either way it goes. And this might foretell what to expect in the November elections this year.

-td-

It was certainly enjoyable to have both of our basketball teams come away with victories at the Max Friday night. The girls evened their record at 5-5 and the boys improved their record to 2-8. It was especially gratifying to see the Cowboys win; they have had a tough time of it on the court this season. Of course they are a young bunch and if they can repeat the performance they put on Friday night, they just might be the surprise team before it's all over. Go! Go!

-td-

## where to write

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