

from our viewpoint...

# We need to face state money facts

Many proposals have been floated on how to solve the state of Kansas's "revenue problem", some worth listening to.

First we should understand, the state has a revenue problem not because previous legislatures gave away the farm, as some say, though there is an element of truth to that.

No, Kansas is broke because we are broke. Kansas is hurting because we are hurting.

Income tax collections are down because people are out of work, others are not making as much as they once were and businesses are suffering in this, the worst recession since the Great Depression.

Sales tax collections suffer because we are not buying as much

If there's no money out there to tax, the state will be poor. In fact, Kansas was doing fine despite the tax breaks passed over the last 10 years — as long as the economy was growing.

The state had so much money, it could — and did — spend more and more every year, with expenses growing far faster than the rate of inflation.

Over the years, the state eliminated sales taxes on farm machinery and manufacturing machinery. It gave breaks to the elderly and the poor. It spent even more on higher and higher school spending and more social programs, because the dough kept rolling in.

When the economy went south, of course, this all had to stop.

Then came the cry to eliminate all the "loopholes" in the tax structure. You know, the other guy's tax breaks.

For when it comes to tax policy, everybody benefits from some part of it. And no one wants to lose their personal tax break. That represents "sound fiscal policy."

That's why when the Legislature decided to try closing some tax breaks, it started with one we all get: the exemption on home utility bills.

The idea apparently was that special interests, such as farmers and business groups, have more pull than everybody. So much for that idea.

There is something wrong with the state's tax system, however, when you realize that, according to a 2006 study, only 7 percent of Kansas property and 24 percent of Kansas sales actually are taxed.

Ed Flentje, a professor of political science at Wichita State University, proposed a "tax-break commission" similar to the base closing commissions which review military installations for closure. It would comb the state's tax structure and propose changes.

His colleague in the "Insight Kansas" column, Fort Hays State professor Chapman Rackaway, went him one further: he proposed just eliminating tax breaks and instituting a "flat tax" for the sales tax. Doing so, he estimated, would mean the rate could be reduced from 5.3 percent today to just 1.9 percent.

Applying the sales tax to services, which today are not taxed, would more than close the state's "revenue gap" expected next year.

Who could complain? Rackaway said free-market believers should be happy to see the state get out of the business of deciding which activities to favor. Everyone should benefit from the simplicity.

Of course, the same logic could apply to the income and property taxes. Just tax everyone and everything a little.

Even Girl Scout cookies, churches and hospitals, rich and poor, corporations and small businesses.

The idea has merit. Rates would be low and fair. Only accountants and tax lawyers would be out anything, and they'd find ways to make money.

Too good to be true? Probably. — Steve Haynes

## The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association  
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association  
National Newspaper Association

e-mail: [star.news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star.news@nwkansas.com)


Steve Haynes, President  
Tom Betz, Editor  
Pat Schiefen, Society Editor

Jessica Corbin, Josh Harenberg  
Advertising Department

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

### Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager  
Jim Bowker, Betty Morris, James Jackson,  
Lana Westfahl, Kris McCool, Monica Aaron, Gary Meyer,  
Barbara Ornelas, Judy McKnight

 [nwkansas.com](http://nwkansas.com)

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services  
([nt.betz@nwkansas.com](mailto:nt.betz@nwkansas.com))

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.([support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com))

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [star-news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [goodlandads@nwkansas.com](mailto:goodlandads@nwkansas.com)

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

**Incorporating:**

## The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

### The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants  
1935-1989

### THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
1994-2001

## Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



# Dictionary project warrants thumbs up

**THUMBS Up to...**

"Goodland Elks Lodge, on your dictionary project for grade schoolers."-(e-mail on behalf of the student recipients); \*the city of Goodland, on your decision to name the former National Guard Army building in memory of Sgt. Derrick Lutters, who lost his life in Iraq."-(telephone); "the Goodland Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, on the outstanding awarded presented at the state convention."-(e-mail); "Northwest Tech students, on your periodic reports in the paper, telling us of your career choice and why you picked NWTech to attend."-(2 e-mails); "Alexis Bateman, Landon Brenner, Jay Cotter, Ismael Garcia, Brook Redlin and Ben Waugh, on being named Kansas Honor Scholars by the University of Kansas."-(e-mail); "Goodland and your impressive fieldhouse for hosting the kids' wrestling tourney. You've got a lot going for you." (e-mail from out of town).

To render a salute, simply e-mail [tad1@st-tel.net](mailto:tad1@st-tel.net), or call (785) 890-2475. You may also bring your thumbs up to the Star-News office. Thanks! And there is no charge for this service.

-td-

Moisture in any form is always welcome. So I welcomed another snow cover when I woke up Wednesday morning. People keep saying it's spring. While they are right, spring also includes snow during the transition from winter to spring. And in the mix are warm tempera-



tom dreiling

- time out with td

tures as Mother Nature lays out her plans for the months ahead. After all, she's the ultimate, right on target, weather forecaster. Right?

-td-

Speaking of weather, Washington, D.C., had to be the hottest place in the country over the weekend, thanks to the hot air generated by the blistering health care reform debate. However, I certainly didn't learn anything new.

-td-

Has it ever occurred to you that the primary pre-existing condition is (drumroll) BIRTH!

-td-

**TAKES ALL KINDS...**

This overweight gal showed up at a health clinic and asked to consult a doctor. She didn't have an appointment, but they said they would get her in just as soon as they could. So she sat patiently awaiting the green light. Finally, a nurse came out and motioned to her to come into the doctor's office.

"And what brings you here today?" the doctor said, looking her over closely.

"I'm fat and want to shed a few pounds," she said.

"I'm afraid a few pounds aren't going to do

the trick," the doctor answered.

"Well, what do you suggest," she asked.

"Exercise, A diet. No in-between meal snacks," he said.

"The snack thing bothers me," she said.

"I need 'em to carry me through the day and night."

"If you keep going as you are, there will no longer be days or nights," the doctor warned.

He asked her to step on the scale, which she did. It showed her to be carrying around 225 pounds..

"We've got a lot of work to do to get you back to where you should be," he said.

"And where is that," she asked.

"Oh, around 160 pounds.," he said.

So he spent considerable time outlining a program that she would need to rigorously follow in order to lose weight. She agreed.

Before she left his office, he asked her what caused her to gain so much weight in the first place..

"Well doctor," she said, "I have metal fillings in my teeth and the magnets on my refrigerator keep pulling me into the kitchen."

Yep, it takes all kinds.

-td-

Have a good evening! And as you make your weekend plans, make sure they include a visit to the house of worship of your choice. And while there, don't forget to *feed* the collection basket.

# Kanorado's ongoing road problems

Letter to the Editor:

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank *The Goodland Star-News* and Editor, Tom Betz, for the continuing coverage of Kanorado residents' meetings with the Sherman County Commissioners with regard to our ongoing problems with the Road and Bridge department.

I was not able to attend that particular day. It is heartening to know many of us have the same negative opinion of this particular department and by coming together as a group realized the myth that "you're the only one with a problem" has been dispelled.

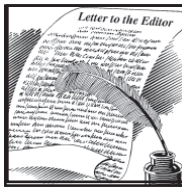
We have not seen a grader down Road 67 since early last fall, in spite of my repeated requests, especially after the horrible condition Rd 67 was in from the hunting season. When I call Road and Bridge now, the only person I speak with is Butch Vandiver, after receiving nothing but continual condescending remarks from the department head, Curt Way.

Because I pass the two graders assigned to the NW quadrant on a daily basis (at Rd 5 and old U.S. 24), I can attest to the fact they never move. Recently, I questioned Butch about my obtaining an actual job description for the grader operators. He did indicate I could come by his office and get one. I was trying to ascertain what the grader operators do when not grading the roads. Butch mentioned that "they repair signs, and do lots of other things." My misunderstanding — I would have thought the primary responsibility would be grading the roads.

I questioned Butch if he drove the county roads very often. He indicated he drives them "all the time." When I asked him his opinion of the horrible rutted condition on Rd 5, he said he had not driven Rd 5 for "a while."

It seems a shame that several hundred thousand dollars of equipment is allowed to sit idle and rust for the better part of the year. We've had a rather mild winter this year, in comparison to past years, and there was actually only one recent snow storm that required the plows to be out. There was more than nine inches of snow on Rd 67 and yet no plows ever appeared.

As that much snow melted, of course, Rd 67 again became a road of "slimy snot." I'm really embarrassed each time we've had out of



from our readers

- to the editor

state friends and family visit us here — when they can get through to our house — and their comments that, "Gee, Sherman County must be a really poor county — your roads are really in terrible shape."

Not only does this portray a poor image of our county, but devalues our respective properties. We have lived here now for almost 8 years, and the only year our roads were graded regularly was the first year. My suggestion to the county commissioners is to approve a refund to the residents of the NW quadrant for the past 7 years for that portion of our property taxes that has gone to the Road and Bridge department to no avail. The county commissioners need to understand that if any of the residents end up in a ditch out here no tow trucks will retrieve us as they know they will get stuck. Possibly the commissioners would be willing to "foot" the car repair and medical bills for the residents in this area since even a 4-wheel drive vehicle cannot maintain stability on mush.

I am in total agreement with my neighbors that the grader operators for our area have not been well trained. After one grading over a year ago, a ridge almost a foot high was left in the middle of Rd 67. It's ridiculous for the graders to shove dirt to both edges of the roads and leave it — then when it does rain, all the water and mud collects on the road instead of draining into the ditches. This to me is nothing more than common sense.

It doesn't help in the summer time when roadside weeds are allowed to reach six feet in height before being mowed. Aren't we taxpayers paying about \$200,000 a year for this non-service?

Is the Road and Bridge department accountable to any of the commissioners?

Phyllis Hadley  
Kanorado

-----

To the Editor:

The U.S. House of Representatives took an historic and bold step forward to expand health care to millions of Americans to guarantee accessible, affordable, and high quality care.

We acknowledge such a complex piece of legislation like the final health reform package isn't perfect — no package of similar magnitude has ever been perfect at the outset — but this is the first step of a legacy building process that will transform American health care.

This measure takes important steps forward by enacting needed insurance reforms, increasing affordability and reducing costs, emphasizing value over volume and placing a greater emphasis on prevention and wellness. For the American Heart Association, health care reform has always been about the needs of heart disease and stroke patients and we're gratified lawmakers didn't lose sight of the concerns of those facing pre-existing medical conditions, lifetime and annual limits and other challenges with the health care system.

We now have health care reform that makes significant progress towards embracing the excellence of available health care in America while improving a health care delivery system that was untenable for too many Americans and unsustainable for all Americans.

The Heart Association will continue to do its part and now with this legislation all Americans will have preventive benefits that help lower rates of obesity, hypertension, tobacco use and diabetes. First dollar coverage for evidence-based preventive services and appropriate treatments and medications that allow patients to lead productive lives after a heart attack or stroke will be key components in our efforts to reduce the burden of disease and extending prevention into communities, especially those of the underserved, will be invaluable.

Sunday's vote for health care reform represents a major milestone but not the end of the journey. We believe the work on health care reform is just beginning.

Chief Executive Officer Nancy Brown  
American Heart Association  
Midwest Affiliate  
6800 W. 93rd St.  
Overland Park