

from our viewpoint...

Budget time raises sales tax questions

The Goodland City Commission struggled through a budget work sessions last week trying to find ways to balance income and spending.

The commissioners managed to get it done, but not without raising the water rates by an average of \$2 per month and a nearly 4 mill increase in property taxes.

Raising rates will help the water fund break even next year, but that is something of an accounting trick because some of the payments that should be made next year will be delayed to the year after that.

No one wants to see huge rate increases, and yet the commission has been told for years that the water fund was in trouble. Over the past four years, the rates have remained the same while the budgets have been balanced by cutting needed upgrades and using the carryover and reserves.

The income problems for the water department are not the only area where the city has run into trouble. There are similar problems with the streets, and depending on what happens in the contract negotiations with Sunflower Electric there may be an electric rate increase coming.

Commissioner Dave Daniels said he felt it was time for the city to look at the alternatives to improve the streets and other facilities.

There are three ways the city has of raising money: raising the property taxes, raising the rates to the users or raising the sales tax.

The sales tax was the method Sherman County used to save the pavement on old U.S. 24, and after the work was done, the one-quarter cent sales tax was taken off.

Property tax increases are wildly unpopular because they are hard on the elderly and other on fixed incomes. To the average person, the sales tax seems fair because everybody who spends money in the city helps pay the tax.

Faced with the financial situation the city and county are in today, it seems to be time to look at the possibility of passing a sales tax for streets, roads and major capital improvements.

“We are doing the voters a disservice unless we give them a change to vote,” Commissioner Dean Blume said.

A one-cent sales tax would raise about \$800,000 a year split between the county and the city of Goodland and a small portion for Kanorado. It would give each a good base to establish a street or road program that could be paid off through the sales tax, and could be used for other projects as well.

It has proved invaluable for the medical services having the one-quarter-cent sales tax approved by voters about 10 years ago. That helps run the hospital, ambulance service, senior center, Good Samaritan Center, county health department and mental health.

There is sure to be opposition to raising taxes, and there should be a good, open discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of increasing the sales tax. There is enough time before the November election to have the details of a sales tax proposal put together and put on the ballot to give the citizens a chance to decide. — *Tom Betz*

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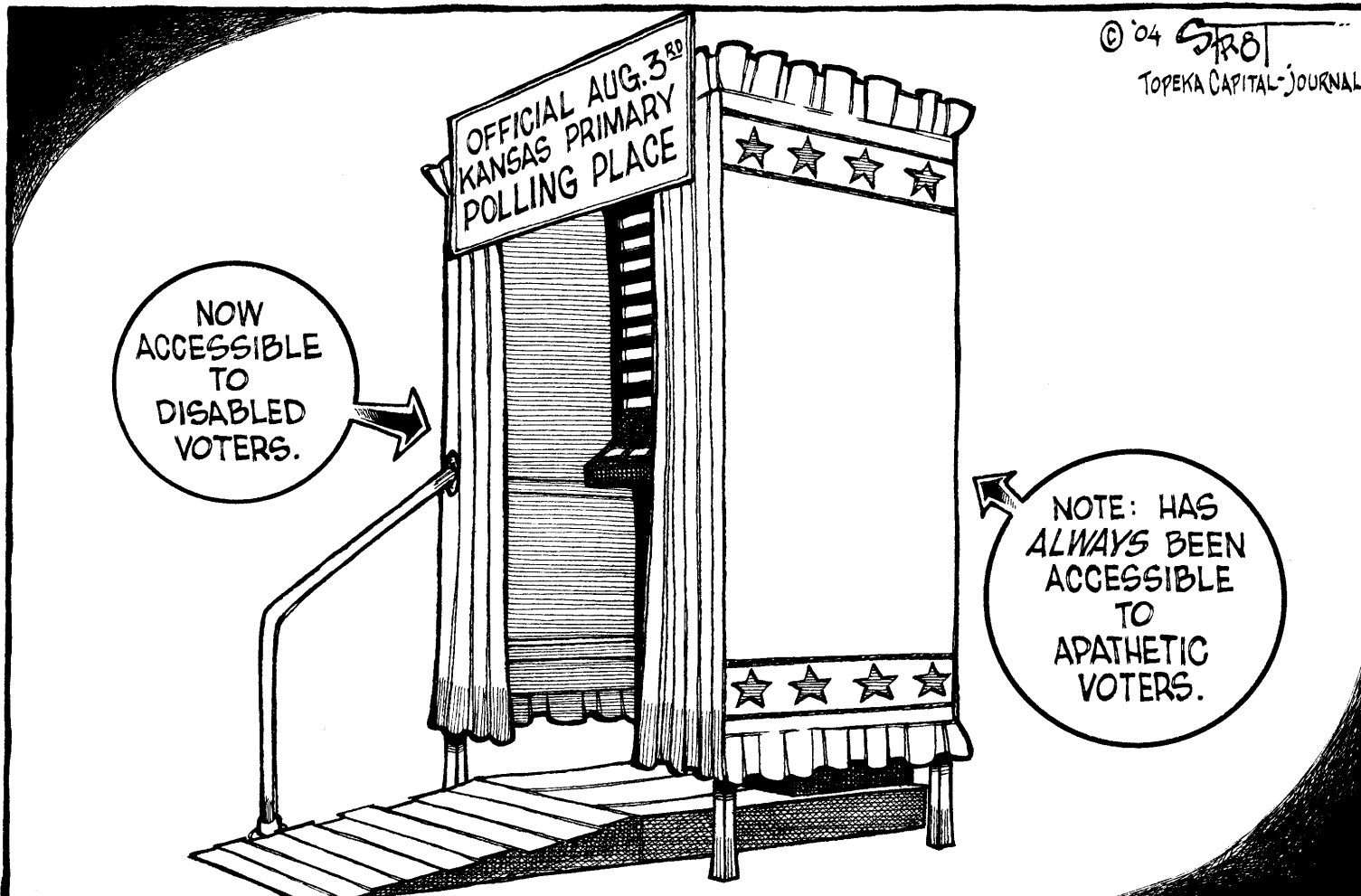
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Kansas: A state with debt problems

Financial awareness, particularly in government, is an issue of great importance to me.

I feel strongly citizens should know exactly why and how their money is being spent. Honesty and accountability are two essential components of our government.

We hear reports about the skyrocketing federal deficit and states like California that are struggling to repair their state’s damaged economy.

But how do we fare in Kansas? According to the latest edition of State News, which is compiled by the Council of State Governments, the answer is not good.

Unlike the federal government, states are not technically allowed to run deficits. However, to get around this, states will issue certificates of indebtedness or bonds in order to fund their debt in an attempt to stay flush financially.

It would be akin to you taking out a loan to pay down a large amount of personal debt. The problem is bonds are just a temporary solution that can end up costing substantially more



**lynn
jenkins**

• state treasurer

money in the long run.

According to Moody’s Investor Services, “2004 State Debt Medians,” the state’s debt looms at a substantial \$2.6 billion, but well below the debt-ridden California’s \$37 billion. However, when that debt is calculated on a per capita basis, each Kansan would have to pay \$963 to pay off our state’s debt making us the 17th worst state in the nation — barely better than California at \$1,060 per person or 15th worst in the nation.

Compare with that of Nebraska, the state with the least debt in the country, and the difference is startling. In contrast, each resident of Nebraska would only have to pay a mere \$43 to rid their state of the debt they face.

Care package was a pleasant surprise

To the Editor:

It was a pleasant surprise to get your care package.

We all greatly appreciate it. It could not have come at a better time.

We had just gotten out of the field after a rough couple of weeks. It was a great morale boost to get a great package like you sent.

It makes our job a lot easier knowing we have so much support at home.

I should be home in early October and will make it a point to thank you all personally. If there is anything we can do for you, let us know.

Once again, thanks to everyone.

Jeremy A Cloyd

Sgt./USMC

Iraq

To the Editor:

We would like to take this time to thank everyone who was involved in anyway with the Fourth of July Parade. It was a huge success and a most fitting tribute to our son, Sgt. Jeremy A. Cloyd, and all who have served or are currently serving our great country.

Hats off to Courtney Warden and the Chamber of Commerce for all the hard work to make the parade possible. Thanks to Scott Weber of Scooter’s and Sight and Sound for sponsoring Jeremy. John and Judy Bateman and Serendipity Flower Shop deserve a round of applause for the beautiful corsage and the thoughtful card. We love you!

Finally, thanks to the First National Bank. The float was beautiful; we know how much hard work went into it. Thank you for allowing us to ride on it. We were honored, and felt like royalty. You treated us so well, even providing the candy to throw, as well as an umbrella for shade from the sun.

It is with gratitude we want to thank First National Bank for the care package they sent to Jeremy and his unit. The time, money and love that went into that huge box was over-



**from our
readers**

• to the editor

whelming! It fills our hearts with love and joy to call you friends.

The morale boost that comes from a letter or package from home is priceless. It’s what keeps Jeremy moving forward in this war. The Armed Forces serve well and sacrifice much for our freedom.

Thanks to everyone for the prayers, cards, letters and packages that have been sent to Jeremy and the Marines in his unit.

Special thanks to Jeremy’s grandparents, LeRoy Lance and Guy and Maxine Lucas, for the steady supply of packages sent to Iraq. Also to Laurel Belshe for the prayer circle and posters, Keith Wiecek, Valerie Kaup, Jim and Avis Alcorn and Jamie Baker for the care packages sent to Jeremy.

Greg and Tammy Cloyd

Goodland

To the Editor:

Article Five of the Kansas Constitution defines who is eligible to be an elector in the State of Kansas.

Section one of article five reads, “Every citizen of the United States who has attained the age of eighteen years and who resides in the voting area in which he or she seeks to vote shall be deemed a qualified elector.”

Unfortunately, voting is a right that not all people with disabilities have been able to exercise. People with disabilities comprise about one-fifth of the voting age population in Kansas, yet less than half of them voted in the 2000 elections.

In fact, if people with disabilities voted at the same rate as those without disabilities, 4.6 mil-

lion more votes would have been cast in the last presidential vote.

In Kansas it is becoming increasingly easier for people to participate in the voting process. The recently enacted Help America Vote Act requires every polling place to have at least one voting machine that is accessible to all persons with disabilities.

Recent changes to Kansas election laws require every polling place to be accessible to voters with disabilities, and in Kansas, voters with disabilities can apply for advance voting or permanent advance voting status so they can vote by mail from home.

This election year is critical in that the entire Kansas Legislature, most of the Kansas congressional delegation and the office of president are all open for election.

People with disabilities must get involved in the political process and exercise their right to vote. Your vote is your voice in protecting your rights and the services you need to live. The late disability rights advocate and “Father of the Americans with Disabilities Act,” Justin Dart, used to tell people, “Vote as if your life depends on it. Because it does.”

If you or someone you know has a disability and has questions about their voting rights or want to register to vote or apply for advance voting, we can help.

Contact SKIL of Western Kansas at 628-8019 or (800) 316-8019.

Lou Ann Kibbee

SKIL of Western Kansas
Hays

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste.

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