

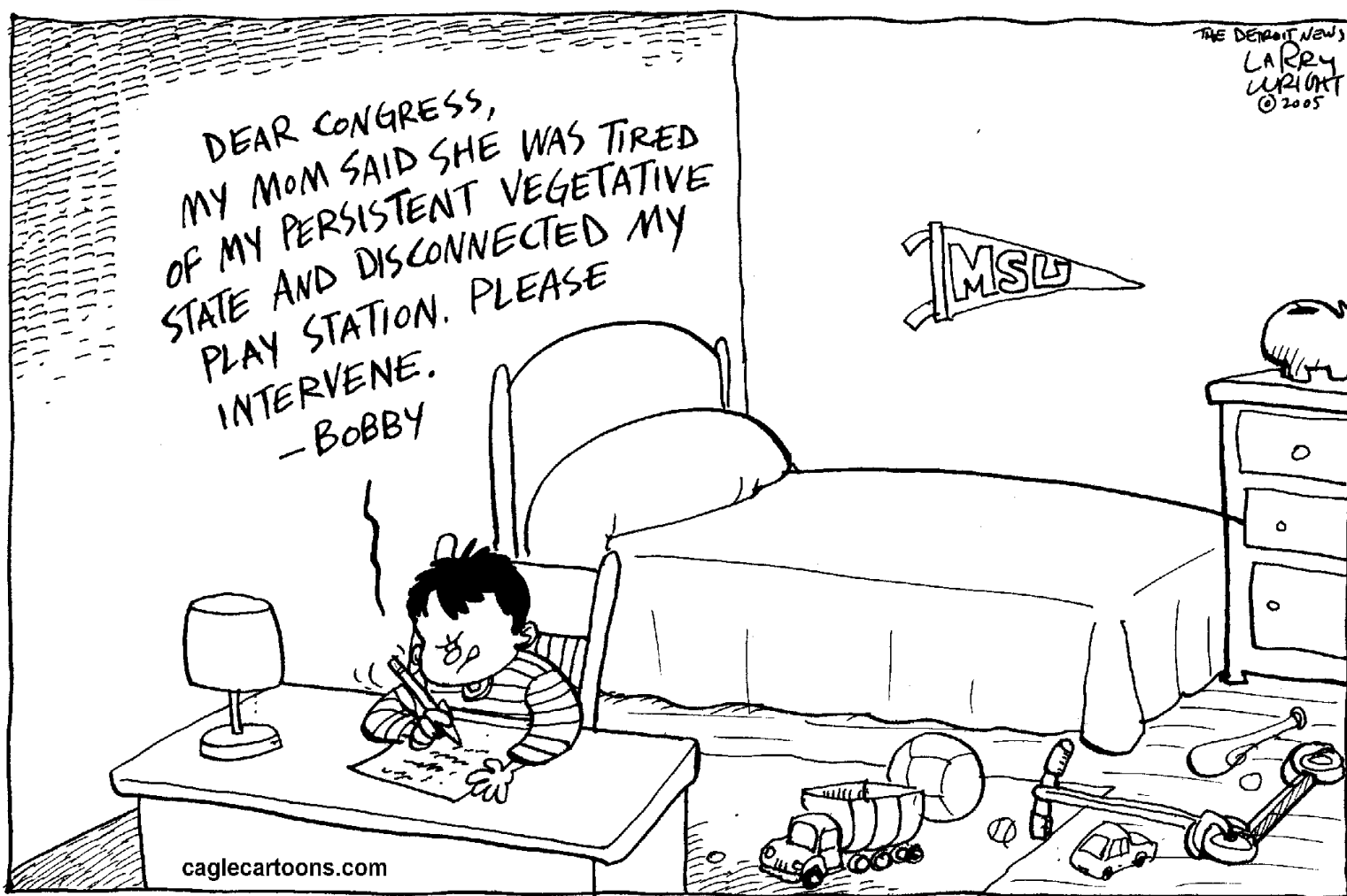
from our viewpoint...

Government caps might be good idea

We're starting to hear in Kansas about something called TABOR, the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights. It's a scheme for limiting the growth of government, first applied in Colorado. Some people would like to try it here. A lot of people would hate to see it tried here, but most of them are dining at the state's table. The idea is controversial. Opponents say it has hamstrung Colorado government. Others say that might not be such a bad idea. We can tell you from experience, though, that property taxes are lower in Colorado, sometimes less than half what they are in Kansas. Roads are better today than what they were when TABOR came into being. City, county and school governments function as usual. Students are taught. Streets are cleaned. Sewers run. Roads are graded. Kansas government has grown like a mushroom in the last 45 years. Kansas taxes have kept pace. Maybe some limits are in order. We've been saved from major tax increase by a conservative majority in the Legislature, but there's no saying it'll always be that way.

Opponents of tax limits say they haven't worked well in Colorado, especially when the economy went down. But all states were in a squeeze then. So were taxpayers. Kansas sponsors say they see the problems with the Colorado law, and know how to avoid them. There are as many pressure groups pushing for bigger state government as there are state programs. No one really lobbies for the taxpayers in Topeka, but every state program has its lobby. Some, like schools, have three or four.

All these groups hate tax limits. They represent public employees, public officials, social services clients and a host of others who suck tax money out of the state coffers. That money comes from all of us. We're not saying the state has no needs. We are saying the state could use some limits. And this idea is worth looking at. In Colorado, by the way, the Legislature never would pass a bill instituting tax and budget limits. There was a petition drive. The TABOR measure had to go to the voters as a constitutional amendment. They saw the logic, even if their representatives did not. What would happen if Kansas voters got a chance to pass on something like this? We'd like to see. — Steve Haynes



I was fortunate to have good parents

I don't know about you, but I've been thinking a lot about my parents. I was fortunate to have good parents. They weren't highly educated; they weren't overly demonstrative; they certainly weren't financially rich. But they were good parents, and they loved their children. Children learn their ideas of right and wrong from their parents. They learn what family and parenting is all about by the example they see from their parents. These are things we understand only as we grow older. However, that doesn't mean they aren't true. Do you ever wonder what kind of world we're making? We like to blame all the bad things that happen on God or on our parents or on some situation over which we had no control. But I believe we all have a hand in shaping our world and our futures. What kind of world will it be when no one has to be responsible for his/her own actions? Our system of justice is not what it used to be. Too many times, bad behavior — that which harms our society or its people — is overlooked because of technicalities. Our jails are overcrowded, so the first-time offenders are slapped on the wrist and put back into society, thus proving they can get away with it. What kind of world will it be when no one feels that marriage is sacred? A walk down the aisle today often costs thousands of dollars. It's a show, a production. But



lorna gt
• commentary

many times, the marriage doesn't last long enough to pay off the wedding debts. At the first sign of trouble, one partner or both just leaves. "I don't have to put up with this!" "I'm not in love any more!" What kind of world will it be when everyone worships at the altar of sports? "Pay the athletes big bucks; it's worth it to have them entertain us. They don't have any moral obligation to live good lives, after all their lives are personal; it's not their fault that the media covers every time they sneeze. They feel no sense of duty to influence young people for the good." Their behaviors have progressed from eccentric to criminal. What kind of world will it be when all the churches have to close due to lack of participation? Your money is your own, isn't it? Why should you share it to pay the church's utility bill or buy curriculum to teach your children moral values? They can learn all they need to know at home or on a sports field. What kind of world will it be when we all see the church as superfluous? When God becomes irrelevant? We are all mature, rational

human beings, aren't we? We can guide our future without any need of a loving, forgiving God? As I think today about my parents — how wise they were, how much they loved their children and felt the need to influence them for God — the questions just keep popping up. What would my life have been like if I hadn't had their guidance? What would I value today if I had seen them blame God for all the bad things that happened to them, if they had excused all my mistakes or blamed teachers for my questionable behavior, if they had walked away from their marriage vows at the first sign of disappointment, if they had demonstrated watching TV sports or participated in Sunday activities which didn't honor the Sabbath? Showing me that all those things were more important than going to church? I grew up valuing the work of the church. I saw people dedicated to God, and I learned first-hand that God magnifies work and money given to his kingdom. I saw what putting God first meant even in a financially-poor, but loving home. Last week we celebrated Easter. Does it really make any difference in our lives? God put our welfare ahead of his only Son's. Is your life here on earth so wonderful that it's enough for you? Or would you rather live forever? Quo Vadis (where are you going)?

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Marriage question leads down wrong path

Why can't gay people get married? When two people fall in love and get married, gay or straight, how can it possibly hurt anyone? Denying others the right to marry is wrong. A Kansas Constitutional amendment is attempting to further discriminate against homosexuals by defining marriage as between "one man and one woman." Over 100 years ago, a shortsighted bigoted man tried to ban the union of "whites and negroes" with a law called Brown's Bill to Make Union of Whites and Negroes Impossible. The bill would have made any such marriages unlawful and declared void with a prison sentence of no less than two years for any clergymen violating the law. Looking back, it's easy to see how unfair the attempt to ban interracial marriages by John Brown state representative from Sherman County really was. If someone even tried to introduce that measure today, the clear-minded majority would run him out of the state. How different is what Brown attempted to do in the early 20th century from what some radical thinkers are trying to do today? Discrimination in any form is wrong. Homosexuals deserve the same rights as everyone else. Our Constitution guarantees everyone the same rights, regardless of race, creed or color. How much of a stretch is it to insert other bases on which we should not discriminate? Much of the argument I've heard for the amendment is from the so-called "religious



kathryn burke
• commentary

right." People who are taught by Jesus to love everyone have singled out homosexuals to hate. Religion should not play a part in the gay marriage decision because marriage is a legal joining, not necessarily a religious one. My husband and I are married, although we aren't members of a church. Marriage to us — and to many homosexuals — is not about God, it's about legally declaring your love for one another. Today, I can be claimed on my husband's insurance, take his name and save on our taxes because of a legal document. If anything had happened to me or my husband before we married, neither of us could have made decisions in the hospital waiting room for the other. In some cases, we might not have been let into intensive care unit, since legally we were not related. Years ago, when women couldn't vote, people stood up and declared that discrimination wrong. When blacks were enslaved, many saw the injustice and worked to free all men. Even the fight to ensure equal rights to the handicapped and mentally disabled highlights our nation's quest to make all people equal. A group called Kansans for Fairness, headed by Bruce Ney, a Topeka lawyer, has launched a "David and Goliath" effort to oppose the

amendment. The group released a report Friday quoting ministers from across the state who oppose the amendment. "How dare any person of faith discriminate against God's own?" asked the Rev. Bob Menelly, retired pastor of Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village. "Jesus himself says nothing in the New Testament regarding homosexuality," said the Rev. James Herron, pastor of United Christian Church, Abilene, "but he speaks often of religious snobbery and intolerance, of thinking ourselves more righteous, more holy, more acceptable to God than others." I implore you, please, vote NO Tuesday and say yes to humanity, fairness and equality. Vote NO and join the fair-minded and tolerant. Vote NO and do what's right for others. Vote NO and say aloud you don't want to be a part of allowing the government to legislate morality. If we allow the rights of homosexuals to be stripped, who's next?

Letter Policy

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