

from our viewpoint...

Spending control part of local taxes

Much is being made of the fact that property taxes have gone up since Kansas changed the school finance formula in 1992.

It's true, but it may not be such a bad thing. On one hand, property taxes are most unpopular with the voters. On the other hand, it brings control of spending back to a school district's voters, who can approve (or deny) a property tax increase.

Voters have little control over statewide tax increases, except for the legislators they elect.

Kansans have elected conservative members who have voted, over the last decade, to reduce state taxes and to give schools more control over their own fate.

People don't seem to mind. In fact, in elections last year, they voted in more conservatives, ousting some liberal members who had pushed for a tax increase.

It's hard to read that election as a cry for higher state taxes, no matter what the needs. From here, it looks like voters want the state to hold the line on spending.

There are some problems with that idea. For one thing, allowing local control means school spending will be less "equal" across the state. That may create an opening for those who decry difference in spending from one district to another, creating yet another excuse for a lawsuit.

The original school "equalization" plan was crafted to avoid just that problem. It took all taxing decisions out of local hands.

By opening up a route for "rich" districts to spend more on their students, the Legislature may be asking for another round of legal problems.

There is a good argument for letting voters decide on tax increases. All Kansans think schools are important. Most of us think they are the No. 1 job of government. That doesn't mean they have a blank check.

People in one town may think schools are a little more important than the next. Voters may approve a levy increase or bond issue in one district, but not the next. That kind of community decision making is the bedrock of our democracy, but it was missing from the state-run school system for a long time.

Election after election has shown that, if school officials make a compelling case, they'll get a yes vote. And that is as it should be.

None of this will mean much if the state Supreme Court takes over the schools, however. The court ordered the Legislature to make "suitable" provision for education, without defining suitable.

It could mean the \$173 million the Legislature scraped up this year, or the \$1 billion consultants suggested a couple of years ago. It's hard to imagine the court trying to order a \$1 billion tax increase, but it could happen.

As it is, the Legislature put what it could find into schools and left the rest to local board and local voters. You have to believe that they will do the right thing.

Is local control of schools and school budgets really such a bad thing? It worked for a couple of centuries, and it might just work again.

Why not try? — Steve Haynes

Pope Oblivious I & Pope Benedict XVI compare notes



I try to control those feelings of anger

I don't know about you, but I occasionally get angry.

It often surges up and overwhelms me when I least expect it. I've tried to analyze why. Why is it so near to the surface that it can be there on less-than-a-moment's notice?

Never finding an answer to that question, I have determined that if I can't prevent it, at least I can control it.

Some people seem to trigger my anger more than others. I'm sure a psychiatrist would say, "Because they're too much like you are." I fight against believing that, but find it's probably true.

It takes quite a bit to make me angry — usually. My body's reaction to extreme anger used to be tears. That doesn't happen much anymore, but then I don't get that angry as often now either. Now anger usually makes me sad.

I'm sad for the person/people I'm upset with; I'm sad with myself for letting them upset me. I'm sad for society's injustice; I'm sad because I have no control of or cure for it. I'm angry,



**lorna
gt**

• commentary

then sad, at man's inhumanity to man, at our inability to learn from history.

Anger is a dangerous emotion. I seldom am so mad that I'm destructive. I don't throw things or pound my fists against immovable objects.

Recently, I've realized that anger first makes me want to fight back, even though I usually can't. Then anger makes me sad with the hopelessness of it. And then I get depressed — sometimes because I can't cry like I used to.

I sometimes, but not often, take my anger out on God. I question, "Why?"

I guess I'm a little like the character in the book, Sutter's Cross by W. Dale Cramer: "I got mad. I didn't see no point to anything. I had to

yell at somebody, so I yelled at God. I guess when you're sitting naked and alone, in the dark, on the edge of a cliff, it's pretty much down to just you and God... I screamed at Him for all the wrong roads I'd been down, roads that ended at this cliff. I screamed till I saw colors from the pain in my jaw, and then I screamed some more. I didn't see how any God could expect me to know what roads to take when none of them are marked, and there ain't nothing you can really know for sure. Every time you think you know something, somebody'll tell you different."

We can't know for sure about a lot of roads. Sometimes the most well-intentioned actions turn out to be wrong. I guess it's all a learning technique.

Anger can be healthy if it causes us to question our reasoning and actions.

We can't be expected to do the right thing every time, but we can learn from our mistakes. Righteous anger can be a way to see what's wrong and then take action to make it right.

Evolution: Two sides deserve attention

To the Editor:
In the Tuesday, April 19, issue of *The Goodland Star-News*, Rick Reeser points out that both the intelligent design theory and the evolutionist theory are based on scientific evidence.

He and others believe the two sides should be given equal exposure in high schools. He reveals the difference of opinion on this matter that exists between the members of the state Science Standards Committee, of which he is a member.

We owe thanks to Reeser for making this



**from our
readers**

• to the editor

information public.

He states both theories are religious because they deal with the questions regarding who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. However, Reeser states that Christianity is deistic. That is not quite true.

We seem to take democracy for granted

Americans prize our democracy, but sometimes we seem to take it for granted.

In our region, there are dozens of townships, small towns, school districts, even cities the size of Oberlin where no one bothers to file for office.

Local office doesn't pay very well, if at all. Some entities, such as smaller townships, don't do very much.

People complain about the lack of interest, but nothing much changes.

Most towns and schools eventually get a full compliment of board members. Most of these boards to an admirable job.

But why don't people care enough to run? Why do so many incumbents stand for re-election unopposed?

Does anybody really care? Here's a proposition that would get people out to run for office.

Let's make it state law that for any county, city, school district, township or special board where no one files for each seat in an election, that district, city or county stands to be dissolved.

There would be a question on the ballot, "Should this 'name of entity' be dissolved according to the law of the State of Kansas?"



**steve
haynes**

• along the sappa

Oh, I can hear the howls already. But it would put voters to the test. Do they care?

Do they want the schools to stay open? The township to grade roads? The city to maintain its services?

Or would it be better just to let things go? My guess is few questions would ever make it to the ballot, at least in cities and school districts.

There might be some townships that would just go away. A few school districts have dissolved already, though not for lack of interest.

People loved them. Lack of kids did them in.

The way things are, people get elected to some boards with just a few write-in ballots. That's not the way democracy is supposed to work.

Voters don't really have much of a choice. Things usually work out, sometimes surprisingly well. But we can do better.

Deism is the belief there is a power who has created, but is no longer interested in what he has created. He is like a giant watch maker who has set the natural laws in order and gone off to another corner of the universe. This is the religion of the founding fathers of this nation.

Christianity is theism. This is the belief that God has created the universe and is vitally interested and involved in His creation by revealing Himself in Jesus Christ. The distinction is very important to Christians.

Earl Martell, retired pastor
Goodland

It allows small groups to get together under the radar and plot things out. Voters don't know what to expect. A few people can "railroad" a stealth campaign and get a slate elected with a minority of the vote.

It may be legal, but it's not good government.

If a town or school faced dissolution, my guess is people would get their names on the ballot. Voters would know what is coming. Interest would increase, and elections would mean more to the average person.

If not, people could vote yes or no on the district or township.

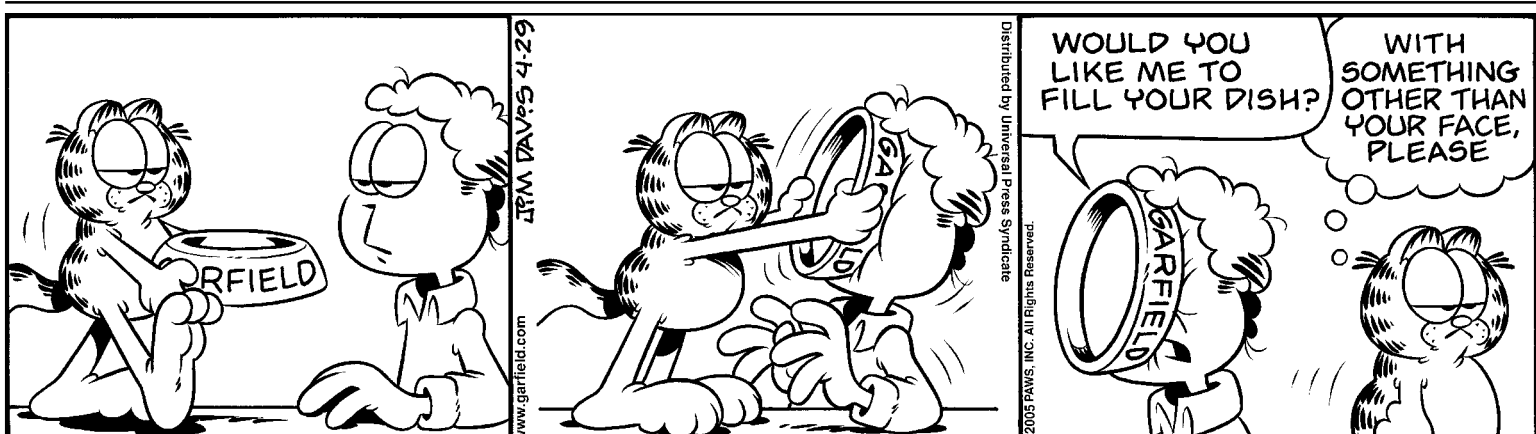
And if no one cared, then we'd be rid of some excess governmental baggage.

And that might not be all bad, either.

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