

from our viewpoint...

Taxpayers' control is the ballot box

Anytime taxpayers don't like what the Legislature or the governor are doing, they have the right to "throw the rascals out" at the next election.

That is the ultimate Taxpayers Bill of Rights, and it is built into the constitution and laws at every level of government.

Today, though, there is a new push led by the conservative group Americans for Prosperity to pass a Taxpayer Bill of Rights for Kansas in the next legislative session.

Alan Cobb, state director for the lobbying group, has been traveling the state to pump up support for this law, which would limit the growth of government and require voters to approve any tax or spending increases over the rate of inflation plus population growth.

He points to Colorado, which passed a similar law by a vote of the people in 1992, claiming our western neighbor has done well with these limits in place over the last 13 years.

Actually, the Colorado Taxpayer Bill of Rights covered all levels of government from the state down to the smallest city. In the past 10 years, many major cities and counties have gone to their voters to remove some of the limits of the law, and in more than two-third of the votes, the limits have been removed.

In the next two weeks, Colorado voters will be asked to repeal a section of the law and give the state part of the money that it has been required to be returned over the past years because of the limits the law put on state spending.

Colorado's economy may be a bit rosier than Kansas', but the state has been facing the same red ink, and with the Taxpayers Bill of Rights, it has been tough to pay for schools and highways in the budget crunch.

With most of the major cities and counties released from the limits, it appears that Colorado is doing well, and that the law has been a success. If that were true, would the state Legislature, the governor, the heads of the largest state universities, the mayor of Denver and countless teacher and education groups be pushing to have the voters remove part of the limits imposed by the law 13 years ago.

As with the Taxpayers Bill of Rights campaign beginning in Kansas, there are claims and counter claims on both sides saying the other side is not playing fair with the truth.

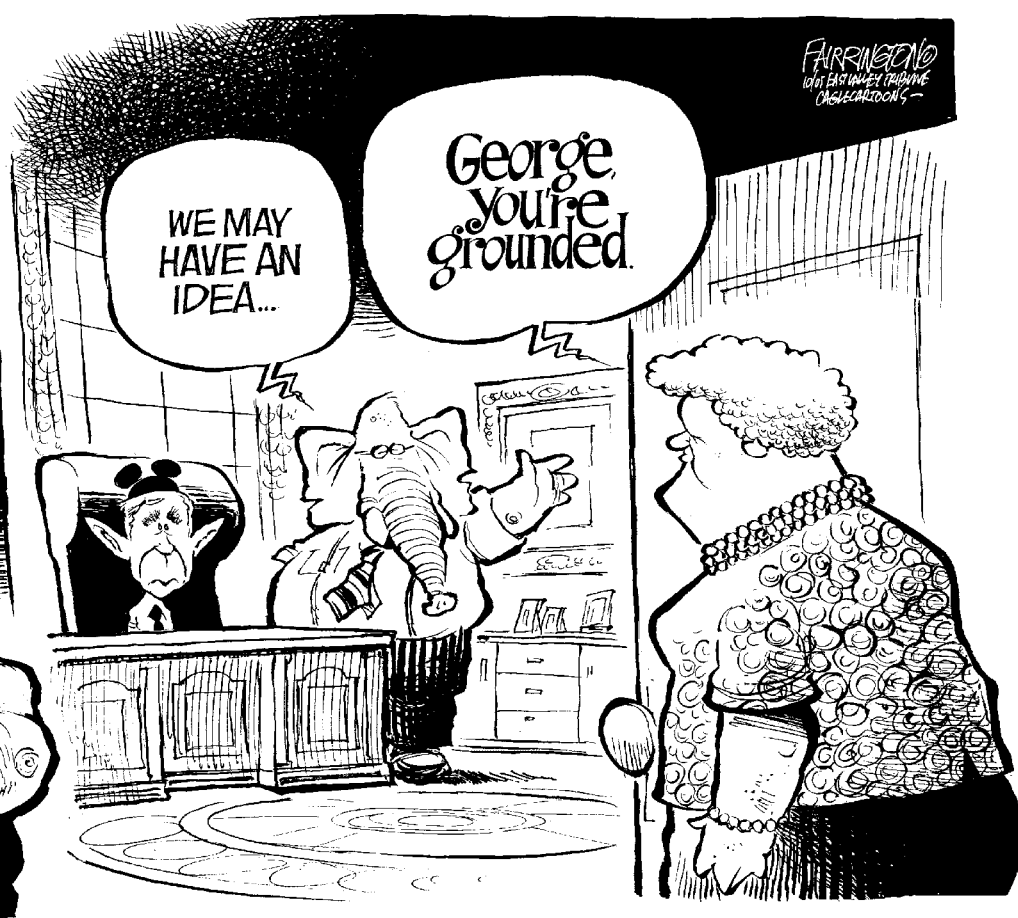
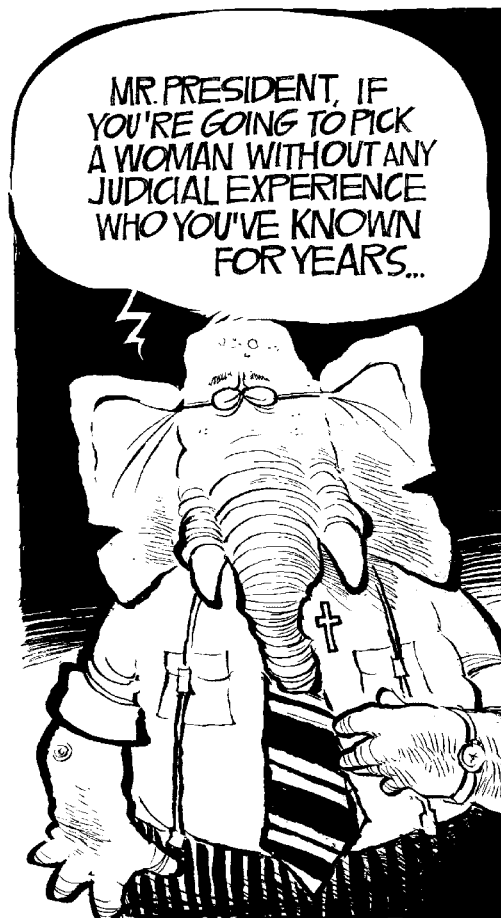
The goals of a Taxpayers Bill of Rights are to give the people the control over future state spending, and to require they be asked before there is any increase in taxes or spending. That sounds good, but with a low rate of inflation and low population growth in Kansas, the law can cause more problems than it will solve.

The results in the upcoming Colorado election should be instructive. No matter what our neighboring state does, the question will be at the forefront in Topeka next year. As it is an election year, people running for state office will face a new litmus test when they are asked if they support the Taxpayers Bill of Rights.

The best way to limit government is to keep the people we elect accountable. Putting into writing limitations based on outside economic factors is asking for more financial trouble.

It would be as good to ask the candidates if they understand how to balance a check book rather than tie them to a law that will take away the incentive to be fiscally responsible.

— Tom Betz



Christianity should be part of evolution debate

To the Editor:

The debate between evolution and intelligent design is a current subject of interest. Permit me to add Christianity to the discussion, since all deal with the development of life on earth.

Not all, but some evolutionists insist that the theory is set in concrete and will not allow for any other explanation for the birth and development of life. Theory, by its nature, is in the never-ending process of modification, change, and correction, meaning that a theory can only be proven wrong.

The Scot skeptic philosopher David Hume's story of the swan has been used to make the point: He writes, "If we claim that all swans are white, we can only prove it by examining all swans past, present and future. If we find one black swan, we have proven the theory wrong."

It is generally known that time is the test of a theory. If it lasts a long time, which some theories don't, but which evolution has, then it becomes more and more accepted as a fact. However, the truth is evolution can only be proven as wrong.

Moreover, evolution is not a fact. A fact in Immanuel Kant's definition is *a priori* knowledge, meaning knowledge that is in place before experiment or sense experience, such as the sun always sets in the west, or two plus two is always four. Evolution is not a fact, a truth that existed *a priori*. Evolution is based on a hypothesis developed into considerable evidence of observed principles that have formed verifiable relationships with some degree of credibility. We cannot deny the evolutionary process before our eyes, but it is not a fact to be considered as true and ultimate.

Intelligent design, according to its adherents,



from our readers

• to the editor

is the theory that there is a design in nature that can lead to the possibility of an intelligent designer. They claim that life is too complex to have developed by evolution. Intelligent design allows the possibility of supernatural power behind creation, which may not be or may be Christian, Buddhist, Muslim or some other power yet to be discovered.

Some evolutionists don't want intelligent design taught in schools. Others say that evolutionists don't want the probability of God allowed into schools. Intelligent design supporters say it should be taught in schools, and have convinced many, including President Bush.

So where does this debate leave us non-scientific types who can't explain the difference between an atom and a radar blip?

It leaves us, who lack understanding of scientific principles and language, wondering if our ancestors crawled out of the primeval slime, evolving into the monkey who later invented the wheel and typewriter, or if we are subject to some unknown force that has designed nature to ravage and destroy people and property.

It is all too complex. Personally, I will go back to the Bible, the Word become flesh in Jesus Christ, who explains to me why we humans behave the way we do and why nature acts the way it does in theological and anthropological language meaning simple language revealing how God, the Creator, relates to hu-

mans and nature.

Evolution and intelligent design offers us little hope for the future, at this point in time, except more debate and confusion. Jesus Christ offers real down-to-earth living in this life, and a future with a shining goal.

Earl Martell
Goodland

To the Editor:

Bovine to beef is intra competition.

Do ye wonder what the fruit sticker cost? Consider — if them and animal IDs from calf to grill efforts had been used to tag aliens, 9/11 might not have happened.

A cow had twins; one sold as nurse calf, then grower, weaner, feeder and feedlot, the other stayed in herd 'till slaughter. Taxing any animal more than once is unfair and unjust! Enthusiasm plus a volunteered \$1 — doeth more than \$10 — seized and spent! The cheat-off crowd's goal is check off with no proof of profit. (Could the radio, television and newspapers fain as cheat-off crowd force sell ads to thee?) Those who tried exotic cattle, other innovations risked to make a profit. The claims expenses and choice of promotion. Of everyone involved in production, have a prior constitutional right over the cheat-off crowd's monopoly. How have they profited thee?

Hath a nation changed their Gods which are yet no Gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Jer. 2:11

Frank Sowers
Benkelman, Neb.

PS: If churches cannot levy dues or tax non-members, are the cheat-off crowd worth their nefarious monarchy?

The real sin of Tom DeLay

The question is not whether Tom DeLay is guilty or not guilty of the specific, bookkeeping offense for which he has been indicted. That is for the lawyers and the accountants to figure out.

What is crucial is DeLay managed to do something that is very, very wrong and highly injurious to our democracy — to fix the elections for the House of Representatives, in effect to take the ballot out of our hands.

Gerrymandering has been with us since the earliest days of the republic, when Massachusetts Gov. Elbridge Gerry drew a legislative district that looked like a salamander to get his allies elected, and the press dubbed it a Gerrymander. DeLay carried this pernicious practice to new lows.

The lines drawn by the Texas Legislature after the 2000 Census were not stacked to DeLay's liking, so the House Republican leader worked overtime to elect Republicans to the state Legislature so they could override the map drawn in 2001 with new, even more biased district lines. His tactic worked and five Democrats were defeated in districts that wouldn't go Democratic even if Adolf Hitler were the GOP nominee.

Did he violate the letter of the law in the ways he funneled money to Washington to execute his nefarious plot? It depends on the paper trail. One has to be really, really stupid to get caught in this era of porous campaign-finance laws.

If somebody was crazy enough to send an e-mail specifying how much the Republican National Committee PAC should give to each Texas state Legislative candidate, they almost deserve what will happen.



dick morris

• commentary

But there probably is no such trail. Money is fungible. DeLay and his minions probably orchestrated several corporate campaign contributions which the national Republican organization happened to use for clerical and administrative expenses which happened to free certain hard dollars which happened to be distributed where they would do the most good for the Texas GOP in the coming state elections.

Yet the result of DeLay's efforts is that we are losing our capacity to elect the House of Representatives. Only 20 of the 435 districts are in least sense competitive.

In the reapportionments that followed the 2000 Census, the political parties in almost every state cooperated to draw the district lines to minimize the number of incumbents who would lose their seats. As a result, the number of House incumbents defeated in the post-Census elections has reached an all time low. In the elections following the 1980 census, 42 House members were defeated. In those after the 1990 election, 39 lost their seats. But after the 2000 census, only 16 were defeated — half by other incumbents drawn into the same districts as a result of the shrinkage of the state population.

The result of DeLay's efforts is that control of the House of Representatives has now been

predetermined and taken out of the hands of the voters. No matter what happens nationally, the GOP will control the House until the 2010 reapportionment.

This massive disservice to democracy makes a mockery of calls for increased voter turnout. What is the point when the lines have been drawn in such a way as to fix the results?

Did DeLay violate the law in siphoning contributions to his favored candidates? Maybe — but everybody does it, and its very unlikely any criminal action can be proven. A wink and a nod is not documentary evidence.

Does DeLay deserve to be indicted? No. In virtually every state, campaign contributions from corporations are scrubbed and laundered through PACs and state or national party organizations so they can replace hard dollars, which are then given to candidates.

But Tom DeLay stands guilty of a greater offense, one not punishable by the rule of law: He has subverted American democracy. The lower House of Congress, intended by the framers of our Constitution to be the body that best reflects the ebbs and flows of public opinion, is no longer really democratic.

Tom DeLay does not deserve to be indicted. But he should be condemned for failing to exercise that quality of restraint and deference to public opinion that is the hallmark of a leader in a democratic society. He sublimated the needs of democracy to those of partisanship. He has done his bit to make America a banana republic.

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