

from our viewpoint...

Colorado voters nix spending limits

Colorado voters lifted state spending limits for the next five years to give the state more money to beef up its programs.

When the vote was announced, Republican Gov. Bill Owens joined the mayor of Denver and the Democratic legislative leadership to celebrate. It was a large bipartisan group, which had spent time convincing Colorado citizens to vote in favor of the statewide question.

The vote was close, but a majority of 52 percent of those voting agreed the message of the Colorado leaders was worth listening to. They voted to give up tax refunds for the next five years to give the state money for schools, highways and health care.

Every time the Taxpayer Bill of Rights is proposed in a state, including Kansas, the fact that Colorado is the only state that has passed such a bill is mentioned. The vote in Colorado, and the large bipartisan effort to convince the voters, is a demonstration of the problems that come from putting tax policy in a state constitution.

Colorado has been living with the Taxpayer Bill of Rights for over 13 years, and in that time the state has faced financial problems because of the spending limits under the constitutional amendment.

When an economic recession stagnates wages and higher living costs squeeze people, it make ideas of limiting government spending sound right. There are good reasons to consider ways to limit expansive government spending when there is truly evidence of wasteful excesses.

However, those simple-sounding formulas have unintended consequences, such as the financial problems that have plagued Colorado for the past five years.

Those supporting a Taxpayers Bill of Right for Kansas have said they will make sure it does not include the provisions that caused Colorado problems. Fixing the glitch is what the Colorado voters were asked to do in the election last Tuesday. State leaders made the case that a fix was needed, and the voters agreed.

Some supporters of the limits on government say it is the only way to control legislators because there is no control at the ballot box. The quest to control spending is easier than finding good candidates from either party who are willing to truthfully approach the need to balance government spending.

If there truly is no way to make changes through the ballot box, it is because the party leaders on both sides feel they do not have to listen, and because of finely engineered boundaries, legislative districts are no longer competitive.

Proponents of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights were upset with the outcome of the vote in Colorado. The important message from the Colorado election is that voters are more intelligent than some political pundits believe.

Congratulations to the people of Colorado. — *Tom Betz*

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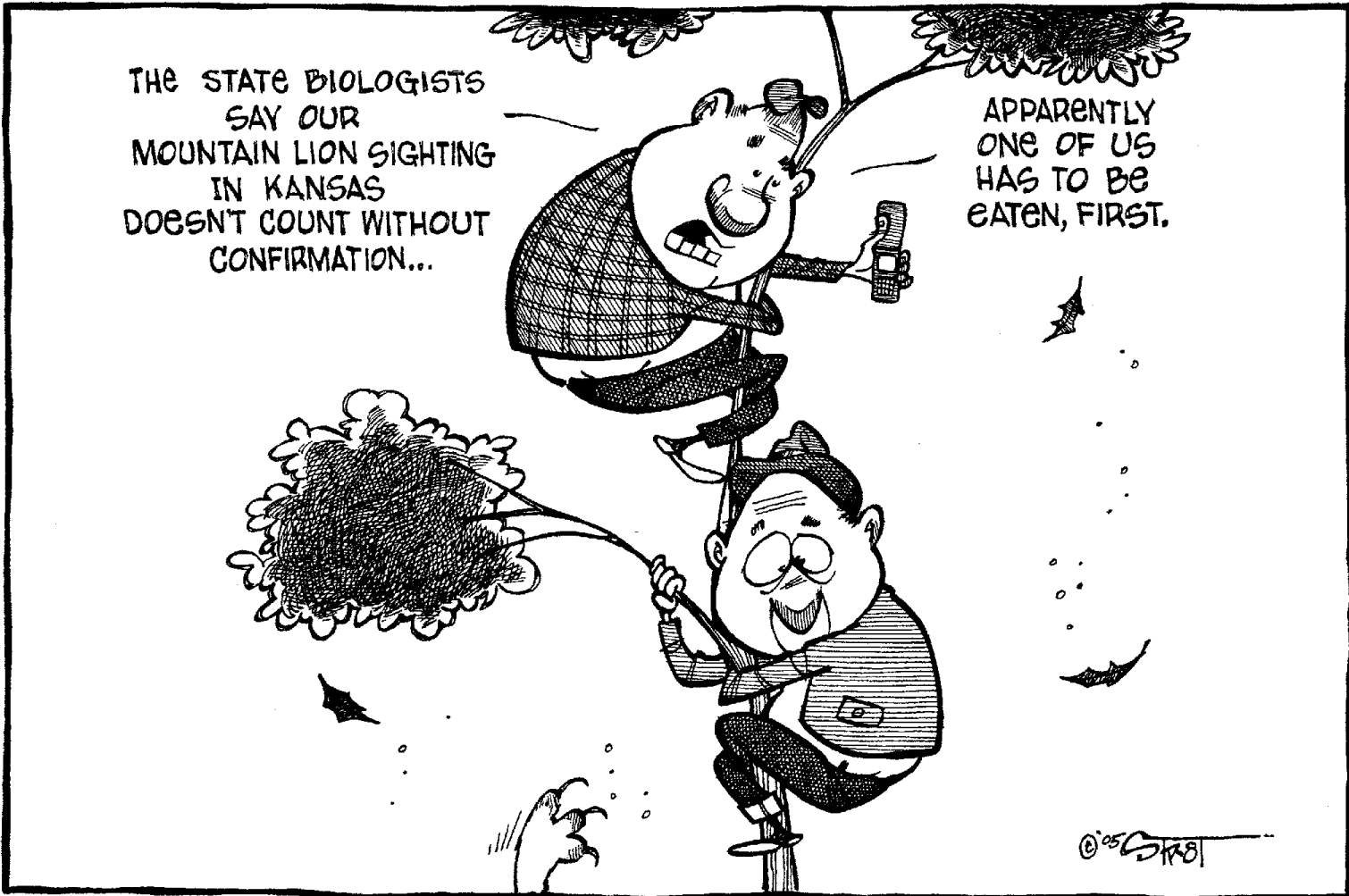
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State clears up policy about closing I-70

To the Editor:

We are writing in response to your recent editorial about the Kansas Department of Transportation's policy on closing Interstate 70 and other highways during snow and ice storms.

Before the ink dried on your recent editorial, our agency had already met with local law enforcement personnel, emergency preparedness managers, troopers from the Kansas Highway Patrol, and our own employees from all the communities from Hays to Goodland along I-70 to discuss this very issue. On Oct. 20 and 21, we discussed our policies and heard comments from the local officials on how these policies affect each community.

You pointed out the frustration of local residents not being allowed through our snow gates in order to get home or work during a storm. Though it has never been our policy not to sort traffic, we realize some of the setbacks that have occurred in the past due to shortage of manpower or intense weather conditions. We addressed this situation during the meetings mentioned above. As a result of our discussions, troopers now have access to open the snow gates. In the future, the patrol and our local highway crews will make a coordinated effort in sorting local traffic.

Still, there may be isolated incidents when



from our readers

● to the editor

the gates will be locked and unmanned. It might be due to "white out" or blizzard conditions where no one — including the traveling public and our employees — could safely travel on a roadway. Or, it could be because of a shortage of manpower, due to our crews plowing, working, and clearing other roadways involved in a storm. But it would never be because we would "put up a sign and go home."

We understand the frustration you and other citizens and business owners feel when travel is temporarily affected due to our road closures. Please keep in mind the safety of the traveling public always has been and always will be our top priority in every storm and road closure situation.

This year's snow situation arrived on Oct. 10 and ushered in an early winter storm, dumping two feet of snow between Limon and Denver. While some may think this storm should have been Colorado's problem by allowing traffic to pile up in Colorado, our policies and

common sense suggest otherwise.

As a neighboring transportation agency, the department has the responsibility to make sure motorists are not allowed to travel into a situation, such as being stranded along the road in a blizzard, in which their lives could be at risk. We must balance traveler inconvenience with the potential risks of traveling into a serious weather situation and the likelihood of finding food and shelter along the way.

Although snow was not a factor in Kansas during this particular storm, travelers who were headed west on I-70 would eventually run into a closure in Colorado. When we know the roads will be closed on any portion of I-70, a coordinated public message is relayed to the media, local officials, and we strategically place variable message boards as far east as possible. This allows the traveling public plenty of time to pull off the road, use an alternate route, and seek a room, since motels could be filling up further west along I-70.

Chriss McDiffett, Norton
District 3 engineer
Kansas Department of Transportation

Capt. Kelly McGuire, Hays
commander, Troop D
Kansas Highway Patrol

Why Bush is failing

By Dick Morris

Two-term presidents fail in their second terms largely because of their successes in their first.

Elected to solve certain problems, they usually succeed, winning plaudits and approval sufficient to propel them to re-election. But their success comes at a price: There is nothing left of their original agenda for them to do and no way to control events.

These second-term presidents end up confronting an array of problems that they never pretended they would be able to solve, and more often than not, these issues bring them down.

This paradox is amply illustrated by 20th century history. Only Theodore Roosevelt had a successful second term, largely because he took office after an assassination and required time to develop the progressive agenda that would ultimately shape his presidency.

Woodrow Wilson, elected to accomplish the goals of progressivism, fell over the League of Nations. FDR, elected to stop the Depression, failed in his second term over his attempts to pack the Supreme Court. His place in history was rescued by his successful third term as war engulfed the United States.

Harry Truman became popular by rescuing Europe from communism but fell over the prolonged war in Korea. Eisenhower's second term was marred by his ill health and a recession. Johnson, having passed the Civil Rights Act, fell over Vietnam.

Richard Nixon, having pulled out of Vietnam, fell over Watergate. Ronald Reagan, having cut taxes and won the Cold War, was brought low over the Iran-Contra scandal. And Bill Clinton, having balanced the budget, re-



dick morris

● commentary

formed welfare, and ended the recession, found himself impeached over Monica Lewinsky.

George W. Bush, elected to cut taxes and reform education, accomplished his agenda in his first year. Given a new task by Sept. 11, he has succeeded in methodically removing, converting or limiting the governments that sponsor terrorism.

Only Syria, under assault, and Iran, facing a solid international front determined to bar its path to nuclear weapons, remain from the original list. Libya has capitulated, Iraq and Afghanistan are conquered and North Korea appears likely to forswear nuclear ambitions.

We feel safe from attack, perhaps wrongly, four years after Sept. 11. And Bush has accomplished his agenda.

But he is paying the price of his success. He lacks an issue to capture America's imagination and dominate Washington's agenda. His Social Security proposal is a nonstarter. His energy and highway bills were largely devoid of innovation and were trivial in scope, if not in spending. Bush has nothing left to do.

So he is falling prey to opportunistic infections such as Libby-gate, the Harriet Miers nomination and Hurricane Katrina. For a president to survive his predicament, he must pivot and adopt a new agenda for the balance of his term.

Losing control over events after the early

years of his term, Clinton embraced welfare reform and deficit reduction as his priorities and kept control over events until he was undone by Monica.

What Bush needs is a new agenda to capture control of the nation's politics. Here are some suggestions:

• A fence along to border to stop illegal immigration and a vast expansion of our capacity to apprehend, hold and deport aliens who overstay their visas.

• A tough new drug policy focused on reducing demand by requiring drug testing in schools and incentives for employers to require testing at the workplace.

• A national crusade to free America of oil dependence, including promotion of hybrid cars, production and distribution of hydrogen fuels, nuclear power, the installation of recapture mechanisms to make coal burning clean, and expansion of biofuels, solar power and wind energy.

Bush will not recapture the initiative by a battle over Samuel Alito's nomination to the Supreme Court. Why he did not choose to nominate Judge Janet Rogers Brown, who had already been ruled non-filibusterable by the group of 14 senators who hold the balance of power, is a mystery.

But the blood that will flow from Alito's nomination will do nothing to move his favorability above 40 percent. It will strengthen his base, but will also fortify and enliven the left. Meanwhile, he will remain ghettoized and emasculated with a low approval rate.

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