

from our viewpoint...

## Council deserves kudos for incentives

"Acclaim or praise for exceptional achievement," is the American Heritage Dictionary definition for kudos.

The Sherman County Economic Development Council deserves kudos for the two incentive packages the council put together and saw approved this year.

Dwane Timm of First National Bank, head of the incentives committee, deserves a lot of the credit for his leadership and perseverance to see the two packages drafted and approved by the county, city and school board.

Having an incentive package is no guarantee of attracting new business, or a better community, but it is another piece of the process that can make a difference. Having an incentive package for both new businesses and for the expansion of existing businesses should foster economic development and growth.

Timm said the incentive committee members, Harlan House and Patty Eckhardt, find examples of the type of incentive package to develop and then make changes to suit Sherman County. Timm said county Commissioner Kevin Rasure was a big help.

The tax abatement is specifically designed to attract new businesses or business expansion on the large scale, and gives these businesses a tax break of up to 90 percent. Timm said he did not want to give them 100 percent because he thought it was better for them to pay at least 10 percent of the taxes.

This package was approved by the city and county in August, and Timm told the council recently there are at least two businesses working on the application process for a tax abatement.

The beauty of the incentive packages is that the second half — tax rebates — applies to all the property in the county. This package can be used to improve an existing building or home as well as new construction and other improvements that add at least \$5,000 to the value of the property.

Timm said this was the tougher of the two packages because it involved the city, county, school district and had to go through the state attorney general's office to get approval.

"I have to thank Mary Volk, city clerk; Janet Rumpel, county clerk; and Marvin Selby, school superintendent for their efforts," Timm said.

House said the tax rebate package really began to take shape when Timm got all the officials involved, including County Assessor Terry Ballard, to sit down at a meeting and begin to hammer out the details.

Timm said at times it was frustrating working through all the details, but he is pleased with what has been adopted, and has been asked to talk to another county about establishing a similar incentive system.

The Sherman County commissioners soon will be reviewing applications for projects begun this year if they are filed by noon Friday. The commissioners set up the program to grandfather in all the qualifying improvement projects that were done this year, but applications have to be in this week or the potential rebate is lost.

Commissioner Rasure and Timm say they hope people take advantage of the tax rebates, but remind people that beginning next week, projects must have an application filed with the assessor before the work begins.

The city and county commissioners and school board members have thanked Timm and the development council for the time and effort to put these incentive packages in place.

This is the type of leadership one hopes to find in an economic development group, and it is good to see it developing.

All the people involved in developing these incentives deserve kudos. — Tom Betz



## Polls and the war

After a newspaper ran Mark Twain's obituary, the story goes, he protested that the reports of his death had been "greatly exaggerated."

So, too, the media accounts of an emerging national consensus against the War in Iraq are considerably at variance with what Americans are actually thinking.

The most recent Fox News poll, completed Nov. 30, suggests that while half of Americans would like to see a schedule for withdrawal of U.S. troops, a majority feel the war has done good things — and a larger majority feel that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq when Bush told us there were.

By 52 percent to 27 percent, Americans believe that "the world would be worse off if the U.S. military had not taken action in Iraq and Saddam Hussein were still in power." By 59-20, they feel Iraq would've been worse off if we hadn't acted.

Asked what they believe about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, 61 percent said there were still such weapons there or that there had been such weapons in the country but that they were destroyed or moved. Only 28 percent agree that Iraq had no such weapons.

These results show Americans are largely in sympathy with our objectives in Iraq and accepting of our reasons for entering the war — two good reasons for the Democrats not to overplay their hand in opposing it.



**dick morris**

• commentary

The irony of this war is that the normal definitions of words do not really apply. "Success," for example, does not mean military victory on the battlefield, but a political victory in creating a stable, democratic, elected government in Iraq that can wage its own war and protect itself against terrorists. For America, "peace" does not mean the end of fighting, it just means that an Iraqi government will be battling its own terrorists with less and less American intervention or support.

Similarly, "defeat" does not mean that the terrorists prevail militarily — but that they force a political decision to withdraw American troops before the Iraqi government and military can take over the task of self-defense.

Even the political interface with the military operations is not what it appears to be. President Bush has been re-elected commander-in-chief for the next three years. No congressional majority will ever muster the gravitas to cut off funding for the war. Our troops are there to stay as long as he wants them to.

With his apparent resolve, there is no real like-

lihood that we will be "defeated" in Iraq. We really won't leave until the job is done. Obviously, in three years, 80 percent of Iraq can figure out how to govern, conciliate, rule and, if necessary, suppress the other 20 percent.

But the war will erode Bush's popularity every day that it continues to rage and Americans die. There is no way around this central fact of our political life. No spinning, Iraqi elections or presidential speeches can do much to alter it. Bush will probably leave office with much diminished popularity and the Democrats will probably make large gains in the elections of 2006 and 2008 because of the cost of the war in Iraq.

Will the war have been worth it? Probably. Iraq will likely emerge as a key regional ally. And the demonstration of American resolve will hugely boost chances for a comprehensive deal between Israel and the Palestinians. North Korea is sounding more intimidated every month. The global coalition against Iran and Syria is forged in the wake of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's commitment to multilateralism in the shadow of Bush's willingness to go it alone if Europe won't move ahead.

How will history treat it all? As George Bernard Shaw put it in "The Devil's Disciple," "History, sir, will tell lies as usual."

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years. E-mail Dick Morris at dmredding@aol.com

## Congress grows deficit to biggest ever

To the Editor:  
Congress has grown our biggest debt ever — topping \$8 trillion. We now borrow money from China to operate our government.

Some congressmen say they're reducing the deficit. That's not what's happening. Only one part has been cut — services to the disadvantaged. Other budget items have increased for those that need it the least.

Look at oil money. Gas prices have doubled in the past 10 years. In this same decade, Republicans took more than \$100 million in campaign contributions from oil and gas companies. In return, Congress gives gifts to oil companies. This July, Congress passed a bill providing \$14.5 billion to the energy industry. In October, Congress passed another \$2 billion giveaway to the oil refinery industry. It also gave away Federal lands and closed military bases to huge oil companies. Do oil giants need free stuff?

Congress gifted companies that are enjoying the highest profits in history. Exxon Mobil, Shell, BP, Chevron Texaco and Conoco Phillips, have together raked in \$254 billion in profits since Bush has been president. Kansans pay 25 percent more for gas in 2005 over 2004. This winter, Americans will still see natural gas home heating costs increase 41 percent.

Do oil companies deserve gifts from Congress while our poorest neighbors struggle to pay for groceries, gasoline, utilities and health care?

Why does Congress rob the poor to give money to the wealthiest few? Look at who is



from our readers

• to the editor

scratching whose back — it's simple arithmetic. As middle class families pay more for gas, congressmen take more oil money for their campaigns. Oil companies give cash to congressmen; Congress gives money to oil companies. Americans pay more for gas; oil companies rake in their biggest profits.

Here's the tragedy — regular folks can't give big campaign contributions to congressmen — so, Congress cut life-saving services to senior citizens and the disadvantaged by \$50 billion. Following that cruel deed in November, all congressmen gave themselves pay raises.

Now, Congress wants to borrow about \$70 billion more from nations, like China, to subsidize their newest giveaways to other already profitable corporations — and the smallest handful of the wealthiest individuals — not just oil companies.

Over 97 percent of you will not be significant recipients of these new gifts. Forty percent of that \$70 billion will be given to individuals with annual incomes over \$1 million. Some congressmen may say all households will receive tax relief. Your mother would say that's a white lie.

Only 16 percent of these proposed tax cuts will go to people who make between \$100,000

and \$200,000, but the dollar amounts will be very small per person. Households with incomes of between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will only get \$29 a year in tax savings. Those with less than \$50,000 income would receive an average of less than \$11. What does \$11 a year pay for? Four gallons of milk.

Do people who make over \$1 million per year need to be given extravagant gifts that we have to borrow \$70 billion more from China just to pay for? Isn't this obscene? Since just two weeks ago, Congress reduced medical services for many poor grandmothers?

This "back scratching" of the wealthiest few is happening this month, December, in your Congress. Please don't look away.

Pam Pohly  
Hays

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