

State shouldn't give in on push to increase taxes

Demand is building to force the Kansas Legislature to raise taxes.

Tax money is addictive, and the people who get it want not just what they got last year, but more. As with other drugs, the legislators should just say "no," but there will be great pressure to get them to say yes.

More than half the state's money goes for public schools, and the education lobby and teachers' union are the strongest single force behind state spending. Over the last decade, educators have gone beyond just hounding the Legislature to suing the state.

Some seem to feel spending as much as they want is a basic right, and a power-hungry state Supreme Court backed them in the last legal fight. This resulted in the high court ordering the Legislature to spend more on schools, though that's a decision most of us thought was reserved for the Legislature, which — unlike the court — is elected by the people.

Nothing is more important to this state than its schools, and given a choice in a normal year, Kansans will back spending on them.

This is not a normal year, though. The governor and Legislature have cut nearly every agency, including colleges and universities in dire need of money. They are ready to begin a new round. Estimates show Kansas will be nearly \$260 million short by the end of the year June 30 without more cuts. Even more cuts may be required next year.

Schools were spared all but a fraction of these cuts so far, as they undoubtedly will be the next time. But in this fiscal emergency, they'll have to take some small share of the

pain — and tighten their belts. That's what Kansas businesses and Kansas taxpayers are doing in this, the worst recession in recent memory.

With jobless rolls soaring and people scraping to pay their bills, who can afford to pay more taxes?

The rich?

Hardly. It's all of us who will pay if sales or income taxes are raised or so-called "loopholes" closed. All of us will suffer if business taxes are boosted and more people lose their jobs.

On the other hand, the state has not made any real cuts in its structure. So far, the governor has done across-the-board cuts. No one has looked at state spending and asked, "Do we really need all these agencies? What does this board or that commission do?"

Someone should. This is a perfect time to streamline state government and eliminate not just a few people here and there, but whole agencies. The result would be a leaner, more efficient, more affordable government, a more competitive business climate and citizens with money to spend now and then.

And the state could spend its money on things that really count, like schools and colleges.

Legislators who still want to raise taxes and "save" all the state's programs might want to vote for a tax increase. We'll see how they fare come November.

Most voters, and we think, most legislators, will want to take the other path, the one that leads toward less spending and smaller government. — *Steve Haynes*

Weekend a real food frenzy

Last week, we had a church-food weekend.

Steve's church had a potluck Sunday after church, and my parish was holding a soup supper Sunday evening. Could I provide an appetizer for one and a cake for the other, please?

Sure, why not. I love to cook.

I decided on BLT bites for the appetizer. They always go over well. Besides I still had most of a package of cherry tomatoes from a previous recipe. I had most of the other ingredients. All I needed was more tomatoes.

At the grocery on Saturday, I picked up another box of tiny tomatoes, a cake mix and a can of frosting.

Then I went home and started to prepare the goodies.

While I was frying the bacon, I put the cake in to bake and started cleaning about 30 cherry tomatoes.

By the time the bacon was done, I had the tomatoes cleaned and laid out on a fresh paper towel ready for stuffing Sunday morning.

The bacon went in the fridge and I took the cake out of the oven.

It was crooked. I had made it in a nine-inch-by-13-inch pan, and one side was twice as high as the other. A quick check of the pan showed that it was warped and so was my cake.

The grocery was closed, and I was stuck.

Sunday morning, I finished the BLT bites before leaving for church. After mixing the ingredients to-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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gether and stuffing my pre-cleaned tomatoes, I realized I had more stuffing than tomatoes. It was getting a little late to run to the grocery again, so I checked the tomatoes in the basement. You know, the green ones you pick just before the big freeze and cover with newspaper to ripen. I was able to come up with just enough small ones to finish off the stuffing — much to Steve's sorrow. He loves the stuffing just the way it is.

The BLT bites were a popular item, and again I had no leftovers.

Back at home Sunday afternoon, I frosted my crooked cake and picked spinach for supper.

I had planted the spinach in July, and while it isn't growing as well as it does in the spring, I thought I had enough to make a couple of salads for our supper.

But it was work. With all the leaves off the trees, I had to pick each spinach leaf separately. It seemed to take forever, and by the time I got enough for supper, I was down to picking leaves the size of my thumbnail. We had enough, but just barely.

I delivered my cake to the church

basement and remembered the soup supper. So after spending forever on my knees picking spinach, we ended up having chili and chicken-noodle soup for supper. It was delicious, and the cake had been cut into dozens of pieces — some a little taller than others.

And, I've still got a bag of home-grown spinach for a salad this week.

For those interested, here is the recipe for BLT bites from *The Taste of Home* magazine:

16-20 cherry tomatoes.

1 pound of bacon, fried and crumbled.

1/2 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing.

1/3 cup chopped green onions.

3 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese.

2 tablespoons snipped fresh parsley.

Cut a thin slice off of each tomato top. Scoop out and discard pulp. Invert the tomatoes on a paper towel to drain. In a small bowl, combine all remaining ingredients, mix well. Spoon into tomatoes. Refrigerate for several hours.

For the cake, just take a warped pan, a cake mix and a can of frosting.

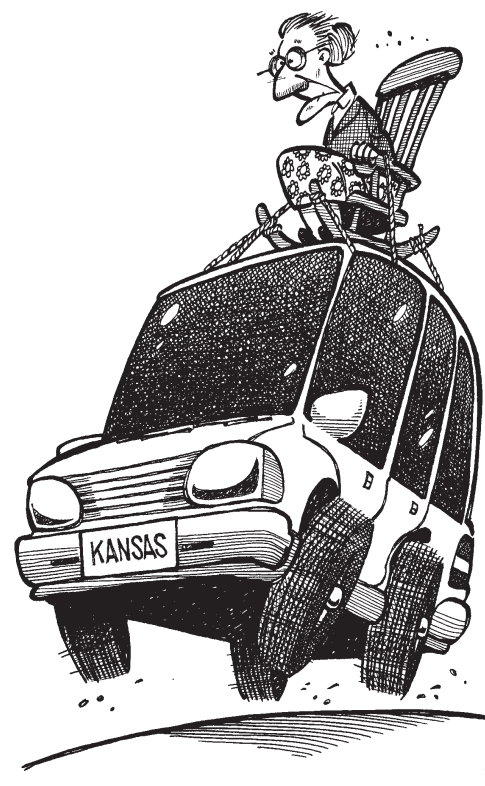
Over the river
and through the woods
with credit cards in tow,

Searching for ways
to spend holidays
and afford the gas to go.

The prices rise
before our eyes
the closer the holidays get.

To save cash, we fear,
by moving grandma here
would've been a safer bet.

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SPT THE HASTINGS TRIBUNE



Winter falls all over the place

We knew it had to happen sooner or later. Snow. Big, fat, fluffy flakes came down so hard and fast Sunday afternoon that visibility was down to about 50 feet. I know, because we were driving home in it.

That night, I talked to my daughter Kara, who lives in Dallas, and told her we were having a blizzard. (I tend to exaggerate.)

"Adam and I both miss the snow," she said, but then again, I don't miss scooping it. I get enough snow when we go skiing."

It's the seasons I would miss. Yes, sometimes it's a pain. But that's why you appreciate spring so much after winter and fall so much after summer.

— ob —

On the news this morning were two mothers whose sons had been disciplined at school for talking out of turn. The boys' punishment? The teacher had taped their mouths shut.

I'm not as worried about the teacher's bad judgment as I am about the mother's reaction. If a survey of elementary teachers was taken, I would venture to guess that most have had thoughts of



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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something like this at one time or another.

Perhaps if parents would back up teachers' authority, the need for punishments, appropriate or not, would be eliminated. It wasn't that many years ago that the chain of command was: God, parent, teacher.

A parent would never even think of questioning a teacher. And, the child knew his parents would back up the teacher, no matter what.

These days of litigation and "my child would never..." have put an end to that.

Jim said he was sent to the principal's office several times for running his mouth. My oldest daughter, Halley, still holds the school record for getting her name on the blackboard more times than anyone else for talking out of turn.

But did Jim's folks go to the school and demand an apology for "their little darling" or did I threaten to sue the school district for damaging my daughter's self-esteem?

No. We said, "There are rules and you have to abide by them."

One of life's little lessons.

From the Bible

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase:

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall be burst out with new wine.

Proverbs 2:9-10

President faces real world

It's amusing, really, to see the administration squirm as President Obama's numbers plunge.

His "approval rating" has dropped from 67 percent to 54 percent just since February. The only branch of government that's less popular is the Democrat-controlled Congress, down from 31 percent to 30 percent.

Oh, his backers thought it was just G.W. Bush the people didn't like. Turns out, it's Congress and whoever sits in the White House.

What happened?

The president, like most candidates, over promised. He told us he'd end the wars, close the lockup at Guantanamo Bay, make health care affordable and cure the economy.

He hasn't been able to do all that in nine months because — guess what — it couldn't be done.

While he's continued the Bush-Gates policy of winding down in Iraq, Mr. Obama has copied the "surge" philosophy in Afghanistan with mixed reviews. His generals want more troops and his backers still want out.

The economy? No president can control it.

Candidates who say they will may even believe it's possible but, the economy moves to its own beat. It's cyclical. Good times come and go, and so do down times.

The government, using the law and the Federal Reserve, may have some influence on these things, but mostly it can shave the peaks and fill

the valleys, nothing more.

The government can't stop a recession and can't start one.

Once the recession starts, it's going to go where it will go. Federal spending might cushion the fall, but that's about it. And once a recovery begins, only the worst sort of bungling will stop it.

And when times are good and markets are on the rise, then we should know we're headed for what the experts so nicely call "a correction." Which means, the bottom has to fall out of every bubble.

Candidates, for president or for Congress, would do well to remind themselves that these things happen and avoid promises they can't keep. It's hard, however, when "everyone else is doing it."

In fact, some candidates get elected because they do make promises they cannot keep.

You might say the current president did something like that. Rather than bring change, however, he followed the policies as they were set out by the last guys. He added window dressing, declaring an end to torture and a move for peace. And sent more troops to Afghanistan.

The peace crowd should be outraged. Maybe they are. Foreign policy is never simple, however, and promises made can be hard to deliver on. The administration must realize that a precipitous pullout would only invite disaster and turn the country we occupied over to a government worse than the one we pushed aside.

Candidates promise. Presidents have to perform.

Most, like Mr. Bush, end up a prisoner of not only their own mistakes, but of the forces that beset them. I'm sure "W" never dreamed he'd be known as the president who led us in "War on Terror."

He thought his legacy would be in education, but that is a different story, as they say.

Mr. Obama? The office ages a man.

History will write his legacy. He only thought it would be about health care.

The economy will recover. There will be other crises.

His numbers? They'll change.

If he's lucky, the way he's going, he'll be able to keep them above Congress.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Couple supports airport growth

To the Editor:

Both of us were born and grew up in Oberlin throughout our school years, and returned to Oberlin to live most of our adult lives. We have become concerned about the survival of Oberlin, with a declining population and lack of young adults staying in the community.

Our population will continue to decline if the community doesn't look at the big picture! With less population, taxes will increase in order to maintain the current infrastructure, schools, medical facilities, streets, electricity, water and the rest. Also, as the population declines, there will be fewer buyers willing to purchase a home in Oberlin, resulting in a loss of value for real estate here.

To help alleviate the situation, we recommend voting "NO" against the proposed airport ordinance. We support a 5,500-foot runway at the

Oberlin airport for the following reasons:

- Enhanced medical evacuation capabilities, which will accommodate bad weather and excessive heat.

- Economic impact during construction, income for restaurants, groceries, gas, parts and service, lodging, etc., as stated in the Nov. 1 e-mail from Ed Young of the state Department of Transportation in Topeka. He is director of the Division of Aviation for the state.

- As Mr. Young suggested, establishment of a northwest Kansas "regional" airport strategically located to become a refueling site between the east and west coasts.

- With a 5,500-foot runway, Oberlin would be the leading con-

tender for a Kansas National Guard "spoke" training site and for a permanent National Guard maneuver grounds.

- Because of our location, there is a possibility for a freight or air-cargo airport catering to independent companies.

If you vote "Yes" on the "Special Question Election ballot," support for future airport projects from the Federal Aviation Administration, other federal and state agencies, and our state and federal legislators will be nonexistent, nil, zilch for 10 years and much longer!

For the future of Oberlin, please vote "NO" to support Oberlin and the airport!

Rusty and Sharon Addleman
Oberlin

Letter to the Editor

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