THE OBERLIN HERALD — **Opinion Page**

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Someone reaps reward from every tax break

A Kansas House committee took up part of the plan to "close loopholes" in the state sales said Rep. Faber, a farmer, with a grin. tax last week, a bill that would raise \$182 million for the cash-strapped state and maybe stave off further cuts in the coming year.

And what loophole would the bill close to work its wonders?

Yours, of course.

Most of the money would come from eliminating the exemption for residential utility bills – water, sewer, electric and gas – now enjoyed by Kansas citizens. That means every time you get that irritatingly high January gas bill, or the soaring July electric charge, you'd get to pay 5.3 per cent more to help pay the church) gets to share the pain. state's bills.

Does anyone think this will fly?

But the Legislature has already been beaten up by the Girl Scouts and the Cancer Society, who complained bitterly when someone suggested they should lose the exemptions they got from the Legislature in better times. The Cancer Society said it would lose thousands now spent on research and aid if it has to pay sales tax on its purchases.

Rep. John Faber pointed out in Oberlin last week, the state probably could solve all its money problems by ending one huge tax they buy. With a combine priced at well over 10 years from now. \$300,000 these days, that's about \$16,000 of hurt a whack, maybe more.

Quickly, you might ask yourself, who has better lobbyists in Topeka, the Farm Bureau, or you?

Then, you know who will win if push comes to shove.

"Besides, I don't think I could vote for that,"

Tax law is largely a matter of whose ox is being gored, it seems, and who has the bigger stick when the infighting starts. And every tax break has someone who reaps its rewards.

The farmers have their tax breaks, to be sure. Businesses have theirs, an exemption on machinery and equipment. You even have yours, on utilities.

That may be why Gov. Mark Parkinson suggested a temporary 1 percent increase in the sales tax. That way, at least everybody (but the Girl Scouts, the Cancer Society and your

But with record numbers of Kansans out of work, with layoffs common and many families making less every year, can people afford any tax increase this year?

It's a good question. By and large, those who spend tax money feel we can. Many who pay taxes are not so sure.

Schools, services for the handicapped, medical care, hospitals and doctors, roads, colleges, all are important. All have suffered unreasonable cuts. But so has the average Kansas family.

The budget will get worked out. Life will go exemption-the one farmers get on equipment on. Kansas will have both schools and farms

> But not before the big fighting coming up next month on whose ox will be gored and whose exemptions will live to see another day. We all need to pay close attention, because we all have a stake in this game.

> > *— Steve Haynes*



Internet not all that reliable

Steve and I took our computers on vacation to Mexico for the first time last month and ran into some interesting problems.

We travel a lot, and we always take our computers with us so that we work no matter where we are. We've never done that during our one week each year in Mexico, however. The place where we stay has no phones in the rooms, no televisions, no nada.

We've had a time share to this little place at the tip of the Baja for many years and have always considered the January week as our nonworking vacation. Since our laptops are essentially a working tool, we leave them and the cell phones at home.

Over the last two years, however, the resort has put in a wireless Internet system. First it was at an Internet cafe near the front desk and then a "hot spot" by the condo sales office near the beach.

Sothisyearwetookourcomputers. I vowed I was going to learn to "play" on mine. It sounded like a fun idea to sit under an umbrella at a table near the beach, sip a rumfilled drink and surf the 'net, check Facebook, learn to play new games and generally try to figure out why people spend their free time sitting in front of a computer.

I was somewhat successful, but discovered that basically I'm too lazy to spend that much time and energy staring at a little screen when I could be reading a trashy



or just enjoying a walk to town in the almost-80-degree weather.

the Internet. It went down all over town the day after we arrived.

They warned us of this problem when we went to the front desk to get our user name and password. Basically, they said, here it is, but it won't work.

We tried anyway. We set up shop near the beach, under an umbrella with rum-filled drinks at hand and a beautiful view of the bay, where a huge ocean liner gently bobbed up and down awaiting her passengers to return from the shopping trip in downtown Cabo San Lucas.

The only network we could find belonged to the cruise ship, and we weren't nerdy or needy enough to try to hack it.

OK, so we put the computers away and headed for town. We and heading for the beach. I didn't needed the exercise and some groceries anyway.

steak and some fixings. Supper drink more than I normally do in a would be cooked in our condo, year and enjoy the hot tub. saving both money and calories. At the checkout, however, our

No one could have outbid her

novel, spending time in the hot tub credit card would not run. The Internet was down.

Dang, we knew that, but hadn't Then there was the problem with equated that with using our credit card.

We emptied our pockets of cash. We put a few things back, something I haven't had to do since I was a college student.

We gathered our steak and pareddown fixings and headed home to make supper.

What, we wondered, had all those tourists from the cruise ship done? Maybe they had cash or maybe commerce in Cabo came to a screeching halt that day because the Internet was down. That could be hard on an economy based on visitors.

Back at the condo, we had our supper and the next day the Internet was back up. But we never did get back into grabbing our computers get on Facebook even once and learned no new games. I did, At the store, we bought a great however, read three mysteries,

Ahh, vacation.

Elderly can tell it like it is

With age comes certain privileges. One of them is "telling it like it is." Jim's dad has been in the hospital for a few days getting over some breathing problems. I was visiting and the discussion turned to eyesight. He said he had been looking out the picture window of his room watching workmen repair the roof across the courtyard. He said his vision is pretty good at a distance.

me way: that he can spot a gnat on the wall at a hundred feet but, he little "left of center." can't see to read the paper without his glasses.



understanding of biblical stories.

This the Class of 1965's 45th Adults too often assume kids reunion. We just lost No. 6 from our I agreed and added that Jim is the comprehend all we tell them, but ranks a few weeks ago. Tommy was Groneweg in last week's paper.

I saw the picture of Robert so much fun. He truly enjoyed our He was holding up his reunions and was trying to hold on barbecued pork shoulder for the auction at the Chamber's fifth annual Farmers and Ranchers Banquet on Feb. 13 at the Gateway. I'm writing to tell the rest of the story....



Next, I said I had just bought new glasses and proudly put on my new black, horn-rimmed glasses. Dad took one look at me and said, matterof-factly, "Well, I don't like 'em."

There's no come-back to a comment like that. You just change the subject and move on.

-ob-

compilation of children's skewed our reunion.

sometimes their understanding is a

In the kid's version, God made everything but it was dark, so he asked for a light and someone gave our plans, we realize that this will it to him. Then Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt. And Judas Asparagus was such a bad man they named him after a disgusting the past. True, they commemorate vegetable.

-ob-

Alumni Banquet time is creeping up. All the "girls" in my class are I just finished reading "A wondering if they have enough time look at where you've been and see Kid's Version of the Bible." It's a to lose 20,40 or more pounds before where you are.

for this one.

As I talk to classmates about become a more common occurrence every year.

I don't think reunions are all about where we come from but, as we age, it's more about where we are.

Life is like a rowboat. You can't see what lies ahead, but you can

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkansas.com. We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:10 NIV

From the Bible

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During the guest speaker's presentation, like other fathers with young children in attendance, I took my 2-year-old daughter Ella toward the back. She enjoyed the meal and socializing with Ron and Diana Solko at our table and the many folks passing by. It turns out, however, that guest speakers have a knack for making 2-year-olds wiggle and noisy.

Of course, walking to the back with your 2-year-old mysteriously creates instant curiosity for your 3-year-old daughter ("No, dad, I'm 3 1/2," Savanna likes to say). The three of us spent the latter part of the event staying quiet (which means playing with friends) in another room.

So, the scene is set: Husband is away. Children are accounted for. You're four months pregnant. You're savoring every bite of a free meal you didn't have to prepare ... and suddenly, it is announced that a special auction is about to take place for this delicious pork shoulder! I pity the poor soul who thought she could outbid my wife that night.

We feasted on that pork for most

City Notes ByAustin Gilley **CityAdministrator** agilley@oberlinkansas.gov

Thank you, Rocking R, for the you can't find a classier place in puzzle set my daughter won in the northwest Kansas - maybe even raffle. Thank you, Carolyn Hackney and Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, for organizing a fine event. Thank you to all of the sponsors and donors for making it possible. And thank you to the area farmers and ranchers who keep us all going strong!

I also want to thank staffers Kathy Brainard, Chris Ward, and Jeanette Diederich for helping make The Gateway such an impressive place and making events real delights.

Seriously, if you haven't been to the Gateway in a while, come check it out. Or check out the pictures at www.oberlinkansas.gov. I realize there has been much discussion over finances and policies, and we are trying to find the best balance of using the facility to make people happy and spur economic activity while not "breaking the bank." That discussion is likely to go on for some time.

In the meantime, don't let talk overshadow the reality of an amazing of last week, and relished every facility where great things happen. ounce. Thank you, Mr. Groneweg. The food and service are great, and

the entire Tri-State area. Between The Gateway and our friends at the Golden Age Center, when it comes to meeting and event space, we've got you covered. And if you're part of a regional group or club, tell them about The Gateway and invite them to check it out for future meetings, conferences, and events.

QUICK NOTES: A public hearing on the airport expansion environmental assessment is scheduled for 5 p.m. Wednesday, March, 17, at the Gateway. . . The next day, Thursday, March 18, a representative from the city's airport engineering firm will be present at the City Council meeting to discuss changes in the current and next phase of the airport project. . . Congratulations to our employee of the month Judy Wenger!

I can be reached at (785) 475-2217, by e-mail to agilley@ oberlinkansas.gov or by mail at The Gateway, 1 Morgan Dr., Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Nine out of ten isn't a bad average

4. A mysterious "Snow Fairy"

5. Gopher traps for sale at the

6. A nurse at the Health

7. Aroad crew that does a fantastic

8. A tank-wagon driver who

always waves at you even though

Department who gives painless

job of keeping our roads in great

shape on a shoestring budget?

who anonymously scoops sidewalks

along Cass Avenue?

local parts store?

shots?

To the Editor:

Top Ten List Where else but Oberlin or Decatur County, Kansas, could I find:

1. Arural mail carrier who delivers oversized packages right to the door and picks up my mail even though I forget to put up the flag?

2. A grocery that delivers within the city and carries bags to your car?

3. The first and best home-owned carnival around? Imagine having your billfold returned after losing it on the Twist-Over — with all the money still in it.

Letter to the Editor

you don't buy fuel from him? 9. Gas prices that compete for

highest in the state?

10. Giant vultures guarding the water tower?

Well, nine out of 10 is still pretty good!

What else can you add? Jim Wesch, Oberlin