

Governor's tax plan needs careful inspection

Gov. Sam Brownback's proposal to shrink and maybe eliminate the state's income tax is a tantalizing plan, but it contains some red flags.

The Legislature is advised to study it well before rushing to ease our tax burden.

For one thing, the governor is proposing to make up for income tax relief by, among other things, ending (on state returns) all itemized deductions, including the one on home mortgages, pretty much a sacred cow. What will voters think when they hear that?

And the governor wants to keep the extra cent tacked onto the sales tax two years ago, leaving the state's average rate (including city and county levies) at 7.66 percent, about average for this part of the country but nearly a penny more than neighboring Nebraska.

The governor says our income tax system puts Kansas at a disadvantage compared to states such as Texas and Florida, which have no personal income tax. The system is driving people out of Kansas, he says, providing figures to back that up.

His proposal calls for making the income tax structure "fairer, flatter and simpler" by going from three rates to two, 3 percent for people making under \$15,000 a year and 4.9 percent (down from 6.25 percent or 6.45 percent) for everyone else. That would make Kansas more competitive with nearby states, the governor says.

The plan would help small businesses by eliminating the income tax on non-wage income of limited liability and Subchapter S corporations and sole proprietorships. Low-income Kansans would benefit from

doubling the standard deduction from \$4,500 to \$9,000.

Corporate rates would be unchanged, and the state would keep the sales tax rate at 6.3 percent, the level it reached with an "emergency" increase under former Gov. Mark Parkinson.

There will be a lot of questions about the sales tax. Many believe it's the hardest tax for low-income people to pay, but the governor's office says it has the least negative impact on economic growth. Many businesses, including farmers and manufacturers, do not pay sales tax on equipment they buy, but we all pay it on food and medicines.

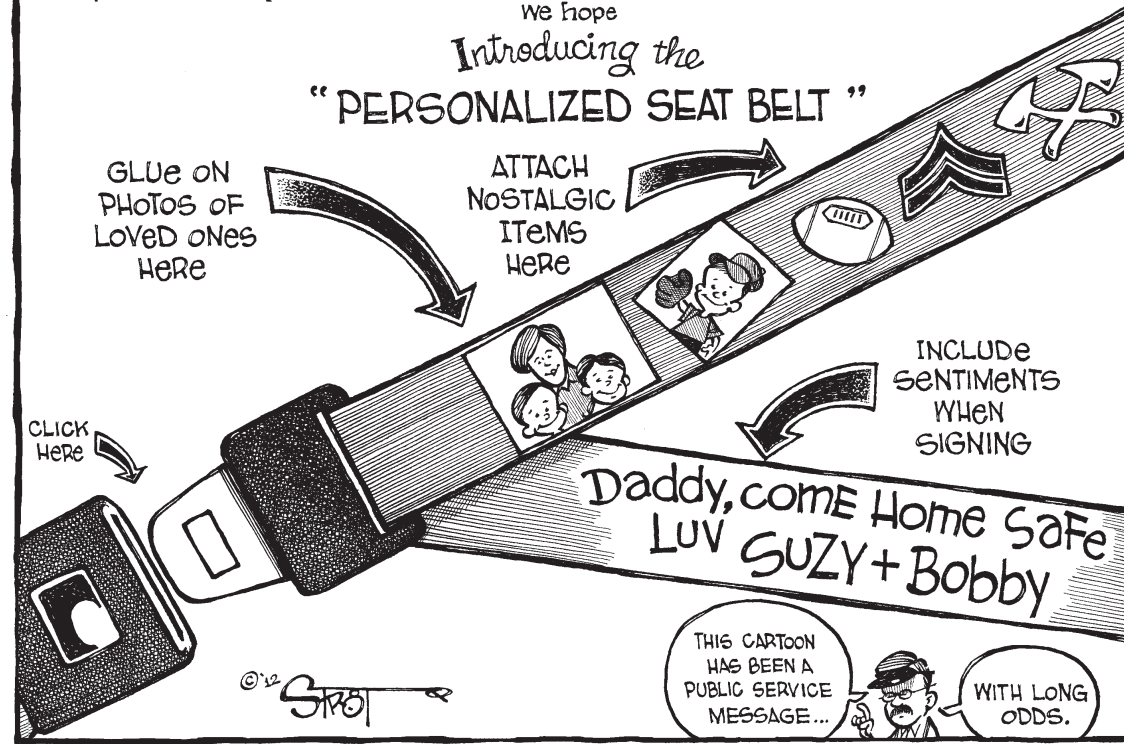
Tax reform has its appeal, but it's a minefield. Someone benefits from all the exemptions the governor would eliminate. And every adjustment the state requires from federal income figures could make state returns a little more complicated, not easier to file.

When the money is counted, many groups will oppose any change. The Democratic party already is having a field day picking apart the proposal, but then the Democrats already have said they want more money.

In the more liberal Senate, the leadership has named a commission to study the state's tax system which may come up with a competing plan. Meanwhile, conservative groups have announced plans to run candidates against a list of "moderate" Republicans who run the Senate.

It should be an interesting session in Topeka as the senators and representatives try to figure all this out. — *Steve Haynes*

Give the Gift of Lower Crash Fatalities in Kansas ...



You can't reason with a cat

"Don't eat that," I said. "Your food is over here. See?"

"You realize that you're trying to reason with a 2-year old," my husband noted with a grin.

Yes, I know. Well, Molly isn't exactly a 2-year old. She's more of a 12-year-old cat with a mind of her own.

Of course, come to think of it, using the words cat and mind in the same sentence is sort of an oxymoron to begin with. Cats don't mind. They don't even care much.

The new kitchen cabinets are in and the flooring put down, so I moved the cat food back upstairs.

I had moved it to the basement about a month or so ago when I realized that the bowls would be in the workmen's way and the cats would be skittish around all the strangers coming and going in the kitchen.

The cats did not like the new arrangement one little bit. They had been having their breakfast and supper in the kitchen ever since I took the all-day buffet away and exchanged their single serving bowl for four separate yellow plastic bowls on the kitchen floor about six months ago.

After Molly developed diabetes and required a shot every day, the vet told us to only feed the cats once a day. That way we'd always be sure to have Molly on hand when it was



Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*
c.haynes@nwkansan.com

time for her shot.

We later decided to start Molly on some special diabetic food, so her bowl has her name on it in big black letters.

Unfortunately, neither she nor any of the other three cats can read.

And if they could read, they probably wouldn't care. After all, they're cats.

We also went to two shots a day and twice-a-day feedings.

It's great on work days. I don't have to set an alarm; the cats come get me if I'm late. Not so great on Saturdays.

Anyway, each morning and evening between 6:30 and 8, I put food in the four bowls. Molly's goes near the 'fridge. She knows that's her bowl and growls at any other cat that tries to eat out of it when she's around.

April Alice and Frank, also known as the sand cats, due to their light tan coloring, have bowls along

the bottom of the breakfast bar and Jezebel has hers over by the sink, since she's afraid of all the other cats and they tend to beat up on her or not let her eat.

Each morning, the routine is the same. I lay out the bowls and give Molly her shot as she and the sand cats chow down. Then Molly traps Jez under Steve's roll-top desk. I throw Molly outside and Jez has her breakfast.

I let Molly back in and she tries to eat out of one of the other bowls. I yell at her, pick her up and put her in front of her bowl. She growls and grumbles and eats out of it for a few bites, then wanders off.

Ten minutes later, she's back and we go through the "move the cat, grumble and eat" routine.

This is repeated each night. Steve just laughs. He knows you can't reason with a 2-year old, and he knows I'm going to keep trying.

He forgets; she goes and gets

In addition to my title of "Domestic Diva" I have earned the title of "Goddess of Go-Fer."

That's because when my husband is working on a job more than 20 miles from home, he inevitably forgets something. I have to "go fer it."

When Caller ID reveals Jim's cell-phone number after he's been gone about an hour, I automatically grab my purse and head for the door. But not until I learn if the trip will include a stop at a hardware store or merely a rummage through his tool bin.

The tool bin is easy: after 17 years of marriage to a carpenter, I am able to recognize most tools. The hardware store run, however, is different.

Experience has taught me to have Jim call the store, describe (in detail) what he wants, and advise them that I will be there in half an hour. That's about how far we live from a hardware store, in any direction.

I've learned from experience not to go to the hardware store for parts unless Jim has called them first. That way I can walk in (with confidence); pick up the bag, box or crate of aforementioned parts; and leave with my dignity intact.

Just as a man should not be allowed to buy paint for the home without a note from his wife, neither should wives attempt to pick up parts for their husbands without a detailed description. I have gone into a hardware store with a picture



Out Back

By *Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts*
cplotts65@gmail.com

drawn on a jagged piece of sheet rock or a scrap of two-by-four and a note about size and width, only to be interrogated by one of the clerks:

"Is that a right- or a left-hand thread? Is it 1-10 or 2-20? Does he want laminate or solid? Is this for metal or plastic? How many pounds/inches/buckets/pieces does he need? Is that interior or exterior?"

Then they get really personal and ask, "Is that male or female?" How should I know? We weren't formally introduced.

I have come up with a solution, though. When Jim calls and starts with, "Sweetheart.....guess what I forgot?" I stop him right there. "Whoa, Big Fella." I say. "Have you called the hardware store yet? No? Well, call me back when you have. You know I'm not going in there until you have called them and they are clear on what it is I'm picking up. Uh, uh, uh.

"Call them. You remember what happened last time I went in before you called. I refuse to leave another store in tears. It's humiliating."

So, that's my story and I'm stick-

in' to it.

-ob-

Winter weather has taken a hiatus and spring-like temperatures have prevailed the last few days. My laying hens are confused. In a good way.

Chickens are like most animals. During severe weather, they conserve all their energy and use it to keep warm. Egg production slows way down. During cold weather, I'm lucky to find three eggs in the nests, and I better get to them within the hour they are laid or they'll have to thaw in a bucket of water.

I've had to tell my regular egg customers, "Not today. Maybe tomorrow."

But this warmer weather has put the hens into overdrive, and I'm running out of room for egg storage in the fridge. The old girls are kicking out more than a dozen a day. That's more than enough to allow me to sell a dozen, here and there, plus make deviled eggs, custard pie or potato salad anytime I want.

Guess it's time to hang out my "Eggs For Sale" sign.

Request could be bad news

An unusual request by a former public official charged with stealing from his employer highlights problems with pleas to change history.

Steven Collier, former Barber County public works director, faces trial in federal court on charges of stealing vehicles and money from the county while he worked there. He has asked the court to eliminate a provision of his pretrial release agreement that requires his probation officer, as a condition of his bail, to inform his supervisor at any job he takes of the charges against him.

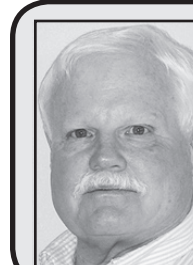
Mr. Collier's lawyer, Douglas Adams, claimed in court filings that this has resulted in him losing at least one job, saying the defendant could become destitute as a result.

It'll be interesting to see what the judge decides, because our courts have a long history of openness when it comes to criminal cases. However, an affirmative requirement that the probation officer go out and talk to employers is a bit unusual.

Whatever happens, it's hard to argue that the charges pending against any defendant should be a secret. We know someone charged with a crime is innocent until proven guilty, but surely the defendant himself owes it to any new employer to tell them about the charges.

And certainly, the public record in criminal cases must remain open. That's a critical part of our system, designed as much to protect defendants from trumped up charges as to protect the public.

The allegations against Mr. Collier do not amount to petty crime. According to the government, while he was the county's road boss, he and his wife managed to get title



Along the Sappa

By *Steve Haynes*
s.haynes@nwkansan.com

to a semitrailer rig and dump truck paid for by the county. These later allegedly were sold, along with a John Deere tractor the couple supposedly put on Craigslist.

Another count alleges that the couple forged an invoice for steel beams, then used the money to buy a bulldozer which they sold. Both pleaded not guilty to all counts.

It's a pretty amazing story. It's hard to believe that any prospective employer would not want to know about these charges.

If it was me, I'd be pretty careful about hiring anyone who'd been accused of blatant stealing from his last employer. It's vital for a manager to be able to trust his or her employees.

It's quite possible someone would hire such a person while he or she was awaiting trial, especially someone who knew the person and had a job where they would not handle money or be able to charge to the company's accounts. But that employer should be able to make an informed decision.

In a related issue, sometimes people go back to court years later and ask to have old convictions or records expunged on the grounds that they've behaved for years. And sometimes, that might be fair. Anyone who has changed his spots might deserve a clean record and a

second chance.

There should be conditions, though. Any subsequent conviction ought to wipe out the change and reopen the court records.

That's something for judges to decide, however. As a newspaper, we can't alter what we have printed. We can only issue a retraction if something is wrong. In our electronic archive, which reflects exactly what was printed, we would refuse to change anything that was factual and correct, though we might add a note if a record had been expunged.

History is history, though, and facts are facts. And when people start trying to rewrite history, that should send up a red flag.

From the Bible

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

— John 1:11-13

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkansan.com

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Kimberly Davis managing editor
Mary Lou Olson society editor
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts proofreader, columnist
Joan Betts historian
Cynthia Haynes business manager
Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
Tim Davis advertising representative
Crista Sauvage advertising makeup

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Kimberly Davis, assistant publisher

Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.



Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

Laser proofs of photos which have run in The Herald are available, first come, first served.