

One thing tax plans have in common: lots of flaws

Tax plans by all comers — the governor, House Republicans, the Democrats — leave a lot to be desired.

The governor starts from the premise that reducing or eliminating the state's income tax will attract new businesses and spur those already in the state to make new investments.

One problem with the governor's proposal is that it would reduce taxes on higher-income Kansans, but raise them for the poorest taxpayers. The principal issue is that it would eliminate many tax deductions and credits taken from federal law, including the "earned income credit," which can generate refunds for people who owe no taxes.

You can argue that this credit is poor public policy, unfair to others who earn money, but raising taxes on only the lowest earners just does not look good.

The governor also would end the highly popular deduction for home-mortgage interest. That should be a winner.

Another issue with the governor's plan is that he would keep the one-cent increase in the state sales tax signed by Gov. Mark Parkinson two years ago to pay for reduced income taxes.

But while income taxes are termed progressive because they lean more heavily on the rich than the poor, the sales tax burden falls most heavily on those who earn less.

The House plan avoids some of the pitfalls of the governor's but has issues of its own. It would allow six-tenths of a cent of the sales tax increase to expire next year, as the Legislature promised two years ago. But it still

would raise taxes on the poor while lowering them for the rich.

The House also would steal \$320 million from the T-Works transportation plan, diverting sales-tax money promised to the road fund and "promising" to pay it back later. Such promises aren't worth the reams and reams of paper they are printed on.

Transportation is too important to this state to be endangered by politics.

The Democrats, meanwhile, want to commit \$45 million of state tax money to cities and counties for property-tax reduction. The state used to do that, but gave up when the budget crisis forced across-the-board cuts. We doubt the state can afford to get back into this "revenue-sharing" scheme.

A little-mentioned drawback to any of these plans is that whatever is done to make state deductions and credits different from federal law will make Kansas tax returns far more complicated than they are today.

Tinkering with the tax code could cost taxpayers a lot of headaches — and money — as they try to figure the difference.

We're sure some brand of "tax reform" will come out of this session. Lowering income taxes is a laudable goal, but selling the change will require an overall impression of fairness. No plan out there so far has that, but whatever the Legislature comes up with has to appear fair and workable for all concerned.

Taxing the poor to help the rich won't do that. It's just a way to let the Democrats make gains in the fall elections. — *Steve Haynes*



Does Grandma like name?

Some religion, I'm told, has a thousand names for God. Around here, we have a thousand names for grandmother.

I was a little surprised when my daughter announced that I was Nana and Steve was Papa to Taylor, our only grandchild. Taylor's only word at the time was dadadada.

But then, youngest daughter has never been one to put off a task. She wasn't going to leave the all-important names for the grandmothers and grandfathers up to her daughter. The kid might end up calling both grandmothers by the same name.

Too confusing! I don't know where she came up with Papa, and I'm not sure that one will stick. Nana, however, was my name for my mother's mother.

Since youngest daughter is partially named after her — her middle name is Ellis, my grandmother's married name — it's appropriate and I should be so honored.

However, I was a little taken aback at first.

It was silly. I loved my grandmother Ellis. She was a wonderful woman.

But, she was *old*. There I've said it.

I remember her as a wonderful old



Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*
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lady. But the operative word for me here is old.

I'm not old. I'm not even 65 yet. Close, I'll admit, but not there.

Well, of course, I rationalized. My mother was a younger daughter. Her mother would naturally have been older by the time I came along.

So, I did some figuring. I was 62 when Taylor was born. Nana Ellis was 60 when I made my appearance.

The sad truth is, I remember my grandmother as she was when I was in my 20s and she was in her 80s, not the way she was when I was 3 or 4 and she was my age.

So, I'm Nana and happy about it. But I'm not giving in to old age any time soon.

Other names in the family for grandmother include YaYa and Suzy.

Now, YaYa was the pet name bestowed by the sons of Steve's cousin on their grandmother. Aunt Mary was way too proper for me to ever think of her as YaYa, but she seemed to enjoy hearing that from her three grandsons and six great-grandchildren.

Suzy is a mystery to both Steve and me. His grandmother Haynes never wanted to be called grandma, he said, so Steve and his siblings called her Suzy. Since her name was Mary, the origin of that nickname is a mystery.

I guess I'll have to find out what Taylor is calling her Blake grandmother and grandfather. Could be YaYa or Suzy for all I know. After all, there's no need to waste perfectly good family nicknames.

Now, she even sings in public

I love to sing. I'm not very good at it, but I love to sing.

Before I met Jim, I would have never had the nerve to sing publicly. I did one time in a play, but that was the exception. And, besides, I was playing the part of a tap-dancing, singing nun in our community theatre during the production of "Nunsense: The Second Coming." It was my character, Sister Mary Robert, who was singing, not me.

All of that is to say, now I sing. Jim is a good, strong song leader with a great sense of pitch. We mostly sing in church, old folks homes and prison. Notice what these places have in common: our audience either can't hear us or they can't get away.

We lean toward the old traditional music, but really like some of the new songs coming out, too. We heard one the other day by a Southern gospel quartet, and Jim went to the Internet to find the lyrics. It's a good thing he did. If we had sung it like he heard it, we might have been in trouble. The song's title is "When I Get Into Heaven With My White Robe On." Jim was singing, "When I Get Into Heaven With My Wife's Robe On."

Singing is a great way to communicate. Sometimes a song says what you can't bring yourself to say. Like, "I'm sorry."

One morning after a little spat, Jim left for work and I was left to stew. I knew I was in the wrong, but just couldn't bring myself to say it. Finally, I called his cell phone and when he answered, I broke out in the



Out Back

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old Stevie Wonder hit, "I Just Called to Say I Love You." We laughed. I cried. All was forgiven.

We can be driving down the highway and one of us say something about how green the wheat fields are and, simultaneously, we'll both start singing, "The Green, Green Grass of Home."

My girls and I logged lots of highway driving when they were little, and singing helped them pass the time. I'm sure they still remember the song, "Oh, I Had a Little Chicken and She Wouldn't Lay an Egg."

"So I poured hot water up and down her leg. Oh, the little chicken hollered and the little chicken begged. And the little chicken laid me a hard-boiled egg. Thanks for the boiled egg. Pass the salt."

And if I sang "I'm Henry the Eighth I Am" once, I've probably sung it a thousand times. Same with "We Are the Gopher Girls," "This Land Is Your Land," "There's A Hole in the Bucket, Dear Liza," "I Just Called Up to Tell You That We're Rugged but Right" and "Amen, A-amen, A-amen, Amen, Amen."

Our "Greatest Hits" album will be available in the lobby after the show. Order now, and as a special bonus, we'll send you a second CD; simply include five-ninety-five for shipping and handling.

Our two youngest daughters, Becky and Kara, will be reaching a life milestone in the next few days when both turn 40. Notice how we say, "Turning Forty," like fruit "turning bad." Just kidding, girls. Their birthdays are only six days apart, so we refer to them as "The Twins." How can this be? Our babies are 40. Oh, well. It's all in your perspective. In 20 years, they'll be 60 and I'll only be 85.

From the Bible

For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect; Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

—Romans 4: 14-15

ID at the polls? What's next?

Politicians on the left and the right are driving our country closer to the reality of a high-tech police state.

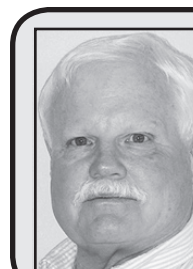
No one thinks that's the goal, of course. It's just that few stop to think about the consequences of a lot of the "good ideas" that come popping out of places like Topeka to and Washington.

Many so-called conservatives here and across the nation worry incessantly about the scourge of illegal immigration. An irrational fear that these immigrants will control our elections has led to state after state requiring voters to show identification at the polls.

While some worry that this requirement will keep the poor from voting, that's not the issue. Americans have always prided themselves on being a free country, a place where people could travel without "papers," as many tightly controlled countries in Europe and Asia require.

Now, in the name of "homeland security," we've spent billions on producing hard-to-tamper-with identification cards so people can "prove" they're Americans. Remember, though, that in this country, you are not legally required to carry identification, except for a driver's license while you are driving.

A police officer supposedly can-



Along the Sappa

By *Steve Haynes*
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not demand that a citizen produce an ID while walking down the street, although we suspect it's done every day.

Now, though, you'll need a photo ID to vote, the most basic of American rights.

Do we want to be more like a communist state?

The odd thing is, no one can prove tighter voting laws are needed. There's no documented problem with vote fraud in this country, especially in Kansas. But politicians such as Secretary of State Kris Kobach make their living by scaring people.

Illegal immigration? Yesterday's problem. It all but disappeared in the recession two years ago.

Terrorists infiltrating our borders? They seem to get in when they want to. The best can afford fake ID, good ones that will get them where

they need to go. Start with the so-called Patriot Act. Most laws supposedly aimed at stopping terrorists really just create more ways for the security police to keep tab on everyone: our bank accounts, our spending habits, or comings and goings. The tax and security agencies have wanted this for years.

And the final irony: our electronic toys, our phones, our GPS systems, our computers and other devices track our days so the government need not even lift a finger. We do the job ourselves, and willingly, trading a free and anonymous existence for constant surveillance.

Did I mention the cameras? Cameras everywhere.

Some day, we'll realize where all this leads. Some day, it may be too late to change anything, however.

Writer says GOP shares the blame

To the Editor:
Having reread my original letter and Britton Scott's letter again, I want to submit a response.

In Mr. Scott's letter (Wednesday, Feb. 22, *Oberlin Herald*, Page 4A), he writes, "Out of respect for your fellow American, you should do your best to make sure what you're saying is factual and be ready to defend it." That was insulting to me, since he was commenting on my letter published Feb. 8 (Page 4A, *The Oberlin Herald*). Please let me defend myself.

My letter was a comment on the Dec. 28 editorial that used the term "his recession" when commenting about President Obama's policies. Besides Steve Haynes, I've heard politicians refer to the 2008 Global Recession as "Obama's Recession," even though he wasn't president until 2009.

On Dec. 1, 2008, the National Bureau of Economic Research dated the beginning of the recession at December 2007. This agency is the official arbiter of U.S. business cycles. The agency said signs of an

Letter to the Editor

economic slowdown appeared as far back as early 2006.

You may not agree, but I don't think we needed economists to tell us that the United States was mired in a recession in 2008, given all the foreclosures, bank failures and layoffs happening around us.

My statement, "Maybe we should share the blame for excessive deficit spending with the three Republican presidents: Ronald Reagan, George Herbert Bush and George Walker Bush."

You may want to disagree, but all presidents have had huge deficits since the 1980s, with the only exception being President Clinton. I'm assuming that you're saying that they shouldn't share the blame?

Since 1981, we have been led to believe in supply-side economics: tax cuts to the wealthy would create jobs and increase government revenues, and that to be anti-union was best for our economy.

I have seen a 32-year winning streak (when I was growing up) turn into a debt disaster that has continued from 1981 to this day. Bush senior called it voodoo economics, with which I totally agree. When Vice President Dick Cheney said "Reagan proved deficits don't matter," I disagree. Can we agree to disagree?

True, there has been a huge surge in the deficit since President Obama took office, as was the case in the 1930s when President Franklin Roosevelt came into office having inherited the Great Depression. President Roosevelt spent large sums of money creating government jobs.

Like Roosevelt, Obama is being criticized for his deficit spending to recover from a recession he inherited. Was this spending justified?

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