

## Legislature must deal with broken tax laws

There is one thing the Kansas Legislature must do before it adjourns “sine die,” and that is to fix the state’s tax system so it works as intended.

The 2012 Legislature left the system in a terrible mess. It adopted income-tax cuts proposed by Gov. Sam Brownback but not the corresponding adjustments—such as eliminating some tax deductions, or loopholes, and retaining the state’s sales tax at 6.3 percent.

With the balancing moves, the state would have enough money to finance its current spare budget. Without them, experts project a \$267 million “shortfall” in the next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Everyone agreed on the problem, but no one could agree on how to plug that hole. The Senate passed a tax plan believing the House would agree to a conference committee to hash out the shortage, but that didn’t happen. The governor signed the bill, apparently feeling the Legislature would have to come to its senses.

So far this year, however, there’s been no change in the mood of either chamber. The House is reluctant to keep the higher sales tax. The rate is now 6.3 percent, but is scheduled to drop to 5.8 percent. House members say voters were promised the sales tax passed under Gov. Mark Parkinson during the Great Recession would be temporary. They still seem to feel that way.

The Senate, like the House, now is con-

trolled by conservative allies of the governor, and in theory, he should be calling the shots. From here, however, the members of both chambers seem to be a lot more independent than critics claim. Getting them together could be a real trick.

And while we’re comfortable with the current level of state spending, hardly anyone thinks another \$267 million in cuts won’t hurt.

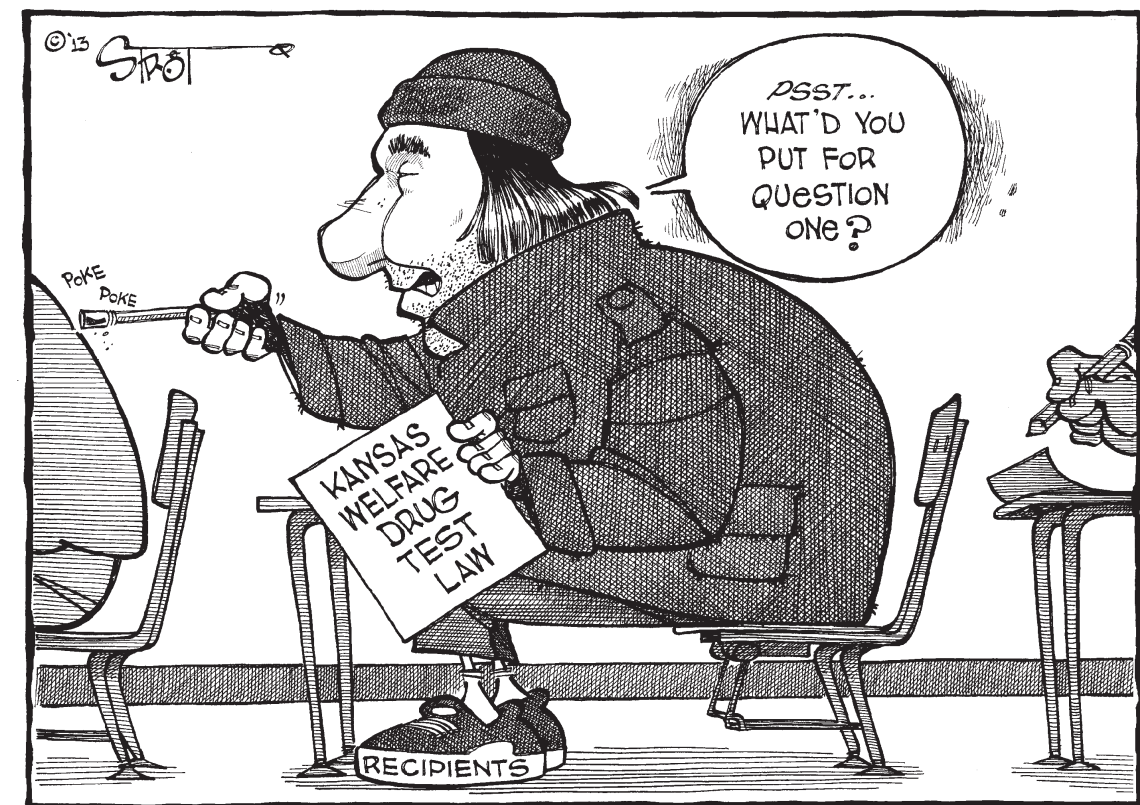
Compromise? So far, no one is talking about it. We think, however, that’s what voters would like to see. And we’re not real picky about how it’s done. Right now, public schools are nervous, universities are sweating another round of cuts, the highway fund has been robbed twice already and advocates for the disabled, mental-health care and prisons, and a host of others are clamoring for more money.

A combination of retaining some sales tax and adjusting some tax rates makes sense. The governor has pinned a lot of his hopes on his plan to eliminate the income tax, but even he did not plan to do it this year. With a big start made, there’s no hurry to polish it off—at least not for most of us.

Better to adopt a sensible plan, than wait a year or two and see how things go.

Sensible. Legislature. Governor.

That may be asking for a lot, but we think it’s vital to the state’s future. — Steve Haynes



## Spring is really confusing us

It’s been a weird spring. If you don’t believe me, check with my daffodils.

The poor flowers came up all ready to bloom and be beautiful in the bright spring sun.

Then it rained. Fine; daffodils love rain.

Then it snowed. OK, daffodils can take a little cool weather and some snow isn’t too bad.

Then it went down into the 20s for two days and two nights. Not so good. Daffodils can take some freezing weather, but they don’t like lots of it.

But, amazingly, when the weather warmed up and the snow melted, the flowers looked as good or better than they did before.

Then it snowed but it didn’t get so cold.

My flowers are starting to think twice now. The daffodils are fading and the tulips are budding out. Several neighbors have gorgeous tulips, arrays of reds, pinks and yellows.

But it’s raining again and they said snow is on the way.

I was out about noon Monday and the temperature was 46 with a brisk breeze. By 1:30 p.m., the thermometer had fallen to 37 and



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
c.haynes@nwkans.com

that brisk breeze was a cold, bone-chilling wind.

I ran home and traded in my sweatshirt for my winter coat.

Dang, I wish the weather would make up its mind. And I especially wish it would decide to be spring.

I’ve spent a lot of time running my winter clothes up and down the stairs. My old house doesn’t have enough closet space to hold one season, let alone two or three. I keep thinking that spring is here, so I get out my short-sleeved tops and sandals. Then it snows and I have to go back down the basement and grab the sweaters and boots.

The only advantage is that I’m getting my exercise when I can’t go outside because of the bad weather.

Then there’s my poor, confused

garden.

I put my lettuce, radishes and spinach in the ground a week ago. On Sunday, I planted peas. All these plants can take a good deal of cool and even some cold weather. However, as Steve keeps pointing out, nothing is going to stick its little head above the ground when the soil temperatures are so low.

Somewhere, I came upon this quote from Mark Twain and I’d say that he knew what he was talking about:

“In the spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours.”

I didn’t even realize that the great humorist had ever lived in Kansas. He sure did nail the weather around here.

## Homemade can be expensive

When your efforts to save a few pennies end up costing you more than it’s worth, it’s time to rethink your strategy.

Remember when I shared my mozzarella-cheese-making experiment? After my investment in all the enzymes and organic products, that cheese cost about \$20 an ounce. After the initial taste testing, I told Jim, “You’d better enjoy that.”

That’s where I am now. This time it’s raisins and corned beef.

Directions on making your own raisins caught my eye. Instead of merely drying them, the method called for a 30-second dip in boiling water; then a dunk into an ice bath; then spread on parchment paper and set in the oven to dry.

Twenty-four hours later I had raisins. And quite tasty ones, I might add. However, at what cost? Well, there was the initial cost of the grapes. At \$2.99 a pound, I already had a \$6 investment. Add in the gas used to boil the water; the power used to make the ice cubes; and finally, the electricity consumed to dry what ended up being two cups of raisins, I figure those raisins are worth about \$10.

Not really, though. They’re only worth about a dollar. I checked, and the price of a two-pound bag at the store is only \$4.99.

I should have heeded Jim’s advice.

“Doesn’t it say on the bag, ‘Sun Dried?’” he asked. “Maybe you ought to try that method and quit trying to save us money. We can’t afford it.”

The jury is still out on the corned beef. It hasn’t been taste-tested, yet. A recipe for “Homemade Corned



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
cplotts65@gmail.com

Beef” was in the San Antonio paper on Sunday. I clipped it out and resolved to try it. Not wanting to risk a 10-pound brisket, I opted for a half-batch. After making a brine of water, salt and a multitude of spices, I submerged the beef, sealed the container and set it in the fridge for 10 days. Yes, 10 days.

Any meat left in my refrigerator for 10 days gets pretty close scrutiny before consumption. Sunday was the deadline. I carefully opened the bag and took a whiff. So far, so good. Nothing putrid or revolting, just a strong “clovey” aroma.

Down the drain went the brine and after a thorough rinsing, into the crock pot went what I hoped would be the corned beef. Water to cover, a sliced onion and some carrots, the heat set on low, and the full expectation of corned beef for Sunday supper.

We left the house at 8:30 a.m., and didn’t return until about 6 p.m. I fully expected to be greeted with the mouth-watering fragrance of perfectly cooked brisket when we opened the door. Not so much. Evidently, the low setting on my crock pot is very low. The carrots weren’t even done and the brisket was still as tough as whang leather. I cranked the crock pot to “High”

and as of midnight, when this column is being written, it’s still not done. Maybe by lunchtime Monday it will be. If so, Jim will get to be a judge, as I will be at the office.

Yes, it was fun to try all these “cost-saving” ideas, but in the end, I don’t think I saved a dime. In fact, it probably cost us money. So, before I send us to the “poor house,” I better just resign myself to the fact that “homemade” might not always be best.

Postscript: I read this column to Jim before I submitted it and he had something to add. “You’ve got to put in there,” he said, “except for homemade ice cream. That is the best.”

### From the Bible

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

— John 10: 17-18

## Most postal problems solved

Judging from the lack of a hue and cry, the Postal Service may have addressed some of its issues and we may have taken care of the worst delivery problems we had any control over.

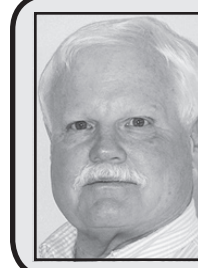
At least the phones have quieted down, the buzz gone from our Facebook page — those are back to announcements and comments on news stories — and most readers are getting their papers, even those a state or two away.

It’s hard to summarize this for everyone, because each paper faces different problems with the Postal Service’s new mailing scheme, but in general, things seem to be settling down.

This all goes back nearly two months now, to Feb. 26, when the service shut down the postal “plants,” or mail-sorting operations, in Colby and McCook (and Alliance, Neb.) and shifted all the work to the post office North Platte. A week or so later, the plant in Hays consolidated into Wichita.

This change disrupted nearly everything about the way our mail moves, from truck routes to the direction it goes. Mail in Kansas traditionally flowed east to either Wichita or Topeka, but not anymore. Now our mail goes north. The effect was to cut us off from eastern Kansas, with letters and newspapers taking up to a week to wander back to places like Emporia or Salina — or Norcat.

Not just the main route changed. Here in the Colby zone, we lost not only our trucks to the east, but also one west to Denver and one south to Dodge City. And while North Platte appears to have good connections to the west — papers to California started going through in two or three days, rather than a week to 10 days — those to eastern Kansas apparently took the long way around.



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
s.haynes@nwkans.com

The worst service gap was to nearby readers of *The Oberlin Herald* who happened to get their papers through the former Hays plant. Via North Platte, Omaha and Kansas City, it was taking a full week for those copies to come back to places only 15 to 20 miles from the newspaper’s office.

But a lot has changed in those two months, and we at least think we’re starting to see the light of day.

Some of the things we’ve done include:

- Leaving papers for Dresden, Jennings, Norcat and Norton at those post offices every Tuesday so those readers will be sure to get their paper on time (or in the case of Norcat, half a day earlier, since the postmaster just puts them out right after lunch.)
- Reorganizing our mailing list to optimize deliveries to a single town. These are handled direct at the former sorting hubs, skipping the trip to North Platte or Wichita (for the Norton and Hays areas).
- Mailing all copies of the Oberlin paper for places east of here in Norton, where they go right into the Kansas mail system and skip Nebraska entirely.
- Adjusting all lists to take advantage of the fastest route to a given location, whether that’s through North Platte or east.

The Postal Service has made some changes, too. It was routing papers to states in the South and Southwest

through North Platte, Omaha and Kansas City, then back to Wichita for sorting. Now they go directly to Des Moines and get sorted there, which should be faster.

And postal workers are doing a great job of sorting our “mixed” area bundles. Those papers come overnight every week after sorting in North Platte. The service has been super.

We know there are still a few problems here and there. A reader in Smith Center said Monday his paper still takes a week. We’ll have to check that one out; not sure how it’s routed.

We still need to hear from anyone who’s not getting a paper or is getting a big delay every week. There may be some change we can make if you let us know. But for now, things look a lot better than they did a few weeks ago!

### In the U.S.A.

“Let us all take more responsibility, not only for ourselves and our families but for our communities and our country.”

William J. Clinton  
Born Aug. 19, 1946  
U.S. President

# 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  
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkans.com

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

### Nor’West Newspapers

#### STAFF

- Steve Haynes ..... editor
- Stephanie DeCamp ..... reporter
- Mary Lou Olson ..... society editor
- Carolyn Kelley-Plotts ..... proofreader, columnist
- Joan Betts ..... historian
- Cynthia Haynes ..... business manager
- Kimberly Davis ..... advertising manager
- Pat Cozad ..... want ads/circulation
- 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.

