

*The Garden City Telegram*

## **TABOR unfair to rural areas**

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What amazes me about the one person-one vote mentality behind TABOR is its impact on rural legislators. This strategy will strip rural legislators of their ability to effectively represent interests of their rural constituents. Three or four highly populous counties in Kansas would be able to control the state's fiscal agenda because under the proposal only a statewide vote could initiate a response to a fiscal challenge over and above the limitations of population growth and inflation. That may sound good in theory, but what it does is handcuff rural elected officials so they can no longer respond to crises or special needs of citizens they represent. It also creates a tendency to place short-term needs ahead of long-term investments.

Negative impacts of TABOR would be multiplied in rural areas, which are lacking in numbers and political clout. As resources dry up, where would the Kansas Legislature make cuts? Certainly not in metropolitan areas, which send far more representatives and senators to Topeka. If there isn't enough money to repair every bridge, which bridge gets left out? The one on the gravel road in Logan County that carries only a few vehicles each day except during wheat harvest, or the one in Johnson County that carries thousands of cars a day? Which would be more likely to see its Area Agency on Aging office closed, Cherokee County or Sedgwick County? This reality of TABOR is probably why Colorado, specifically its rural counties, voted to suspend its control over that state's fiscal policy. Even GOP Gov. Bill Owens, who early on advocated the measure, urged voters to suspend TABOR. After the election and TABOR's suspension, the Colorado governor said, "It means we can join the 49 other states recovering from recession; we can make up some of the cuts." Now Owens is not proposing a tax increase but just spending money that the state would normally bring in with its current tax structure. This was not possible under TABOR and more than \$3 billion in tax funds collected by the state were restricted from spending. That restriction meant fewer bridge repairs in rural counties, fewer services to farming communities.

It makes no sense to me that rural legislators would champion the TABOR movement. It is not in their constituents' best interest. It does make sense to me that the money funding the TABOR campaign is coming from Johnson and Sedgwick counties. They will be the big winners if TABOR were to become reality in Kansas. Let's help our rural legislators understand that while TABOR may sound good, it is not in rural Kansas' best interest. We need elected officials who are empowered to go to Topeka and protect our interests and quality of life.

EDWARD H. HAMMOND,

Hays

Hammond is president of Fort Hays State University.