

The Garden City Telegram
Thursday, December 15, 2005

FROM THE EDITORIAL PAGE

– Our View –

TABOR talk

With a proposed TABOR (Taxpayer's Bill of Rights) for Kansas gaining little momentum statewide, TABOR supporters have set their sights on communities.

Garden City officials recently learned that local TABOR proponents want to circulate a petition seeking support for such a spending ordinance.

A TABOR essentially limits government spending based on population growth and inflation, with tax revenue above the amount spent returned to taxpayers.

Local TABOR supporters hope to collect enough signatures to force the City Commission to enact such an ordinance or put the issue before voters. City officials are checking the legality of the plan.

As they do, residents only need to look west for proof of TABOR problems.

In a November election that saw a record turnout for an odd-numbered year, a majority of Coloradoans voted to suspend their TABOR. Residents were frustrated by spending caps that forced the state to put off needed road repairs and saw higher education costs climb and health-care services decline - even though the population grew.

Such fallout casts real doubt on the need for artificial spending restraints that would handcuff local government.

Representative government encourages residents to express their desires, and for elected officials to weigh that input and make decisions in the community's best interest.

Undermining that decision-making process and putting government on autopilot with a TABOR wouldn't benefit the community.

Indeed, TABOR spending restrictions could force the City Commission to shelve any number of projects, and leave local residents to worry about the potential for cuts in essential services, from filling potholes to paying the people who keep us safe.

Worth noting is that Coloradoans who recently voted to suspend TABOR for five years did so knowing that about \$3.7 billion taxpayers would have received as a refund would instead go back to the state. They were that intent on making sure government had the funds to provide needed services.

That alone should make Kansans plenty wary of a TABOR, be it at the local or state level.