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Ending misguided effort

Colorado voters suspend Taxpayer's Bill of Rights

After living under a rigid tax lid for 13 years, Colorado voters last week suspended their state's counterproductive Taxpayer's Bill of Rights amendment.

Kansans should hope the special election's outcome ends a misguided effort to fly state government on autopilot. A band of well-financed anti-tax forces have started to push for a similar measure in the Sunflower State.

In 1992, Rocky Mountain State voters approved the tax lid by a 53.7 percent to 46.3 percent margin. But after seeing its unintended consequences on higher education, health care and transportation, as well as other state programs, voters by a 52 percent to 48 percent margin suspended the overly restrictive measure for five years.

In the process, taxpayers gave up a projected \$3.7 billion in tax refunds. They decided state government could make better use of those funds than the private sector in helping Colorado bounce back from a recession.

That's a major defeat for the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, which has a Kansas chapter pushing a Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, and Club for Growth, which targeted several Kansas incumbents in the 2004 elections.

Americans for Prosperity has already tried to spin the Colorado vote, claiming that Referendum C simply fixed a glitch in the amendment. The group claimed the referendum makes the measure look more like an improved Taxpayer's Bill of Rights being proposed in other states.

But government cannot operate on autopilot. Voters elect their legislators and governor to set tax policies and decide spending priorities. Those elected officials should retain the responsibility and the authority to grapple with those issues annually without having to contend with an artificial tax lid.