

Colorado tosses TABOR

Vote shows how Colorado residents have become frustrated with the harm of an artificial tax limit

It took more than a dozen years for Colorado voters to get fed up with damage from the state's Taxpayer Bill of Rights, a law that limits state spending increases to a combination of population growth and inflation.

Tuesday voters approved a change to TABOR allowing state government to increase spending by \$3.7 billion over the next five years. Under previous terms of TABOR that money would have been turned over to taxpayers.

Colorado's experience with TABOR is watched around the nation because anti-tax factions are pushing versions of the law in a dozen states. That goes for Kansas, where TABOR will be debated in the 2006 legislative session.

Local lawmakers are lining up on either side of TABOR. As reported Thursday by the Journal's Michael Strand, Rep. Charlie Roth, R-Salina, generally sides with TABOR supporters. Josh Svaty, D-Ellsworth, and Sen. Pete Brungardt, R-Salina, line up with the opposition.

We are on the same side as Svaty and Brungardt.

TABOR sounds great on the surface. It promises minimal tax increases, a pitch that sells well to voters. Everyone complains about taxes at one point or another, no matter what tax bracket they claim. It is the American way.

TABOR capitalizes on this frustration with a brightly painted package that appeals to voters. But there are rotting timbers under that finish.

This is a bad law that chips away at the foundation of our representative democracy. It removes the ability of elected lawmakers to represent their constituents on funding matters. Additionally, the Legislature can more quickly adjust budgets according to demands on spending and changes in revenue.

Think back to the 1990s when the Legislature cut taxes in response to growing state revenue. Lawmakers made the necessary adjustments when revenues slowed in this

decade.

Supporters say TABOR gives voters a chance to approve increases in state spending. But those public referendums do not provide the flexibility and timely action available in the Legislature.

Kansans should reject the fancy package □ TABOR folks are peddling. It is deceptively simplistic and a dangerous threat to our system of government.

— Tom Bell

Editor & Publisher