



# Family Concerns

"Bridging the Information Gap"

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## THOUGHTS ON TABOR BUS TOUR

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***"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8***

These words, spoken by Micah the prophet to the people of Judah, warned them about false protestations of godliness and meaningless worship. They ran through my mind throughout the entire bus tour of Kansas that delineated the terms of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) to people all over the state. We traveled over 1,000 miles, making 23 stops to talk to people in small towns and in large towns about the tax situation in Kansas. CWA of Kansas accompanied this bus tour because we know that families all over the state are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet, leaving them few choices other than putting Mom back to work or Dad working more than one job so that they can give their families the American Dream.

The bus tour was titled "The American Dream Express," a term that brings soft feelings to our hearts, but few of us think about what the American Dream was and is. As we traveled across Kansas, watching the landscape change from woodland meadows to vast expanses of prairie grass and big sky with only grain elevators providing a change in elevation, I thought about the indomitable spirit of those who settled this beautiful state. What caused them to settle in a fertile but capriciously arid land? What caused them to stay through the dust bowl, through plummeting farm prices, wind, snow, tornadoes and heat? Why did they cling to a land that could be so harsh? What kept the covered wagons moving west through a seemingly endless prairie that was a constant uphill climb? I believe that is and was the American dream . . . to live in a land in which opportunities abound, in which there is minimal government interference and where taxation without representation is not a way of life.

What I saw on the trip were hundreds of people who feel that a government that is growing at three times the rate of their incomes is a government that is taking too much. I talked to folks who barely make ends meet now, who cannot absorb another government bite from their incomes. I talked to people who are scared to death of their county commissioners and their local school boards, who marginalize, bully and brow-beat those who protest higher taxes.

My spirit heard over and over again that the Lord requires justice with mercy and humility before Him, yet in the protesters, mostly from the educational establishment and the handicapped who erroneously thought TABOR was about cutting government programs, were often rude, demanding and harsh in their indictments of a resolution they had never read. Justice requires that one person not take more than his share from others; however, the educational establishment demands more than the 68 cents out of every tax dollar, claiming it is for the children. This includes post-secondary education.

However, legislative post audits have confirmed what we have suspected all along: There is WASTE in education and improper allocation of funds. Kansas spends a disproportionate amount of money on administrators and lags far behind on the amount of money spent on the classroom, including teachers, children and supplies. Accounting principles have been questioned, as well as the inordinate number of taxpayer-funded lobbyists in Topeka who bombard legislators with the education mantra. TABOR would place a cap on spending above the state's economic growth. Any additional expenditure would have to go to the people for a vote. The fact that per capita government spending in Kansas is increasing at triple the rate of increase in wages of the average Kansan falls on deaf ears in the education crowd.

Next year Kansas faces yet another mandate from an unelected black-robed oligarchy called the Kansas Supreme Court for an *additional* \$585 million for the schools. Figuring the population of Kansas and the average family size of three, that is \$600 per year *ADDITIONAL* taxes. This is taxation without representation in its most extreme form. To some people, this figure represents a night out on the town. But to most Kansans, whose incomes are declining, this is a major budget-busting event.

On the side of mercy, almost all of us certainly want to take care of those who can't help themselves and give a "hand up" to those who need it. Those with disabilities who came out to demonstrate against TABOR for the most part had been misinformed by those who apparently want to exploit their disabilities for the benefit of the media. TABOR will not cut taxes; it merely places a cap on additional spending above growth of population and income, leaving the decision to the people. However, one had to sympathize with a group that is competing for the money left over from education: 32 cents out of every dollar to divvy out to the aging, the handicapped, the poor, roads, public safety, etc.

The final admonition in Micah's prophecy is to "walk humbly before your God." I guess I didn't see much humility in the angry tirades against a proposal that most opponents admitted they had never read. I saw little humility from a school board president who bullied and drowned out patrons of his district who genuinely wanted to ask questions about what TABOR could mean for them. I didn't see it either in those who said they represented the handicapped, who loudly disrupted meetings and who refused to listen to those who patiently tried to explain that they would have an opportunity to vote on a constitutional amendment incorporating a taxpayer's bill of rights. I did hear some folks, when they were allowed to talk by those who disagreed, ask some good questions and they were heard by those who will be drafting the legislation and discussing it in the Legislature.

It takes humility to listen and learn because it is admitting that you might not know everything about a subject . . . that you might not know everything about another's circumstances or point of view. I listened as well . . . to both sides . . . and learned, not because I am so humble, but because I know that a judicious and merciful approach to taxes and what is done with the money is the key to Kansas remaining the great state that it is.