

OPINION

**District 53 Newsletter:
May 4, 2023**

The House took last week, Week 16, off as the Senate caught up with their work, then we came back this week and began passing budget bills in preparation for the end of session.



Rep. Dean Fisher
R—Montour

Property taxes have been one of the hottest issues we've heard about from our constituents this session as assessments have hit the mailboxes, shocking most property owners. The legislature does not directly control local government spending (county, city, schools, townships), so it's difficult for us to put hard and fast limits on those entities since every one of them is different. However, we have heard the cries to reign in the growth in property taxes and we have acted with House File 718.

This bill provides property tax relief for landowners by curbing the budget growth of local governments without discouraging economic development. It does this by lowering the growth rate used to determine spending and by consolidating, capping, and recalculating certain levies. Those numbers will be lowered, delivering tax relief each year, using the formula below. This bill lays the groundwork for how to responsibly deliver even bolder reform in the future. The growth rate reductions outlined below sunset after four years, which allows two rounds of assessments for the legislature to analyze the effects and then require legislators to act further.

Counties: For the General Basic County Levy of \$3.50/\$1,000 Rural and the Basic County Levy of \$3.95/\$1,000: If a county's taxable valuation grows by 6 percent or more then the growth rate is reduced by 3 percent and the levy is recalculated. If a county's taxable valuation grows by 3 to 5.99 percent then the growth rate is reduced by 2 percent and the levy is recalculated. If a county's taxable valuation grows by less than 3 percent then there will be no recalculation. Levies not impacted are: pioneer cemetery, debt service, EMS, law enforcement, flood and erosion, and natural disaster.

Cities: For General Basic City Levy of \$8.10/\$1,000: The cities follow the same growth rate reduction formula outlined above for counties. The bill also consolidates 15 special levies into one new capped levy. Levies not impacted are: municipal transit, aviation authority, insurance premiums, local emergency management, EMS, liability, debt service, IPERS, law enforcement, police/fire retirement, agricultural land.

This bill also provides direct and immediate tax relief for seniors and military veterans. For all Iowans 65 and older, it creates a new exemption on top of existing tax credits. This exemption will amount to \$3,250 for 2024 and \$6,500 for 2025. It also turns the current property tax credit for military veterans, which amounts to \$1,852, into a larger credit to provide additional relief for Iowa veterans. This new Military Service Property Tax Exemption will total \$4,000.

The bill also increases transparency by requiring tax bills to look more like an itemized receipt, showing where your money is going. Certain levies outside of the new consolidated capped rate can be increased if approved by the voters or voted upon by elected officials. This will increase transparency in levy increases.

All elections for bonding must take place in November and require more notice to voters to ensure more Iowans are able to make their voices heard on whether it is a good use of their money. While this may make it more difficult for local entities to pass bonds, the bill also increases the threshold for all bond amounts that must go to the voters by 30 percent. This threshold has not been adjusted for inflation in 30 years.

As noted, this bill is not the end of the discussion and action on property taxes. It's just one big step forward. We will be working on it next session and monitoring the situation over the next four years as this legislation plays out.

However, I would caution everyone that they must be engaged with their local governments and making their voices heard about local government spending. Your county supervisors, city councils, township trustees, and school boards are the elected officials that you should be holding accountable for their spending and tax levies.

Hopefully by the time you read this newsletter the session will be over, we have already passed several of the budget bills and hope to adjourn Sine Die by May 5 at the latest.

**SLICES OF LIFE:
THE EYE OF THE STORM**

Is it just me, or has life gotten more complicated? So many variables and tough decisions. So many crossroads.

And it's all happening at lightning speed.

Even on days when I don't tune in to the cable news networks.

The world feels like it is spinning faster and faster on its axis. Or so it seems. And that can make life seem like an upended house during a tornado. (We aren't in Kansas anymore.)

The storms seem to be all around us. The lightning and thunder are imminent. Threatening.

We watch our backs. We peek around the corner before stepping forward. We lose sleep. We worry about the past and what will happen next.

What will happen — if.

Life seems out of control, or at least beyond our control. It's scary. Beyond scary. It is overwhelming and all-encompassing. It threatens to take our breath away.

If only we could make it stop.

But we can't.

Or maybe we can. Even if just for a moment.

Take that moment. Take a breath.

For yourself and no one else. Just. Take. A. Breath.

Then take another. And another.

And stay there. With just yourself and your breath.



Jill Pertler

Think of a positive thought and put it into a sentence, if you can.

The world is good. Life is good. I am good.

Peace, kindness, love are inside me.

Right now. Right here.

I love tacos.

You get the idea.

Don't worry about bills or the mortgage or your kids or the leaking oil in your car. It will wait until after this moment. Believe me, it will all be there long after this moment.

So take it. The moment. Take it for you. Take it for all that you love. Take it for all that you hold close to your heart. Just take it.

It isn't selfish. Not at all. It's the opposite of that.

Finding your peace and your calm is generosity at its finest. It enables you to escape the storm that threatens to torment your life. Take a break because you deserve it. You need it. You know you need it.

Oh how you know.

Life can feel like a storm, a tempest, a hurricane. The wind whips with life's pressures and problems. Your hair may be drenched. Your clothes cling to your wet body. The air is hard and harsh blowing on your skin. Thunder echoes; lightning fills

the sky. There are too many close calls to count.

But in the midst of every hurricane, including this one, is the eye of the storm. The calm. Find that. In the midst of the chaos of life, find the center — the tranquil peace that is the eye of the storm — and hunker down and keep yourself there.

And just breathe.

In the quiet, still space where everything just outside your own being is whirling all around you, stay in the eye - in your own calm. Where everything is as it should be.

Still. Peace-filled. In focus.

Clarity is rampant in the eye of the storm. What a gift that is. Embrace that gift. Accept it as yours. Know that it is yours for the taking. A choice. Your choice.

The eye — in the calm, your calm can lead to clarity, to sanity in an insane world.

Chaos is undoubtedly all around us and it can be, and is, overwhelming. Find your calm. Your own calm, in the midst of the chaos. Right there in front of you.

In the eye of the storm.

Jill Pertler is an award-winning syndicated columnist, published playwright and author. Don't miss a slice; follow the Slices of Life page on Facebook.

**Magic Mike 6xl
The plight of the finger**

MICHAEL D. DAVIS
CORRESPONDENT

I don't know it to be true, but I like to think that when I was just a chunky little baby, my big sister, just a kid herself, flipped me the bird, and I returned the favor.

The Unholy Middle Finger, The Bird, The One Hand Salute, all of these are just synonyms for a single finger on the hand; that when thrust to the sky alone, is supposed to show your contempt and disgust.

I frankly think there is more to that. Many people have shown their contempt and disgust for me over the years, and rarely did they use their fingers. For me, the middle finger is a lot of things. It is a 'hello,' a 'goodbye,' a 'good burn buddy, ya got me.' But more often than not, it is a way to oppose conformity.

I walk around our little burg, usually draped in black adorning a large vest with a painting across the back. The painting is one I did myself, of a skeletal hand giving, you guessed

it, the finger. The reason for this is that I have been bullied, put down, and generally shoved into a box my whole life. It wasn't till I found my vibe and accepted myself as the fat weird asthmatic freak that I am, that I painted that finger and donned it as my Superman cape.

I know what you're saying. But Mike, that is still using the finger as a symbol of contempt. Contempt for conformity. And you're right, my good friend, but let me elaborate on the other reasons I love this finger.

For one, the finger is universal and ancient. You don't need to speak the same language to give someone the finger; you flip the bird, and you are all on the same page. The ancient Romans knew that they called it the *digitus impudicus*.

Also, for all the times I have given the finger, and I have given the finger a lot, I have rarely given it out of anger. I don't know if I just see this gesture as something different, but I often give the finger when laughing. I have flipped the bird to my moth-

er, father, sister, and just about every friend I have, and I've received the same from them.

Even when given in anger, there is nothing finer than flipping the bird. It's that silent swear that can be given with a tense hand when your boss quickly glances in the other direction. It helps blow off steam, and it's fun!

I'll leave you with a story of a first impression. One of my longest friends has a brother that I believe is 18 now. When he was just a boy of around three or four, my very first meeting was seeing him run across the yard in his underwear while, as they say, flipping me the bird.

I did not see my friend's brother for about 15 years after this incident. When I met him again, he was grown, and I asked him if he was the one that ran across the yard in his underwear, flipping me off.

"Oh, yeah, that sounds like me," he said laughing.

LOCAL LUNACY

by Michael D. Davis



Locals celebrate Mother's Day

Speak Out
How to contact your elected officials

U.S. Senate
Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-3254
Web forum: grassley.senate.gov

Joni Ernst, R-Iowa
825 B&C Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-3254
Web forum: ernst.senate.gov

U.S. House of Representatives
Ashley Hinson, 1st District
1429 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-225-2911
Web forum: hinson.house.gov

Letters to the Editor Policy

Limit your submission to 400 words. The deadline to submit letters is no later than Monday at 10 a.m. for publication in that Friday's newspaper. Letters may be edited for libel and grammar. We reserve the right to shorten letters and reject those deemed libelous, in poor taste or of a personal nature. Letters must be signed with the author's real first and last name and must include a street address and a daytime phone number for verification. Individuals may submit no more than one letter per 30 days. Send to: rmaharry@timesrepublican.com

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