Capitol View

By Ed Howard

It's too soon to guesstimate whether the initiative will be economically feasible, but Gov. Dave Heineman has proposed measures that would reduce your state income tax burden.

In his State of the State address, Heineman offered lawmakers, and the citizenry, observations that would have been welcomed by taxpayers 100 years ago and every year since:

"Our hardworking taxpayers are tired of government taking too much of their paycheck."

We would go a step further and proffer that taxpayers who don't work hard are tired of government taking so much out of their paychecks, too.

Whether some of us or none of us get to keep a little more of our earned income will depend in part on how the state analyzes and forecasts the Nebraska economy in coming weeks.

Heineman's package includes reductions in corporate income tax rates, centering on smaller businesses.

A reminder that not everyone loves a tax reduction: Heineman wants to eliminate the county inheritance tax – and county officials are objecting. The tax, collected by individual counties, throws off about $42 million.

A peace pipe will be offered down the road.

President Obama's supporters figure he will have time to offer a political peace pipe to some of those angered by his denying a permit for the TransCanada XL pipeline. The one that would have hauled Canadian tar sand oil across the Sand Hills and a portion of the economically important and ecologically sensitive Ogallala Aquifer.

His critics naturally enough blasted the decision not to grant the permit for the route requested. They made it sound as though everyone in the middle of the country was, by virtue of the decision, deprived of a high-paying, long-lasting job.

Central to the president's decision was his assertion that he was denying the permit because of the route it would have taken. He all but announced that if a more environmentally friendly path were to be selected, the pipeline could be carrying that coal tar stuff to the Gulf Coast of Texas in a couple of years.

Of course, that move would cause consternation among the scientists and others who say the mining and use of tar sands is, in itself, an assault on the environment.

ED HOWARD is the statehouse correspondent for the Nebraska Press Association.