

Votes and vetoes in the legislature

News from
your
legislator
Ward Cassidy



I plan to write several articles between now and when we return to Topeka for the 2012 legislative session. I receive legislative updates each week and the information should be of interest to the people of Northwest Kansas.

Most people now know that Governor Brownback signed the 2011 budget bill. He vetoed the line item appropriations for the Kansas Arts Commission and also the 2.5 % surcharge on state employee health benefits.

I expected the Arts Commission veto. The Governor has said all along that he would work to find private funding for the Arts and that it should not be included in the State Budget. I feel the Arts are very important to the people of Northwest Kansas and the Commission provided us with opportunities we would not have received otherwise. Hopefully, we will still have those opportunities with the new set up.

I was glad to see the Governor's veto of the state employee health benefits. The 2.5% surcharge was projected to raise \$1.5m, but the Governor said in his analysis it would raise only \$790,000 and that it could present legal problems for the state. I felt that the legislature was not being fair to our state employees and that they were always looking for ways to cut them. I voted against the proposal to take away the longevity pay for state employees.

Governor Brownback also vetoed a provision that would have required Rob Siedlecki, SRS Secretary, to have quarterly reports to legislative committees on what he has been up to. All other Cabinet secretaries check in annually.

The SRS has been in definite need of strong leadership and change to make it effective and trusted in the State of Kansas. I have dealt with the agency, as a high school principal, many times in my career and found it lacking. When Secretary Siedlecki first arrived in Kansas, from Florida, he stayed at the same place I was staying. I got to know him rather well and I feel that he can turn the agency around.

The net effect of the Governor's line item vetoes will be an increase of \$498,000 in the State General Fund.

A quote from the Governor, "As we look toward more challenges ahead, I encourage the Legislature to join me in thoroughly reviewing areas we can reduce the reach of state government. One of these areas is state subsidization of public broadcasting. I intend again to include no funding for public broadcasting in my FY 2013 budget, so I encourage recipients of these grants to make appropriate preparations."

I supported the funding of Public Broadcasting. I felt that it is something used and enjoyed by many in Western Kansas. We do not have a population base that can afford to fund public broadcasting. I hate to see it go away, but at least they have another year to find a different funding.

Good news for KPERs. It is estimated that there will be \$4m in additional savings in FY 2011 and \$11m in FY 2012. More good news - the May revenues in Kansas were \$46.9m above estimated income. Most of the increase was from individual income taxes, which means, although unemployment is still high, more people are working and paying taxes than a year ago.

I plan to travel the district often between now and next January. I will be at the Highway 36 Commission in Phillipsburg, I present with Dale Dennis, the state educational finance director, at Oakley, and will be spending the afternoon in Atwood this coming Monday. Use my legislative e-mail for any questions or concerns ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

It is great to live in NW Kansas and I am glad to be home.



A friendly goat revolution starts in Norcatur

Who knew I would have started a "goat revolution"? Like me, my friend, Babe, thought having a couple of portable, self-propelling, environmentally sustainable and economically feasible lawn mowers was a good idea. However, she did not want the full-sized models; she preferred the "compact" size.

I "just happen" to know a lady who raises pygmy goats. A phone call informed us she even had a couple to sell. A female that is "more than likely" pregnant and a young wether; both very tame. Three of Babe's grandchildren, Cateara, Tobias and Sasha, are visiting for two weeks, so the timing was perfect.

So, off we went on our goat-buying excursion; cat-carrier in hand. The goat lady's husband easily carried the female out of the pen and "folded" her up to fit in the carrier. However, when she stood up the carrier "exploded" and it took several pairs of hands to keep the lid on the carrier while wires were located and secured to hold the container closed.

There was no way the little male goat was going to ride in the carrier with his female companion. The only recourse was: one of the kids would have to hold the kid. (Get it?) Anyway, three hands shot up accompanied by voices begging,

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



"Me, me, me. Pick me."

Tobias was chosen because he seemed sturdy enough to hold on to a scared goat. But, not before I seriously cautioned him to hold on tight. The last thing I wanted was a terrified goat doing laps around the inside of the van while I was trying to drive.

I needn't have worried. The goats were, indeed, tame and took their first ride in stride. Or, took it in leaps; or bounds; or in whatever goats take. When the pair was released inside their new fenced home they went right to work doing what they were "hired" to do: munching grass and leaving their little "calling cards" everywhere they went. Better there, than in the van.

-ob-

I receive some interesting e-mail from friends. One was a link to a site, www.cohort11.americanobserver.net, that

provided an animated map of the United States, broken down into counties. The animation illustrated the progression of unemployment during recent years. Kinda scary - except for one thing. There is little unemployment in the Midwest, although, it appeared to be spreading into the metro areas.

What does that mean? I think it means people in Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and The Dakotas are not afraid to work and they will work. I don't think they expect a hand-out when Mother Nature deals them a bad hand. I think they never consider giving up or giving in. We come from good hardy stock out here. My mother used to say, "Hard work never killed anyone".

-ob-

Jim was beaming after his first appointment with the occupational therapist. After taking measurements of his thumbs she announced, "You're the winner! I have never measured a thumb that big."

She told him that if he did all his hand, finger and thumb exercises every day, like she showed him, he would only have to come once a week. He promised he would and I'm going to see to it that he does. She is much too pretty for him to see three times a week.

The fashionable way to dress for work on the farm

Insight

John Schlageck

What's today's fashionable farmer wearing to work?

If you guessed any of the high fashions featured in GQ, Esquire or any other men's magazine, guess again.

Looking good is great when you go to town but safety and comfort are more important when dressing for farm chores. And while farmers and ranchers may not give the notion of dressing for safety a second thought doing so may prevent accidents that can lead to a long and healthy life living and working on the land.

Let's begin with the head, after all that's where thinking about safety should start.

Head injuries are common on the farm and tend to be serious. When doing work that may involve head hazards, trade your comfy ball cap for a hard hat.

When you're spraying chemicals, wear a wide-brimmed hat that is impervious to liquids, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety director. Make sure the brim is wide enough to keep chemical spray from drifting down on the back of your neck or face.

Eyes have been called the "window to the soul" but just like all windows they can break if something is hurled, splashed or sprayed into them.

Safety goggles/glasses and sunglasses should be just as much a part of your daily

garb as a good pair of steel-toed shoes, according to Higgins. Sunglasses are important because they lessen eye fatigue after long hours in the bright summer sun and when worn throughout the years may help prevent cataracts.

While many people consider the farm and rural America a place of quiet tranquility, many farmers experience hearing loss.

As a general rule, whenever the noise level reaches 85 decibels, farmers should reach for ear protection. While farmers don't carry testing equipment to measure decibel level, they should wear protection when in doubt as to the noise level.

Earmuffs are preferable to ear plugs because the latter can cause compaction of ear wax that is difficult to remove.

While they may be more comfortable, avoid wearing loose fitting clothes that could get caught. If you plan to stay in the sun most of the day, wear long-sleeved cotton clothing. Natural fibers allow the skin to breathe and offer protection from the sun's harmful rays.

Avoid wearing sweats with long drawstrings that hang from the waist

or around the neck. These strings are made of extremely strong nylon or other artificial fibers. Such fibers don't rip or tear as easily as clothing like cotton. It's too easy for dangling strings to catch in augers or other moving parts.

Shoes and boots can provide foot protection and good traction. Make certain your shoes are clean of mud and manure that can cause slipping and falls.

Good fit is important for both daylong comfort and stability. When spraying chemicals, wear waterproof or impervious footwear that won't absorb chemicals.

Rings and watches hang up on bolts, sharp corners - just about anything you find around a farmstead. Always remove rings and other loose-fitting jewelry. If you fail to do so, you could easily lose or injure a finger or some other limb.

While the safely-dressed farmers will not make the fashion pages of GQ or Esquire, you won't find them in the hospital, emergency room or obituary pages either.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Thumbs up to Melanie at Jamboree for helping me!
Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the wildlife and parks employees, great memorial weekend! Emailed In.

Thumbs up to everyone who helped make OK Kids Day a huge success. It was a great morning of fun for children and adults alike. Emailed in.

To render a Thumbs Up write: dpaxton@nwkansas.com
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Dear Editor,
Thank you Norton, Kansas for the much needed supplies and prayers you have sent to the people of Joplin, Mo.
A special thanks to McRae Huszagh and his dog for all the hard work, love, kindness and hope they have given Joplin. This will never be forgotten.
Thanks to anyone else there from Norton who I have not met.
Betty Campbell, Joplin Mo.

Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up: e-mail dpaxton@nwkansas.com,
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