

## Authority over school spending taken from elected legislators

Everyone tends to see things through their own lenses, viewing the world around us from our particular seat at the table. So, it might seem unusual that the decade-long fight over school funding in Kansas suddenly pops up in the *New York Times* as a national issue.

"What's the deal," you might ask. "Kansas is a small state in the middle of the country. Why would the *New York Times* editorial board stoop to give advice to our Supreme Court?"

It's because this is not just a Kansas fight, but a national movement concerned with perceived equality in education and with taking authority over school spending out of the hands of the elected legislatures by court action.

And right now, if you listen to the voices of the largely liberal East Coast establishment led by the *Times*, the wrong side is winning in Kansas.

Other than being firmly in control of conservatives, Kansas is not unique in this battle. Forty-five states have faced school-funding lawsuits, most aimed at increasing spending. These draw support both from civil-rights groups concerned with the fate of urban schools and minority students, and from teacher unions and education groups that want more money.

The *Times*, in an October editorial, advised the Kansas Supreme Court to back a district-court order to restore public-school funding to 2008 levels, spending an estimated \$400 million more each year.

"The State Supreme Court should uphold that order," the editorial board intoned, "while making it clear that the Legislature does not have the power to unilaterally shortchange school children."

While the *Times* allegedly refused to run a full response from Gov. Sam Brownback, it did run a short letter from the governor noting that education spending had increased \$200 million on his watch and defending his income-tax cuts.

Those cuts really bother the pro-spending side in this struggle, because they see them representing dollars the state could be putting into teacher salaries and other programs, forever lost.

While it did not run the governor's full response, the *Times* did run an opinion, or "op-ed," column attacking the state's education funding stance by two "experts" committed to forcing higher school spending, titled in a play off the old William Allen White editorial, "What's the Matter With Kansas Schools?"

The piece puts the struggle into the national perspective: "Many of these lawsuits successfully forced elected officials to increase school funding and to deliver more resources to poor students and those with special needs. If the Kansas Supreme Court rules otherwise, students in those states may begin to see the tide of education cuts return."

The authors were David Sciarra, who heads the Education Law Center, which describes itself as "a public interest law firm specializing in the reform of elementary and secondary school systems in New Jersey," and Wade Henderson, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the Leadership Conference Education Fund, and among other things, former head of the NAACP Washington office.

Their article implies that Gov. Brownback was somehow responsible for school budget cuts — most occurred in 2009, while he was still in Washington — and cast his tax cuts ("a \$1.1 billion tax break ... benefiting upper-income Kansans") as a big part of the problem.

There is more, much more, to this fight. too much for one day. Meantime, schools go on, Kansas test scores remain relatively high and no one seems to know just how to fix the inequalities that do exist, except to spend more money.

At the crux of the battle, however, is the basic question of whether democratic decision making or the courts will control school budgets. Which side people fall on seems to depend on whether they want more money to spend or lower taxes, not whether they believe more in the power of the people and their elected representatives, or the (often necessary) power of the courts.

In the best of all possible worlds, the discussion would be about what works for kids, not about how much to spend or who controls the purse strings. But basic issues of democracy and fairness tend to overshadow that right now.

— Steve Haynes



## Security concerns still linger

I can only imagine the trepidation some feel about participating/attending the 2014 Olympics. All those years of practice and dedication now marred by threats of violence. Although assurances abound about the security at Sochi, still concerns linger. Politics and the Olympic Games however, seem to go hand in hand.

The first ancient Olympic games were held in 776 B.C. and continued for 12 centuries, until Emperor Theodosius decreed them "pagan cults." The first modern Olympic games were held in Athens in 1896. Germany and France did not attend because they were still at odds following the Franco-Prussian War, which had ended 20 years earlier.

Women competed for the first time in 1900. In a move to make it official, the Olympic Committee voted, in 1924, to allow women to compete. Four countries, Turkey, Japan, France, and the United States, opposed the measure. The reason the U.S. delegates gave was, "They had a mandate from Congress to

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



vote against including women."

After WWI, Turkey, Hungary, Austria and Bulgaria were banned from competing. In 1948, following WWII, Japan and Germany suffered the same fate. For over three decades, South Africa was banned because of apartheid.

Boycotting has long been the way one country shows their dissatisfaction with another. The Melbourne Olympics in 1956, were boycotted by countries who opposed the invasions of the Suez Canal and of Hungary. The People's Republic of China withdrew because of the presence of the Republic of China (Taiwan). The Cold War provided a perfect excuse to boycott.

Only 80 countries participated in the Moscow Olympics in 1980.

Just days before the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, a "massacre of dozens of students" was carried out by the Mexican government. Four years later, in Munich, eleven Israeli Olympians were taken hostage and later killed by the Palestinian group, Black September. The 1996 Atlanta Games were the site of a lone bomber who objected to the U.S. government's stand on abortion. He killed one and injured many others. In contrast, in 2012 amidst high security, the London Olympics were carried out without violence.

Sochi presents unique and very real threats. Russian President Vladimir Putin is determined to achieve a successful Olympic event. High security, for obvious reasons, is the norm.

The Olympic rower Peter Raymond, who participated in the 1968 and 1972 Olympics, acknowledged the threats, but supports Olympic participation, "Otherwise the terrorists are winning." [mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net](mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net)

## We must first examine ourselves

In high school psychology we learned about "projection". It's a coping mechanism. When things go wrong we project our failure onto someone or something else!

It might be better to examine ourselves and attempt to change our behavior in order to achieve a more successful outcome the next time, but where is the fun in that?

It's the difference between stating "I lost an endorsed check from Nor'West newspapers" and what I'm about to tell you.

After we paid our property taxes the Smith County Treasurer sent back a receipt, a check and a note explaining we overpaid. I was certain we had not overpaid but it was exciting to get a little unexpected bonus.

They must have been a little backed up after the rush to pay taxes Dec 20 and Christmas. This correspondence did not reach us until after January 1: about the same time as my stipend from Nor'west.

I put both checks in my purse thinking I'd cash them.

Then the Treasurer called. "Oops--we made a mistake, you didn't over-pay." Actually they projected the error onto me: they claim I did not include one of the barcode things they scan.

I suggested since I still had the check I tear it up, they void it and we'd call it good.

Oh no, voiding a check was not a possibility! I must write another.

Later, we went into the Treasurer's office. "How about I just signed this check back to you?" I asked.

They agreed to that. I pulled a check out of my purse, endorsed it, turned it

### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



over and realized it was my Nor'west check.

I stuffed that back and fished out the other check. Square with Smith County!

Now I have to explain my purse. It is a Miche' Bag. You buy a base purse and add covers. The covers are attached by magnets. Miche' offers all sorts of other accessories for their bags, including underwear. Underwear goes between the bag and the cover. You can put lists, receipts, checks, etc in the underwear and they are relatively secure. Even if the cover comes off which sometimes happens if it gets bumped.

I thought I put the Nor'west check in the underwear.

On Martin Luther King Day the hubby went to St Francis. I rode along. We had lunch with my sister at Cuppa Joe's. Cute place, check it out if your travels take you there. None of us had any cash. We commiserated about how I had an endorsed check and she needed cash for a trip the next day!

It got windy. We were kind of nervous about that. This was right after the accident out by Rexford. A big "thumbs up" for the coverage in the Telegram!

We stopped for fuel in Oberlin.

When I got out something bumped my purse or maybe the wind caught it.



Thumbs up to whomever picked up the tab for two high school students at Town and Country on Monday. We feel unworthy and are trying to be better people because of this. Emailed in.

Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:  
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or to write 215 S. Kansas Ave.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

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