

Making affidavits public record

The Kansas Senate will get to decide the fate of a bill which would open up the statements made to convince judges to issue arrest and search warrants.

The bill (HB 2555) would put Kansas in good company: nearly every other state, federal courts and even those in many foreign countries make these affidavits public.

In Kansas, however, they have been sealed for years. That's bad for two reasons:

Kansas citizens can't see what their judges and prosecutors are doing with these cases, and it leaves open the possibility that investigative work was either shoddy or corrupt. The public has no way to judge when records are sealed.

The ghastly experience of a Leawood family shows what can happen when there is no accountability for the work done on warrants. They were enjoying the privacy of their home when a drug squad outfitted in body armor and assault rifles burst in, ordering the parents to get down on the floor like common criminals.

The kids were allowed to watch while officers ransacked their home, holding Dad at gunpoint, until the squad, having found absolutely nothing illegal, withdrew without arresting anyone.

The couple asked why they had been singled out, but no one at the courts, the police department or the district attorney's office would tell them. The affidavit filed by officers to get a search warrant for their home remained sealed.

They were forced to hire a lawyer and spend more than \$25,000 to learn the truth: The father and son had been seen leaving a hydroponics-supply store which detectives claimed was frequented by people who grew marijuana. In fact, the son needed the supplies for a project growing vegetables.

Later, drug officers searched their trash and found green leafy matter which was identified as possible marijuana, but turned out in fact to be green tea. That flimsy report was enough, however, for this goon squad to put a decent family through hours of hell. No amount of pleading would convince the city or county to open that record for them.

In other states and in federal cases, these affidavits serve as a factual basis for news stories about a crime, allowing citizens to know what happened without resorting to rumors or biasing a case against the defendant. This does not create problems with providing a fair trial later; in fact, the opposite may be true.

One Kansas district court has made its affidavits open for years with no adverse results. Judges in Emporia, serving Lyon and Chase counties, continue the practice today. That shows there is little to lose by opening warrant-request records.

The bill, as passed by the House, has safeguards for the names on informants and other vital information. It would put Kansas in line with the rest of the country and end this odd and sometimes dangerous practice of secrecy, so foreign to our open system of courts.

We hope the Senate will see the light and pass this bill forthwith.

— Steve Haynes



The importance of reading

As a child, I remember fondly the shiny floors of the Norton Public Library, children's story hour and Miss Bessie, the librarian. I remember checking out books, along with my mother, and heading home to unlock the treasures inside. There were picture books, later The Bobbsey Twins and then biographies. I can still tell you where to find George Washington Carver's biography.

Many schools this week, including Norton, celebrated the birthday of children's author, Dr. Seuss. His books of whimsical, nonsense rhymes have delighted children since his first one, *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, was published in 1937. In addition to Dr. Seuss' birthday, last Wednesday was Read Aloud Wednesday around the world. This day was set aside to highlight the problem of childhood and adult illiteracy. It is estimated, in our country alone, 32 million adult Americans, roughly 13%, are unable to read. Twenty percent of this country's high school graduates are il-

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



literate. Throughout the world over 793 million people are unable to read.

We know more than we used to about learning difficulties in general and reading difficulties in particular. I remember my mother lamenting the fact that she knew she had had children with learning disabilities and/or dyslexia but didn't know about those problems at the time and thus she was unable to help them. Now we know more, but still we are unable to help all children. But there are other problems behind illiteracy. Poverty, lack of parental involvement, inferior daycare situations to name a few. I was fortunate to have parents who were avid

readers. My dad struggled with reading. He would now have, more than likely, been identified with dyslexia, but in 1911 or 1912, he was just a slow learner. Although books were not his favorite, he always had a newspaper or a magazine close by and once he read something, he never forgot it. My mother had a book for every room, including the porch and car. She would read several books at a time.

The one thing we can probably all agree on, is that the lack of this skill will hold people back, socially, professionally and financially. It can define who we are and who we become, both as individuals and as a country. Illiteracy has been linked to incarceration, thus proving costly to all. Helping children fine tune the skill of reading will open doors for them.

Or as Dr. Seuss said, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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The highs and lows of pot legalization

The 2014 Happiness Study is out! As always Kansas is in the middle in every sense! States in the bottom ten include Missouri and Oklahoma. Nebraska and Colorado are in the top ten.

Up here in the northern part we may benefit from the happiness drifting in from Nebraska. Those on the western border are happy because of what is drifting in from Colorado.

All you have to do is inhale!

Personally I've felt the legalization of marijuana may have a negative impact on Colorado.

But what do I know? I've never even tried to smoke tobacco. Drugs do not interest me in the least.

So innocent am I, I always wondered how people get drugs. Who do you ask?

When it comes to drugs like meth, once you make it how would you sell it? It's not like you can put an ad in the shopper!

A few years ago a house in the area had two signs. One came and went: "Eggs for Sale". The other was always there: "No Trespassing. Violators will be shot!"

I don't know how egg sales went but stopping by seemed a bit risky.

The little old ladies claimed the residents were selling meth. The "Eggs for Sale" went up when they had product. The "No Trespassing" sign was up because they didn't want anyone snooping around.

They knew this because the same thing went on in someone's hairdresser's cousin's boyfriend's sister's town.

I hope law enforcement is taking note.

Marijuana is not meth. And most people pooh-pooh my concern about it. (Maybe I do know people who would sell me a couple of joints!)

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



"It's ridiculous the money we spend prosecuting and incarcerating people who just want to smoke a joint every now and then." "Alcohol causes many more social problems." So they say!

I suppose, but marijuana is an ambition killer. Thinking of employers like Lockheed-Martin who make precision products for weaponry and aerospace: do they want a "whatever dude" workforce?

Companies still have the right to a no tolerance drug policy for their employees. But could it reach the point they cannot find drug free employees?

At her funeral I inquired as to my cousin's son's employment. He's a gardener for a marijuana grower in Denver.

OH! Do you get to take your work home?

He said there are cameras everywhere.

What kind of a security check they do before hiring workers? Do they do drug testing?

I saw a televised report on Colorado's marijuana industry. People have parties; like wine tastings only with different varieties of pot. It appeared very chic; the women in designer cocktail dresses and pearls. Special munchies geared towards "wellness" are provided. There are also foods prepared with marijuana.

One gal is making a career of such

party planning. The self-proclaimed Martha Stewart of Pot!

A Denver newspaper has a "marijuana critic!"

I wonder what happens down in the 'hood? Do they go into the legal shops? Can they afford to? If you have pot produced and sold outside the legal system what are the consequences?

No worries: it appears there will be plenty of marijuana tax revenue to prosecute and incarcerate in those cases!

The pot seems pricey. But then you only need one cigarette as opposed to the bar bill you might run up. In the long run it could be cheaper. And there is no hangover, only a sense of well-being.

Okay I'm convinced! Kansas needs to relax and get on the marijuana gravy train. Tax the heck out of it and fund our schools.

Maybe it would be a boom to our Universities also. The University of Colorado is the fastest growing University in the country. Of course, there are no Flat Irons in Kansas.

Meanwhile, California Governor Jerry Brown is warning against rushing into legalizing marijuana.

"I think we need to stay alert, if not 24 hours a day, more than some of the potheads might be able to put together," he says.

What a buzz-killer!

Didn't they used to call him Governor Moonbeam? You think he might have smoked a joint or two?

Maybe he knows something-----

Kansas: stay the course! We aren't as happy as Colorado or Nebraska. But we are better off than Oklahoma and Missouri!

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