

## Study could be a threat to rural Kansas courts

A study of the state's judicial system announced this month by Lawton R. Nuss, chief justice of the Kansas Supreme Court, is the kind that never bodes well for rural Kansas, especially western Kansas.

Chief Nuss said the 24-member "Blue Ribbon Panel," made up of judges, lawyers, legislators, court workers and a few citizens, will look for ways to improve the way courts serve Kansas. What he really means is ways to handle the growing caseload without any more state money.

Kansas courts have increased fees to keep up with their budget, but still had to enforce unpaid furloughs last year to make ends meet, closing court offices for days at a time. With the state budget already facing a \$550 million shortfall next year, there's little prospect of getting more from the Legislature this year.

The panel will use figures from a "weighted" caseload study initiated by the courts last summer to come up with its recommendations, the chief said. Whatever those are, and the group has not yet begun its work, we might expect cuts in court services, judge positions and coverage for our area.

The chief justice said the panel "is authorized to consider such issues as the number of court locations needed to provide Kansans access to justice, the services to be provided in each court location, hours of operation, appropriate use of technology, cost containment or reductions and flexibility in the use of human resources."

Since court unification in the 1970s did away with county courts, with an elected county judge in each county, Kansas by law has maintained at least one judge in each county. Some counties have a district judge, others a district magistrate judge who may or

may not be a lawyer.

Judges are elected in rural areas, but appointed in most urban counties. They serve 31 judicial districts across the state, with from one to 26 district judges.

When courts look to cut costs elsewhere and focus on the growing caseload in urban counties, one of the answers often suggested is to cut back on services, employees and judicial positions in rural counties. So far, that has not happened, but it's clear the new commission could take another look at the "one judge, one county" promise.

Rural Kansas does not make for efficiency. With 105 counties, the state has a widely dispersed local government system. Yet the state expects, even requires, more of counties each year.

If there's pressure to cut court services in rural areas and shift resources to the cities, we'd like to know how people in rural Kansas will continue to receive the kind of service they are used to, and deserve.

Will defendants be hauled across two or three counties to see a judge? Will people have to drive half a day to see judicial records? Will filing court documents become an all-day trip for some?

Who knows?

Judicial slots allocated to small counties are coveted by the cities. There's no money to grow the system, so something has to give.

All of rural Kansas needs to watch the progress of this effort by the courts. The panel includes several rural residents, some from western Kansas, but pressure will be great to shift resources to the cities.

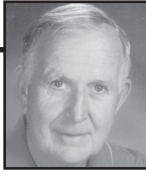
We will have to fight for our courts and services.

- Steve Haynes



## Legislative News

By Ward Cassidy



Representative, 120th District

Week one in Topeka!

I went to Topeka several days early to get my office organized and set up my computer. Unfortunately, I left my own computer at home and have not yet received my legislative computer. With 33 new freshmen legislators I imagine they are having lots of trouble getting everyone going.

My wife, Gloria, my two daughters, their husbands, and my treasurer, Michael Day and his wife Brenda, all traveled to Topeka for the Inaugural Ball. It was a fun evening and I was grateful they made the trip.

Sam Brownback was sworn in as the 46th governor of the state of Kansas. The snowstorm caused the event to take place in the house chambers Monday morning. After a short speech, Governor Brownback hosted an open house in his first floor offices. Gloria and I have met his wife, Mary, and we had a very nice visit with her before we had the opportunity to congratulate the new governor.

At 2 p.m. on Monday there was a swearing in of the new house members in the house chamber. I felt a tremendous responsibility as I took the oath to stand up for my 120th district and to serve Kansas.

Wednesday evening we sat in the chamber and listened to the State of the State Address. I knew that there were going to be major budget cuts but I was hopeful, after talking to the budget director, Steve Anderson (he grew up in Oberlin), that Northwest Kansas would not be hit too hard. We are now \$570 million in debt

and I believe we all knew it was going to take some tough decisions to get the state budget back in line.

As most of you know the governor presents us the budget, the legislature holds hearings on how the money is spent and what services are provided for the money that is available. The different agencies then come in to present their plan for delivering the specific services they provide.

Education is going to be hit hard again. Every one of the 120th school districts will lose significant amount of dollars again this year and in next year's budget. The stimulus money was a blessing when it arrived, but a curse now that the state has to wean itself off federal money. There is not going to be any agency that does not feel the budget crunch. Hopefully, there can be decisions made in Topeka and in our local communities that will help us provide services till the economic recession turns around.

I do believe that with the Republican governor and the large Republican majorities in both the House and the Senate there will be enough votes to pass conservative legislation. The budget deficit and the unfunded pension liability of the state employees retirement system, close to \$7 billion, are going to dominate the session in both the House and Senate. There will also be a strong move to pass legislation outlawing late-term abortions. There is a group

of legislators that want to repeal the 1-cent sales tax. The governor is not in favor and I would be surprised if it happens this year with our large deficit. There is also a move to repeal the Clean Air Act and I am definitely not in favor of doing that.

The governor has also recommended many changes and consolidations of 11 different agencies that will save \$9.2 million in the budget. One that will affect our area is the merging of the Animal Health Department and State Conservation Commission to the Department of Agriculture.

Personally, I have been working on Oberlin's water problems, a statute that affects a business in Phillipsburg, and my first committee bill that will put more teeth in laws against internet predators. I really love my job and am constantly talking to fellow legislators on how their decisions will affect Northwest Kansas.

My office secretary is a wonderful lady named Evelyn. This is her first year working in the legislature. She has three of us to serve and works very hard. My office phone number is 785-296-7696. Next week the legislative web site is supposed to be up and I will include my e-mail address in next week's article.

## Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Dave and Charlene Meyer, St. Francis; Ben Andrist, St. Francis; Gabe Gienger, Orlando Fla.; Marie Walker, Plainview, Texas; J.C. Hixon, Aurora, Colo.; Mike Bandel, St. Francis

GOD SAYS But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. Proverbs 6:32

The Saint Francis Herald (USPS 475-960) A Century of Service to Cheyenne County P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050 Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices. Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association. Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

## Hangin' With Marge

By Margaret Bucholtz



How to Know If You Are Aging

margeb@cityofstfrancis.net

It used to bother me about how my children are going to know I am getting older. Everywhere you read, it tells children to look for signs so they will know when their parents need to be put in a old folk's home.

When my mother started going down hill, I knew it because she didn't have that spotless house that I always knew. You might find some dust, however did keep on cooking.

My house is far from spotless. I will clean it, but it isn't a big thing and my cooking is "sometimes I cook and sometimes I don't." I have always been a little "blonde" so my mind will not be something they can count on. But I think I have figured it out.

While we were on our trip we

stopped in Ohio to visit Kurt's relatives. The night we got to one of his aunts, she had surprised us with three of Kurt's cousins that were in town for the day.

As soon as they arrived at the aunt's, Karen, one of the cousins, said, "I want to sit by Margaret so we can visit." I thought that was very nice of her as I really don't know any of Kurt's relatives very well.

As soon as she got her chair beside me, she immediately asked about our families. I told her everyone was fine. We now had 23 grandchildren that were growing up very fast. She smiled and said, "Can you remember all of their names?" I said, "Sure" and began naming each one and which kid they belonged to. Soon I noticed she was kind of squirming

in the chair and you could tell she was looking around the room to eavesdrop on someone else's conversation.

I thought, "well how rude, after all she was the one that asked me to name them." After the evening was over and we went back to our camper and I was in bed still thinking about how rude she was. When all of a sudden it was like the clouds busted open in my brain. She did not ask me to name them; she only laughed and said, "Can you remember all their names?"

What a red face I had. Now I know that someone out there will tell my children that my mind is really gone and I won't have to worry about that again.

## Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



scmccormick@nwkansan.com

An out-of-the-blue e-mail got me digging through some old newspapers here at the office.

A request came from Cary Hatch for information about an event. Now a resident of Cedar Park, Texas, Cary grew up on a farm northwest of McDonald during the 1950s and 1960s.

On a summer evening, the still country air was shaken by a huge explosion. A jet had left Schilling Air Force Base near Salina in route to Lowry AFB outside of Denver. At 32,000 feet the SAC (Strategic Air Command) B-47 bomber caught fire in two engines and burst into a ball of fire.

This story came from the lone survivor of the crew of three. Copilot Lt. Howard J. Steen, then 29 from Fergus Falls, Minn., was ejected just before the explosion and parachuted to safety. He landed five miles south of Benkelman and was picked up by farmer Virgil Hatch, Cary's uncle.

The pilot's, 1st Lt. Douglas Powell, 28, and navigator's, 1st Lt. Harry Dan Welborn, 27, bodies were found in and near the wreckage.

Sections of debris landed north of Bird City on the farms of Ralph Leach, Edward Meger, Jim Hickert and Guy Lamb and near the Willis Burr home. One of the en-

gines came down on the Bird City Golf Course.

The survivor was taken to the St. Francis airport and later spent a sleepless night at John Hancock's home.

At the time, Melvin Mast was a Bird City city marshal. He was quoted in the paper as saying 3,000 spectators were at or near the wreckage within an hour of the crash. Police from St. Francis and Atwood came to the scene and the National Guard was called up from Colby to control the crowd.

Thanks for the e-mail Cary.

Church of Christ 332-2380, Pars. 332-3424 502 W. Spencer Norman Morrow - Minister Bible Class 11 a.m. Morning Worship 10 a.m. Wed. Bible Study 7 p.m. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church 625 S. River • 332-2680 Fr. Roger Meitl Sunday Mass 10:30 a.m. Weekday Mass 8:30 a.m. Confessions Sat. 4-4:30 Salem Lutheran Church 332-3002 Pastor Chris Farmer Sunday School 10 a.m. Morning Worship 11 a.m. Communion 3rd Sunday Solid Rock Baptist Church 412 S. Denison Welcomes You! Pastor Allen Coon Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 Prayer Meeting, Wed 7:30 p.m. First Christian Church Pastor Jeff Landers 332-2956 • 118 E. Webster Bible Fellowship 9:15 a.m. Church Service 10:15 a.m. First Baptist Church 2nd & Scott • 332-3921 J.W. Glidewell, Pastor Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m., Wed. AWANA Club 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. St. Francis Community Church 332-3150 204 N. Quincy Street www.sfccfamily.com Pastor: David Butler Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Potluck & Communion - Every 2nd Sunday Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m. Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC 202 N. College Pastor Ken Hart 332-2928 Pars. 332-2312 Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Communion 1st Sunday of the month St. Francis Equity St. Francis Herald

