



Governor's olive branch best art folks can expect

Gov. Sam Brownback has backed down – a little – on his plan to do away with the Kansas Arts Commission, proposing that it be merged with the state Film Commission and placed in the Department of Commerce.

Last year, the governor vetoed the arts commission's entire budget, nearly \$700,000, a move which supposedly cost the state \$1.3 million on federal and regional grants. Arts advocates were outraged, from Topeka to the local arts commissions which received a lot of the grant money.

Now the governor is proposing a \$200,000 budget for the merged commission and a plan for an income-tax checkoff to support the new Creative Industries Coalition.

Predictably, Henry Schwaller IV, the former chair of the arts commission who has tried to be a thorn in the governor's side ever since the veto, pooh-poohed the plan. The checkoff couldn't possibly raise enough money to bring any federal funds, he sniffed.

Mr. Schwaller's name ought to indicate which side of the tracks he comes from, and there is the problem with spending taxpayers' money on the arts.

Most of us have no say in how it's spent, and the programs produced often lack mass appeal. It winds up with a few people who could afford to see plays and concerts on their own spending tax money to put on programs that don't serve most voters.

The logic and the ethics are suspect. In a time

when schools and universities are short of state money, why put dollars into programs with so little support?

Well, everyone agrees the arts are "good." And good for us, like broccoli. And a few dogged supporters won't give up on reaching for that \$2 million, especially the paid staff of arts commissions in larger cities. Their jobs are on the line, after all.

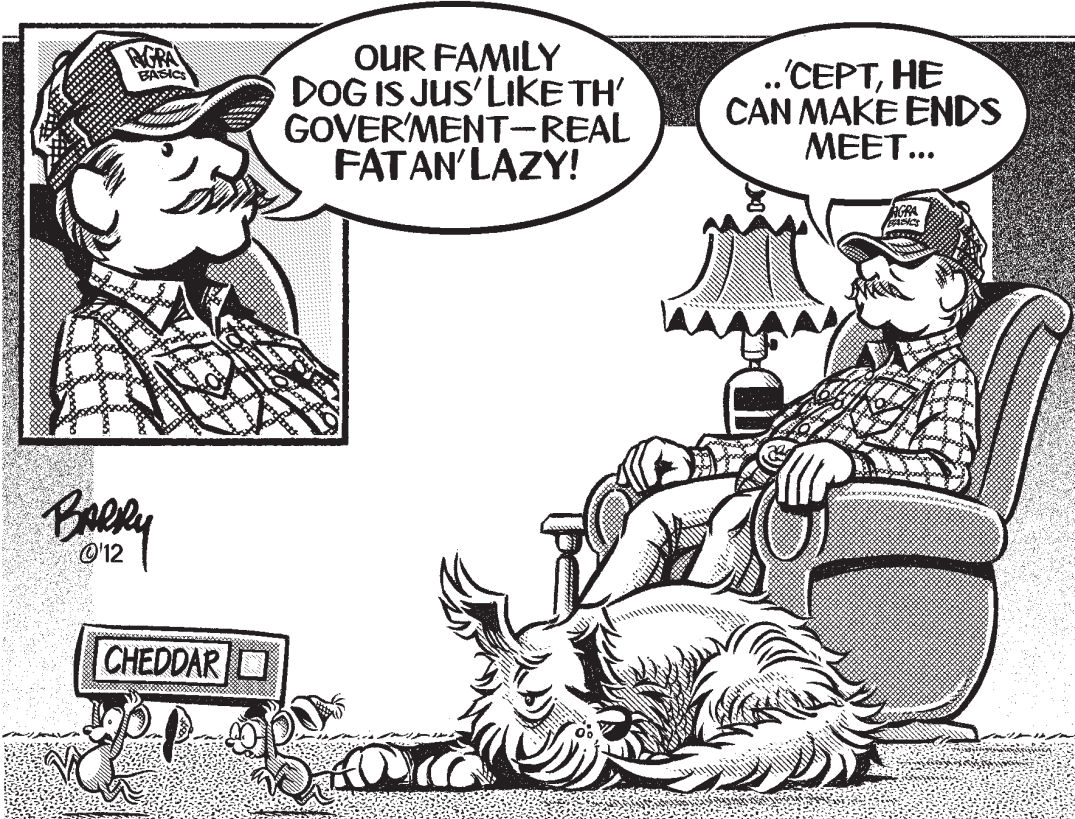
Mr. Schwaller has been a leader in this movement. He's a busy guy, according to his official biography, a real estate investor in Hays, where he also serves on the city council, and is a teacher in the business school at Fort Hays State University.

We don't doubt his sincerity, or that of anyone who wants to spend public money on what should be a private pursuit. We simply think it's wrong headed.

If all the arts-commission supporters got out and raised money for the arts, instead of just complaining about the end of state support, arts programs in Kansas could be flush with donations.

Maybe it's either more fun to complain, or some of these people just can't get the idea that the idea of an elite few deciding how tax money will be spent on the arts isn't so appealing to many people. Or that the state and federal governments don't have any money "left over" anyhow.

Maybe they will learn with time. — Steve Haynes



Across the County

By Marty Fear



County Extension Agent

January is Kansas Radon Action Month

Radon is a naturally occurring element produced from radioactive decay in the soil; it's an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas, and cited as the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, and the second leading cause of lung cancer in the general population.

Radon surveys have shown that 6 percent of homes in the U.S. have average concentrations above the recommended maximum level. However, the Kansas survey demonstrated that one in four homes were high, said Bruce Snead, Kansas State University Research and Extension residential energy specialist.

"Anyone can be vulnerable," said Snead, who explained that the cancer-causing gas, which can seep from the soil beneath the foundation through cracks or joints (in the foundation) into a home, is typically easy to detect and mitigate at a moderate cost.

"Detection is relatively simple," said Snead, who recommends beginning with a home radon detector, which, in its simplest form, can be purchased from many K-State Research and Extension offices in the state (for about \$5), at home and hardware stores and on the Internet, usually for \$25 or less.

"Testing is important, because it's the only way to tell how much of the gas is present," said Snead, who explained that, in Kansas, since 1987, 41 percent of the 50,182 test results available had levels above the recommended ceiling of 4.0 pCi/L (Pico Curies per liter of air, is the unit of measurement).

Conduct tests in the home in the lowest lived-in level about 20 to 24 inches above the floor for two to five days. The goal is

to measure the potential for elevated concentrations that come from the soil beneath the home's foundation. Testing in a kitchen or bathroom, in which more humid air and ventilation is typically occurring, is not recommended. Following test directions is a must.

If the initial test result is 4 pCi/L or higher, a follow-up test is recommended. Consider fixing your home if the average of the first and second test is 4 pCi/L or higher. If the initial result is low, further testing would be advised if living patterns change, if you begin occupying a lower level, or a significant change occurs in the foundation, heating/cooling systems or insulation/air sealing features. Hiring a professional contractor to fix your home is recommended.

More information about radon is available via the Kansas Radon Program at K-State Research and Extension offices throughout the state, online at <http://www.kansasradonprogram.org> and by calling: 1-800-693-5343.

Radon programs at Kansas State University are supported by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency, and serve as a state and national resource on radon awareness, testing, and mitigation.

Contact the Cheyenne County Extension office at 332-3171 or cfear@ksu.edu with questions or comments or to pick up a radon testing kit.

Till next week - Marty

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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Do you ever wonder how you would handle an emergency situation?

In this world of instant access to news it has been easy to follow the story from Tuscany, Italy of the tipped and semi-submerged luxury liner. What isn't easy is to understand why the captain acted in such a cowardly way.

Certainly, when all the dust settles and the Italians have a chance to sort out the facts, the rest of us will have a better understanding of how the ship ended up off course and striking a reef. I guess the good news-bad news was that the dam-

age from the sea's bottom came close to land.

Unfortunately it appears that over 30 passengers and crew lost their lives due to a terrible accident.

But back to Capt. Francesco Schettino.

When disaster struck the Costa Concordia what did the top man do? Apparently he wasn't too worried about anyone's safety but his own. After heading to his cabin for some valuables he "slipped and fell" into one of the lifeboats while his charges were left to fend for themselves.

Touching back on the original

question of handling adversity, I really don't know what I would have done. I'd like to think that I would help others to safety before looking out for number one.

When a person takes command of a ship it is with the possibility of inherent danger. For as long as men have gone to sea in boats, those things have sometimes sunk.

So I would hope most of us would do better than Capt. Schettino.

Woman shares political opinion

To the Editor:

Its hard for me to believe that President Obama's approval is as high as it is. What sane person would re-elect a president whose policies have sent this country spiraling into a recession so deep we may never recover?

In his first three years in office President Obama has added trillions to our national debt. Food prices have increased 57 percent and gasoline nearly \$4.00 per gallon. Not to mention that unemployment is off the charts.

Meanwhile, he spends more time on Air Force One flying all over the world promoting jobs for other countries when he should be in the oval office seeking solutions for America's problems with the help of congress. He would be called the traveling-in-chief.

The president stopped the Canada pipeline that would have created thousands of jobs for Americans and given us an alternate source of oil, not from the Muslim countries. He created back door

Letters to the Editor

Amesty for illegals from Mexico for political reasons.

President Obama rents million dollar estates where he vacations yearly in Hawaii and Martha's Vineyard. He travels with an entourage of hundreds plus his motorized division and helicopter. Economizing is not in Obama's

Automatic shopping plan added to my bill

Letter to the Editor:

If you visit Mon Budget Savers, Minnetonka, Minn., and buy something, you will then be enrolled in a shopping plan and you will not know it until you get your next bank statement. The plan is \$29.95 per month.

If you Google Minnetonka, MN you will see all the complaints about this company, and it is dif-

ficult, or it was for me, to get hold of them.

Their phone number is 800 475 1942 and their address is 5832 Lincoln Dr., Edina, MN 55436

They say they will mail you a form to request a refund on your initial payment of the \$29.95. I AM STILL WAITING!!!

Neil McCumber
St. Francis

McDonald, Kan.

Marilyn Frisbie

St. Francis

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