

Legislature should find plenty to fight about

One of the most divisive issues for the Kansas Legislature this coming spring might be immigration, which oddly enough, is mostly the responsibility of the federal government.

Conservatives will be fully in command of the scene in Topeka, and they look to agree on many things. Social conservatives will push for laws restricting abortion, drugs and maybe even strip clubs while trying to defend religious liberty. All of those are areas where people have a lot of protection from the federal courts, however, so whatever the Legislature does is liable to be more for show than substance.

Victory on the floor will make a lot of people feel better after years of having social initiatives suffocated by more liberal governors, however, and Gov. Sam Brownback is liable to sign many of these bills.

Another thing liable to unite disparate conservatives is cutting the budget and keeping tax rates down. While last spring, compromise on drastic tax cuts enacted at the last moment appeared likely for the coming session, all bets are off now that conservatives have solid majorities in both Houses behind a conservative governor.

The smart money says there may be little incentive to raise more money to close an alleged \$700 million budget gap now. Instead, the emphasis may be on cutting programs and slashing the budget even more. The administration still maintains it plans to put more money into public schools, however, and not less.

Whatever happens, low income-tax rates pushed last year by the governor appear to be with us for the next few years. Now neighboring

Missouri is making noises about copying Kansas rates to keep pace in economic development. Lower taxes are seen as attractive to businesses looking for a new home.

But immigration is the rub. Gov. Brownback and his allies, including the state Chamber of Commerce and farm and ranch groups, tend to look at the situation from the standpoint of labor shortages. They know the state has jobs which can't be filled without immigrants. It's a practical matter with them.

The xenophobic wing of the party, led by Secretary of State Kris Kobach, wants the state to enact restrictions on hiring illegal immigrants, along with tougher still election laws and maybe even an Arizona-style law requiring police to check the status of possible illegal immigrants. Mr. Kobach, after all, helped write the Arizona law.

The secretary pushed the state to require voters to show photo identification, though he had no proof – and still has none – that illegal immigrants were voting or that there was any kind of problem with voter fraud. His "issue" sounded good enough that he got the bill through a conservative Legislature which should have been concerned with the civil liberties problems it raised.

When push comes to shove, and with more than 50 freshman legislators, no one really knows how to count the votes, but the issue could split the solid-red statehouse down the middle. And make a supposedly slam-dunk session more than a little interesting.

– Steve Haynes



Letters to Santa

Dear Santa,

I wish for a toy daddy, a toy Austin, a brown light that I can sleep in the dark with, a Fin Mc-Missle, a little house for me and Daddy to play in, my own crayons, a toy mommy for my house, too. Dear Santa Clause, I love you. A little chair for my house, too, and a table. I wish my room could be a Spiderman room.

Love,
Austin Barnhart
5 years old

Dear Santa,

I wish for a Captain America, a Spiderman, my own glue machine that makes balloons, my own toy kitchen, my own crayons and I wish they were all red, my own curtains, my own cool drink and cup, my own table, piggy bank machine that makes baseball piggy banks, my own paper, my own light switches, a house where a lot of people live, and I can live with when I grow up and an iron man.

Love,
Jessa Barnhart
4 years old

Dear Santa,

I wish for a Hulk Mash, my own Kindle with a tiger game, a doggie, a Captain America, my own crayons, a terrible Hult, another Buzz Lightyear, a toy thingy to go on my door, a big factory that makes popcorn tigers, a cookie machine with monsters and ketchup, a hot dog and a cheeseburger, my own factory that makes piggy banks with tigers with happy faces and mad faces, a tree that makes stuffed animal tigers, big ones and little ones.

Love,
Nicklas Barnhart
4 years old

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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Part of it is my Irish roots. Part is loving the game of college football. Wherever it comes from, I'm glad to see the University of Notre Dame playing for a national title.

Notre Dame and Ohio State football were big in our home. The folks both grew up in the Canton/Akron area. Also, it was at Akron South High School that Dad and his brother attended with an Armenian kid named Ara Parseghian.

I don't know if they ever played football together, but I remember

the brothers talking about basketball games back in that day. They had another friend who ran a neighborhood restaurant in the old place who scouted local talent for Coach Parseghian in the 1960s and 70s.

But the allure of the Fighting Irish on the grid-iron goes back further to Knute Rockne, George Gipp and the Four Horsemen. I imagine about every good Catholic kid in America who played with a football knew what college

he would want to play for.

The last few decades have been humbling for Notre Dame football. Coaches and players have come and gone since the earlier glory days.

So it is a good thing to see the luster return to the gold helmets in South Bend, Ind. May the luck of the Irish be with them.

Hangin' With Marge

Kurt's Retirement

By Margaret Bucholtz



Kurt has been retired now for several months and I have tried really hard to not just overwhelm him with things to do. To be honest I really don't think he realized that I had been making honey-do lists for years now. That list was about the only thing I could remember where I put it. I didn't want to pull the list out right away or he would have probably begged to go back to work. However I got it out a few weeks ago and talked him into helping me paint the utility room.

I got all the stuff pulled out of the little room and then began telling him what all I wanted done. First let me tell you I am NOT a hoarder, but I do kind of have the tendency to become one. The stuff in that little room filled up a couple of rooms when I moved it, so I think I might have had just a little too much in there.

I had him put up a couple of shelves and a few other things. The best way to get a husband to help you is to just start building yourself. Kurt will drop anything so he can do it right. He thinks it is a lot easier to do it right the first time instead of tearing up what I have done and doing it over again.

I got a little tired of waiting on him to get things ready so I just started painting. It wasn't two minutes into the paint time until I put my brush in the paint can and pulled it out to

start painting. Unfortunately Kurt was working below me and a big blob of paint hit his head.

There was no humor, nor was there a fit, but trust me the look on his face told the story. Later as we discussed it he said, "A drop of paint in my hair I could have handled, but this was a glob. I could even feel it on my scalp."

No wonder he likes working alone.

GOD SAYS
And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.
Romans 8:28



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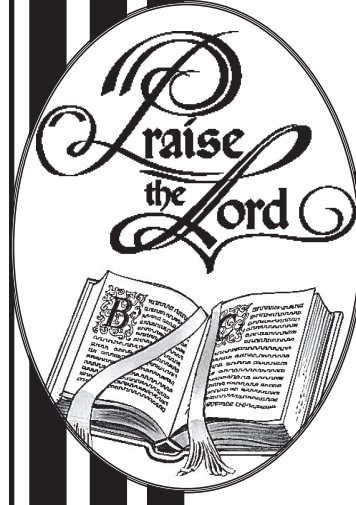
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