

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Resiliency of farmers show

From The Hays Daily News

Up until Easter weekend, Kansas wheat farmers were looking forward to what promised to be an outstanding growing season this year. Extended drought conditions appeared to be giving way as heavy snowfalls and early rains soaked the top soil.

The results of the late spring freeze, however, is tempering agricultural experts' forecast for the season.

The Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service reported this week that 73 percent of winter wheat in the ground was damaged. According to an Associated Press report, 29 percent of the damage is severe, 24 percent is moderate and 20 percent light.

"The crop was in such good condition three weeks ago — and in a manner of a few days it turned around tremendously," said statistician Eddie Wells.

That's not good news for Kansas, the nation's largest wheat producer that had planted 10.3 million acres in anticipation of a bumper crop. The new assessment suggests 41 percent of the current planting to be in poor to very poor condition. Only 30 percent was in this condition during last year's drought crop.

One small silver lining might be the drought conditions of previous years that has resulted in surplus supplies running thin. Simple supply and demand should drive wheat prices higher. Whether they go high enough to compensate for the production loss this year's freeze caused remains to be seen.

What we don't have to wait on is the resiliency of the Kansas farmer. Those who toil in the soil weather everything Mother Nature throws at them — and return to the fields the next day.

As Joe Kejr, president of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, said: "People will go on. You just kind of regroup and go on."

We are eternally grateful for this long-standing work ethic. It's what keeps America strong — and food on our table.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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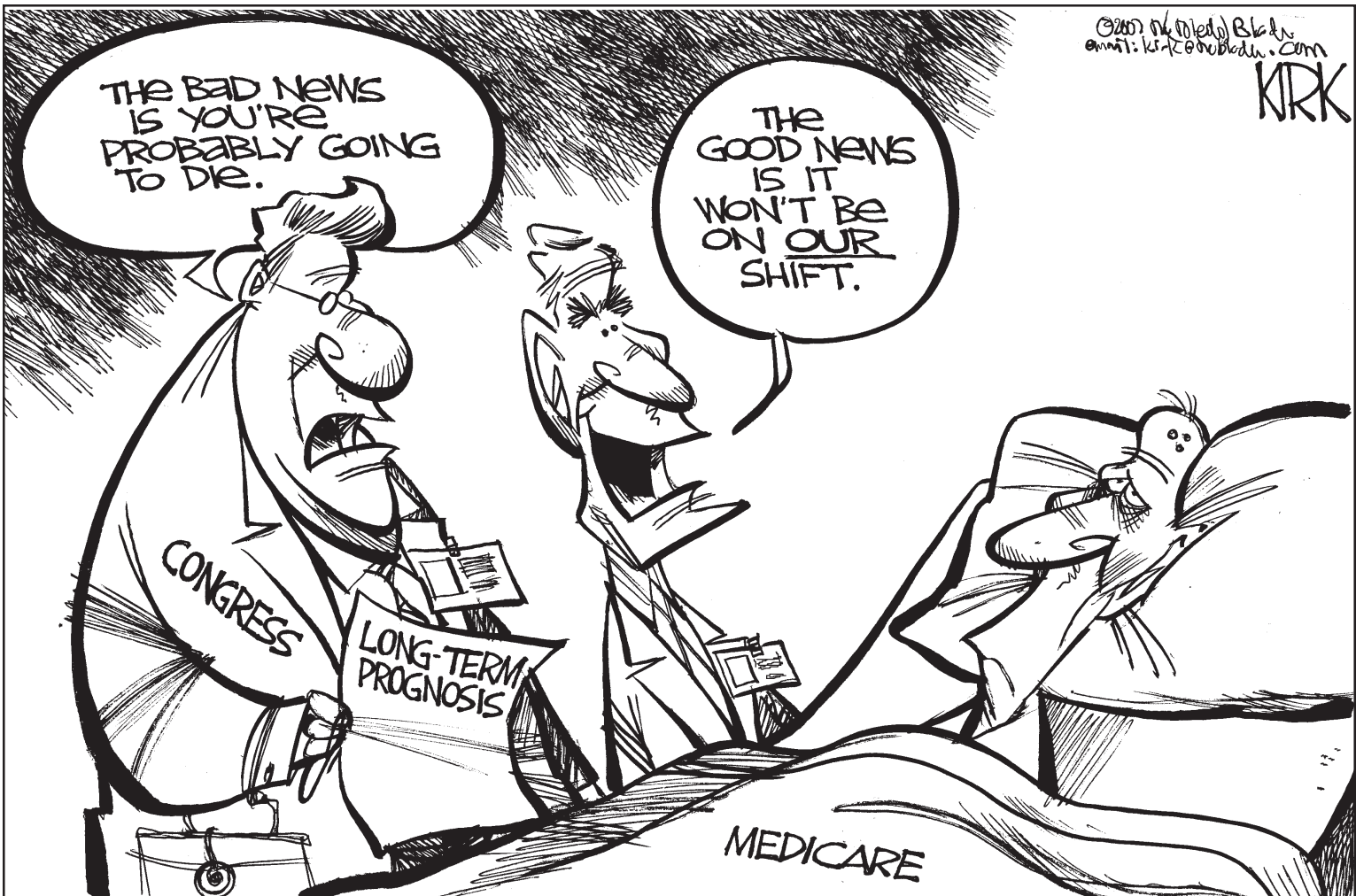
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Remember what to pray for

Today is the 56th Annual National Day of Prayer, a day set aside to pray for our nation. But from where I stand, each and every day should be a day we pray for our nation.

A nation going down the tubes in many areas.

This year's national day of prayer theme is based on 2 Chronicles 7:14 where God says if Christians will humble themselves and pray and seek him, he will forgive our sins and heal our land.

This is cause for daily prayer for our nation. A key topic of prayer is abortion. My husband and I recently had the opportunity to counsel with a young woman believing the lie a woman has the right to choose whether or not to bear the baby she has conceived in her body. My husband told her that as far as God and we are concerned, to abort the baby just because it was not her husband's is nothing more than murder.

My husband told the young lady she would not put a pistol to the head of her 4-year-old daughter and pull the trigger, yet an abortion would be nothing less to the unborn child within her. Our counsel fell on deaf ears and the four week old gestating baby was killed.

Another source of people's deception is the airways — secular radio and television and the Internet. Sure, I watch secular television and use the World Wide Web, but I screen everything and put my use of both in God's hands.

Far too many times I've seen first hand how people get caught up in believing what they hear or see as that of being truth. I believe Satan uses the very same tools we Christians use and that Satan influences people's lives with those tools.



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

I believe what the Bible says in Ephesians 2 verse 2: "in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." Meaning if we live by the world's ways, not God's ways, we are deceived by Satan. There's only two choices — God's way or Satan's way (the world's way).

The young woman who listened to the lie that abortion is acceptable heard the world's viewpoint. She heard the same erroneous information as that of a recent accusation that gang initiations are not alive and well, particularly in Colorado.

But I too was once deceived. I say this because when I was 14 I was called into mission work in South America. But it was after meeting former gang member Nicky Cruz and listening to his testimony at a youth conference in Denver that I dedicated my life to God. But, just like so many other people, I succumbed to the world's viewpoint, Satan's viewpoint that is, and drifted away from God.

Oh sure, I went to church, but sitting in a pew

no more makes a person a Christian than sitting in a garage makes him or her a car. I thought my way of doing things — a husband, couple kids, a house with a white picket fence and a station wagon in the garage — was better than serving the Lord.

But after stumbling my way through life and falling flat on my face, God picked me up and dusted me off and burdened my heart for America.

He's placed a burning desire in my heart to let people know that materialism is not what true happiness is all about. He broke me of pride and greed and set me on the path which he wanted me on.

A path to let people know that America is listening to the ruler of the kingdom of the air and it's the wrong thing to do. I won't sit here and tell you I have all the answers, but I will tell you I know the one who has them.

Those answers started being given to me one at a time as I shed the worldly ways I'd put in place for myself. Oh sure, I live in a nice house and drive a nice car, but they are only tools for this body to do God's work. I finally learned that I was just like the disciple Peter and doubted that God knew better than I did (Matthew 14: 25-31).

So as we celebrate this national day of prayer, my prayer for all Americans is that they realize prayer is the second step in finding the path to the person with the answers. The first step is to get out of the boat.

— Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press.

The jackpot keeps growing

By Steve Haynes

Full-time Legislature.

There. That ought to scare the pants off of most Kansans.

If it doesn't, it should. As a group, if the legislators can't make a mess out of things in 90 days, how could we expect more in a full year?

Minus time off for campaigns, of course.

Yet, faced with the growing complexity of the state budget, some members are talking about extending their time in Topeka. It's like a group of convicts getting together to extend their sentences.

Are we sure we're ready for that?

There's the old saw, purportedly written by a New York judge: "No man's life, liberty or property are safe while the legislature is in session."

Conservative Kansas lawmakers are frustrated by continued growth in the state budget, though.

The budget has grown by a factor of 10 every generation since the state was founded. Still, the Associated Press reported, the budget didn't hit \$1 billion until 1974. It has doubled since 1993, when it was just \$6 billion.

Last week, House members revolted when

asked to pass a \$304 million supplemental appropriation. Some claimed it would run state surpluses below the required 7.5 percent and threaten a cash crisis.

With spending already near \$12.5 billion and growth in the general fund estimated at more than 8 percent, killing the supplemental seems largely like closing the barn door after *all* the livestock have fled.

That's what bothers the anti-spenders. They feel helpless dealing with a budget that's too big and too complex to control. Mostly, the Legislature just takes what the governor has sent over and quibbles about a few programs. Only the appropriations committees see the whole picture, if anyone does.

Adding time to the session won't help much, not when most major decisions are put off until the late hours of the last few nights. Budget bills are cobbled together in conference, then rolled out for the troops, tired and ready to go home, for a vote.

At that point, a lot of real bad legislation gets pushed through, but especially the big spending bills which wrap up the budget. Sure, they've been debated and examined since January, but

when the whole ball of wax rolls out the final week, no one — save maybe a few conference members and some lobbyists — really knows what's in there.

That's one big reason the jackpot keeps growing at roughly 8 percent every year.

A lot of other bad bills come about that time — witness the one legalizing casino gambling this year, supposedly to raise revenue for still more state spending. The Legislature should have a rule that no bill can come to the floor without full and open committee hearings, but we digress. The issue here is spending.

What the Legislature should do is set a spending limit and trim the budget to fit that. Every program has its friends, though, making real cuts real tough.

What the Legislature probably will do is extend the session, study more and keep voting for bigger budgets every year.

Legislators talk about working "to curb the growth in spending." No one talks about cutting the budget.

And guess who gets to pay the bills?

— Steve Haynes, president of Nor'West Newspapers including the Colby Free Press

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