

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Eminent domain questions imminent

From The Ottawa Herald

Reverberations from a Connecticut eminent domain case soon will have a significant impact on Kansans.

Beginning July 1, Kansas property owners will have more protection against potential condemnations invoking eminent domain for economic development purposes.

The change, which was prompted by Kelo vs. New London, Conn., saw the city take over a neighborhood of private residences and then turn them over to a private developer.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2005 that the case was handled correctly. That didn't stop 38 other states, such as Kansas, from passing legislation to offset the decision.

After July 1, those seeking to use eminent domain in Kansas will have to pay property owners at least 200 percent of private properties' market value and go to the Kansas legislature for approval.

The price may be reasonable if another private property owner wants the land bad enough, but putting the additional burden of having to go through state lawmakers makes it next to impossible to believe an eminent domain case will even be broached.

On first impulse, it makes good sense to rule in favor of property owners; however, there may be times when the sale of a property to another enterprise provides a greater public good.

... It is easy to look at a blighted urban area and know the public would benefit from razing an economically depressed area and converting it into something universally economically and socially beneficial. That decision is less clear when a property isn't bad enough to be considered blighted.

... Challenges to this new law and philosophy are imminent as the public faces the repercussions of the change. ...

The government can and should take property for the public good, if it does so responsibly. The expansion of U.S. 59 is one local example. The new Kansas law could, however, tie the hands of economic development leaders and curtail future developments. Only time will tell.

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@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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Summertime memories

Seeing kids running loose from school makes me remember the things I did when I was a kid during summer.

We had a big backyard to run in, complete with swing set, so we really didn't ever have to leave home to have a good time. Although when I was deemed responsible enough, I got to go on long bike rides by myself.

My sister, Lori, is nine years my elder. I usually just went along with what she wanted. Although there were some interesting incidents that happened before she got into high school.

Like the time she decided to not listen to our dad, and kicked her pony in the flanks. We got bucked off. She broke a tooth or two and her glasses. I landed on my head, earning a concussion and skull fracture.

Then there was that other time she decided to take one of mom's good casserole dishes and make a solar cooker to roast hot dogs.

Summer vacations as a younger sibling were interesting.

We spent a couple of vacations camping, then later at our grandfather's place on Grand Lake in Oklahoma.

That was the summer I became an older sibling, and the year Lori left minnows in a jar, and managed to smell up the car.

As we got a little older, she was able to channel her horse-craziness into a job mucking stalls for a local stock contractor. She also had her own horse, and her job helped pay for room and board for her mare

That meant I got to go riding occasionally, and



Tisha Cox

• Off the beaten path

listen to all the stories about the horses' personalities, and the rarer but no less interesting stories of the rodeo bulls they sometimes housed in the horse stalls.

A couple of the Brahmas had the ability and tendency to jump fences. Needless to say, that was why they kept the alleyway gates shut most of the time, meaning when you went to see the horses, you either crawled under or through the fence.

She graduated from high school in 1982, went to college, and got married another year after that. By that time, my younger sister Chris was starting to develop a personality, and the ability to hold conversations.

When she got old enough, we had a fort in the backyard, and at one point, had ridden our bikes so much, we had a dirt track in the yard. That didn't last too long because it all got planted back.

Somewhere along the way, mom started to find ways to herd us out of the house in order to get us to stay outside instead of wasting our summers sitting in front of the television.

I can't say I blame her, and looking back, it was a good thing she did. Otherwise, we wouldn't have the memories we have.

Traveling as an older sibling was better than being the little sister. It meant I got more room, although I had to grow into being a role model. Still a funny thought — me, a role model for anyone.

But Chris and I lived to tell about it.

As the two of us have gotten older, our trips have evolved, as has our relationship, and so have both of our roles in relation to our older sister.

We're equals now. It's funny to consider that, looking back at all we put each other through over the years.

When Lori was around, I got to be the annoying younger sibling who called her "sis" instead of by her name. And when Chris came along, that came to a screeching halt.

Summers were when we became reacquainted, got to spend time with each other, and make plans for conquering the world.

Or just be happy with the times Lori would bring the horses over and we would ride bare-back around town, take our dogs for a walk, or sit out on the front porch late on a Saturday night listening to the radio.

Those are happy, good times I wouldn't trade for anything.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcoc@nwkansan.com.

School of thoughts

From The Topeka Capital-Journal

They're back. Schools for Fair Funding apparently wants more.

This, remember, is the organization that pummeled the Kansas Legislature in court and eventually hauled off \$800 million in funding for K-12 schools. ...

We thought for at least a year or two, school administrators and local board members would be busy figuring out how to spend all their newfound loot. ...

The \$800 million apparently is not enough. The game continues.

At least that's the plan of SFFF, which announced it would refine its operation to focus more on lobbying than litigation — well, that is, if the Legislature responds to its every whim, and litigation is not needed.

These kids have already shown us their propensity to sue if they don't get their way.

And they have seasoned professionals sitting and ready to represent them, while hauling in million of dollars themselves, via the Kansas taxpayer. ...

Taxpayers are exhausted, and a good many

Other Viewpoints

• From Pens of Kansans

Legislators who visit Topeka annually believe the judiciary in Kansas is out of control.

SFFF has played the Kansas judiciary, and thus the Legislature, like a sixth-grader's snare drum.

They know the game, and they're not shy about grabbing all they possibly can grab from the taxpayers.

But the time is coming when Kansas taxpayers and our representatives will say we've had enough.

That time is near. ...

On licensing teachers

From Lawrence Journal World

Proposed adjustments to the Kansas licensing requirements for teachers seem to be a reasonable way to try to solve the shortage of teach-

ers in key academic areas. ...

... One would remove a requirement that out-of-state teachers have earned a 2.5 grade-point average in college, and the other would allow a teacher who is licensed in one science subject to teach another science subject by passing a state exam. ...

Neither of these proposals is likely to have a significant effect on the quality of Kansas teachers. In fact, in some cases, it may open doors to even more qualified and successful teachers to enter Kansas classrooms. It is of concern, however, that the state is having to look at various steps primarily to help local districts deal with teacher shortages in certain subject areas.

According to education officials, Kansas and other states are only at the beginning of a flood of teacher retirements that will have a significant effect on public schools. Replacing this dedicated group of teachers will demand a number of new strategies, likely to include additional peer support and higher salaries not to mention acknowledging teachers as respected professionals who play a vital role in the growth and development of future generations.

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Mallard Fillmore

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