



Other Viewpoints

Honor overdue for past chancellor

Honoring Gene Budig as a chancellor emeritus of Kansas University is a long-overdue honor.

KU officials have asked the Kansas Board of Regents to put consideration of the title for Budig on its agenda later this month. According to a KU spokeswoman, KU officials realized when Chancellor Robert Hemenway was granted emeritus status last year, that the same honor had not been granted to Budig and decided to correct the oversight.

Emeritus status isn't automatic for the state's past university executives, but Budig more than qualifies under the criteria approved by the regents about a year ago. Factors to consider, according to the policy, include "distinguished administrative service that advances the strength, growth and integrity of the university, and outstanding contributions to the higher education system, the community and the state, as well as the length of administrative service to the university."

Budig served as KU's chancellor from 1980 until 1994, when he became president of baseball's American League, a post he held until 1999. He continued to be involved in higher education and was named senior presidential adviser and College Board professor in 2005.

His support of KU has continued since he left Mount Oread. A recent \$100,000 gift from Budig and his wife, Gretchen, established a new professorship and pushed the couple's total giving to the university over \$1 million.

Budig's service while chancellor and his ongoing support of KU and higher education illustrate a commitment worth honoring. The emeritus title is well-deserved and should win easy approval from the Regents.

— Lawrence Journal World, via the Associated Press

Where to write, call

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U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org

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Repairs can't wait indefinitely

Colby Public Schools has operated without a capital outlay tax levy since the late 1990s. During this time, the district has been successful in operating economically in order to pay for capital outlay expenditures from its general operating budget.

However, many building repairs, transportation purchases and technology upgrades have been put on hold. Over the past three years, our district has lost more than \$1 million in state money and cannot continue to handle capital expenses without more cuts in educational programs, student activities and staff.

As superintendent, I believe we have made all the budget cuts possible while still providing students with a quality education.

The district needs your financial assistance in maintaining Colby Public Schools as an important investment in our community.

The district understands the impact a capital outlay levy will have on taxpayers. A five-year plan has been developed that outlines estimated expenses for necessary building maintenance, transportation and equipment purchases. The district plans to levy 2 mills for the 2011-13 school years. The major expenses will be incurred during the 2013-15 school years, with a levy up to 5 mills after the bond and interest levy (currently 6.1 mills for the high school) goes off the tax rolls in 2013.

Detailed information is available to the public regarding:

- The USD 315 Five-Year Capital Outlay



Terrel Harrison

• From the super's desk

Plan (2010-2015).

- Transportation Fleet: three buses at 200,000-plus miles (includes both activity buses), four buses at 100,000-plus miles, four SUVs at 200,000-plus miles and three SUVs at 150,000-plus miles.

- Technology: 138 student-use computers over 10 years old.

- District budget cuts: \$1 million over the last two years (36 personnel cut, no salary raises).

- State funding cuts: \$1.5 million over the last two years.

Citizens may obtain this information at the USD 315 Administration Building, 600 W. Third St., or telephone (785) 460-5000 and ask for it to be mailed. You may also invite a district representative to visit with you or your organization about the capital outlay needs.

Here is the estimated annual cost of a 2-mill capital outlay levy on the following property:

- House (assessment rate 11.5 percent): \$100,000 appraised value, assessed value of \$11,500, times 2 mills (.002) equals a tax of \$23.

Commercial (assessment rate 25 percent): \$100,000 appraised value, assessed value of \$25,000, times 2 mills (.002) equals a tax of \$50.

Farmland (assessment rate 30 percent of use value - Ka. soil/best). Dry land (160 acres): taxable value of \$7,840, times 2 mills (.002) equals a tax of \$4.80. Irrigated (160 acres): taxable value of \$19,960, times 2 mills (.002) equals tax of \$12. Grassland (160 acres): taxable value of \$1,600, times 2 mills (.002) equals a tax of 96 cents.

Our community is fortunate to have an outstanding public school system. When a family considers moving to Colby, the public schools are one of the primary things they evaluate. Many times they ask for a tour of our facilities and information regarding the learning opportunities available for their children. I am always proud of Colby Public Schools and the quality of education we offer children in our district.

I believe a strong school district is essential for the economy and future of our community. Thank you for investing in your school, community, and the future of our children as we prepare them to be life-long learners and responsible citizens.

Terrel Harrison is in her third year as superintendent of the Colby School District.

Beautiful spot is family legacy

You might get plenty of arguments from people across Kansas as to the exact location of God's country. Without a doubt, our state has many beautiful locations, and more importantly, wonderful inhabitants.

On a recent trip to far northwestern Kansas in mid August, I visited one of these jewels. My destination was the Blanka family farm and ranch in Cheyenne County. The Blankas live less than three miles from the Nebraska border and about 22 from the Colorado line.

If you're not familiar with this part of our state, the topography is flat, fertile, sandy loam farmland on the tops and bottoms of rolling hills. With plenty of rain this spring and summer, the hills were lush and green with grass. Cattle grazed contentedly.

Shawna Blanka's family moved to Cheyenne County, northeast of St. Francis about 1887. In 1914, her great-grandfather built the home where she and her family live today with concrete blocks and sand from the Republican River - two miles from their doorstep.

Oh, and if having a river that close isn't enough, less than a strong stone's throw from their open porch on the left side of the house is "Hell's Canyon." This view is the Blanka's favorite.

Hell's Canyon is surrounded by flat farm ground and then the land breaks off and falls nearly 300 feet to the bottom. The sides of the canyon are covered with grass and yucca plants. The steep slopes angle down in the canyon at a 30 percent grade.

The day I visited, the temperature climbed



John Schlageck

• Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

to a balmy 73 degrees by noon. A cool northwesterly rustled through the tall cottonwoods - truly a day from heaven.

"We kinda like it out here," Shawna said. "The hills, the crops, the big skies and the peacefulness. That's what we wake up to every day and come home to every night."

Don't get her wrong. The Blankas aren't merely vacationing out here on the great High Plains. But living in this land of wide-open spaces, short grass and low humidity oftentimes feels like it.

The Blankas remain busy from sunup to sundown. Shawn, Shawna and their two boys, Shakotah and Shadryon, run a several thousand-acre dryland wheat, corn and irrigated corn, alfalfa and grassland operation. They also run 400 head of momma cows, finish out the majority of their calves each year, not to mention caring for more than 20 hay burners (horses) and nearly 70 goats. They farm and ranch in partnership with Shawna's parent, Tom and Donna Stevens.

The boy's names, you might ask? According to Shawna, it's a "western thing." She also wanted to continue with the "Sh"

sound. The western thing and family tradition also account for the horses.

"Grandpa got me going on a horse before I could walk," Shawna recalls. "I started competing when I was five and rodeoed through college. I just haven't been able to stop."

Shawna still uses the horses to herd cows and barrel race on the rodeo circuit. Her two boys have learned to ride.

Both love the solitude this big-sky country affords. Like their mom, they love the opportunity to ride with the wind and exercise their independence. You might say they're already firmly entrenched in a world steeped in self-sufficiency.

Shakotah and Shadryon have shown interest making farming and ranching their vocation. The boys could be the fifth generation to farm and ranch in Cheyenne County.

"That'd be the best thing that could happen," Shawn says. "There's nothing we'd like to see more than our two boys being a part of this family tradition."

And what better place to do so than the fertile, wind-swept country of the great High Plains?

That's right. God's country.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.



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