



School funding a ‘ridiculous’ suit

Finally, Schools for Fair Funding attorney Alan Rupe has said something that makes perfect sense.

“This situation is ridiculous,” Rupe said after the group once again sued the state in demand of more money for public schools.

So true.

It’s ridiculous that taxpayers are once again having to shell out their hard-earned cash to Rupe and his aptly named co-hort, John Robb, so they can press the state for yet more tax money.

It’s ridiculous that the 63 school districts that make up this group continue to shower Rupe and Robb with tax dollars in hopes of persuading the courts to take the school budget out of the hands of the people’s duly elected representatives.

It’s ridiculous that Rupe, Robb and the district officials behind the suit are demanding more money when the state and its citizens are hurting.

Yep. Ridiculous, all right, and here’s hoping the Legislature can do something to circumvent this bunch.

Perhaps lawmakers could dust off a maneuver they discussed during the first go-round with the group — a constitutional amendment to clarify the state’s obligation to provide “suitable” funding for schools.

A change in the finance formula also could head off the suit. Whatever the case, lawmakers need to protect taxpayers from continual cash grabs by Rupe, Robb and their buddies. ...

Actually, the fact is that Kansas school children don’t have to go to court every few years, as Mr. Rupe suggests.

That’s not just the opinion of *The Capital-Journal*. Many school districts have recognized it, too. To their credit, they either haven’t joined this group or have opted not to support the lawsuit.

Spring Hill superintendent Bart Goering told *The Kansas City Star* that the district’s board considered joining to the suit but opted against it.

“Everybody is cutting back, and they just felt we shouldn’t go after money the state doesn’t have,” he said.

Good for Spring Hill, and good for other districts that have stayed clear of this bunch. They obviously know a ridiculous situation when they see it.

– *The Topeka Capital Journal, via the Associated Press*

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Strategy could help you quit tobacco

If you smoke cigarettes, you probably want to quit.

You don’t need any more convincing that smoking is bad for you. You know that tobacco causes cancer, heart disease and emphysema among other health problems, and that your smoking is also harming those around you.

You just want the cigarette monkey off your back once and for all.

Unfortunately, the mere desire to quit smoking usually isn’t enough to succeed. Your enemy is formidable. Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances known to science.

Every year, about 40 percent of smokers attempt to kick the habit for at least one day. Most endeavors fail. It takes an average of 12 to 14 attempts before a typical smoker quits for good.

Quitting isn’t easy, but most smokers who persist eventually succeed. Former smokers in the United States now outnumber current smokers, and the gap is widening each year.

More than 45 million ex-smokers across America provide living proof that it is possible to give up smoking and never look back.

What methods improve the odds of successfully quitting? What works when motivation alone isn’t sufficient?

No single way to quit smoking works for everyone, but one approach supported by the National Cancer Institute is worth a try. Your smoke-free lifestyle begins as you take five simple steps that go by the acronym START:

Jason Eberhart-Phillips

- Kansas Health Officer

S is for Set a quit date. Pick a date that gives you time to get ready, but is not so far ahead that you lose your drive to quit. Perhaps you could join thousands of others around Kansas who are quitting the smoking habit this year on Thursday, the date of the Great American Smokeout.

T is for Tell your friends. You’re going to need lots of emotional support as you go through nicotine withdrawal. Tell your friends, family members and coworkers that you are planning to quit, and tell them exactly how they can help you succeed.

A is for Anticipate challenges. Think about when you smoke now and why. What are your triggers for smoking? When the cravings are strong, how will you stay away from things that tempt you to smoke? If you think in advance how you will cope with the discomfort of nicotine withdrawal you can improve your chances of staying smoke-free.

R is for Removing tobacco. Throw away all the cigarettes, matches, lighters, ashtrays and other things around your home, car or work-

place that remind you of smoking. Saving a secret pack of cigarettes “just in case” your willpower fails can doom your plan and make it easy to get hooked again. Don’t do this!

T is for Talking to your doctor. Let your doctor in on your plans. He or she can answer your questions, give specific advice, and may suggest some nicotine replacement products that can help with withdrawal.

Your doctor or pharmacist may also connect you with support groups, or recommend that you speak with an experienced counselor on our state’s toll-free quitline, (800) QUIT-NOW (784-8669).

For the first time this month, the Kansas Tobacco Quitline is able to provide a free, two-week supply of nicotine replacement products to eligible callers, but supplies are limited.

Your decision to set a quit date and stick to it is the single best thing you can do to improve your health. Within hours of quitting tobacco, your body will begin to undo the damage that years of smoking has caused.

You can do it. This time you can win over smoking. And you can START today.

Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips is the state health officer and director of health in the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. He can be reached at jeberhart-phillips@kdheks.gov. Read his blog at: www.kdheks.gov/blogs/dr_jasons_blogs.htm.

Concise farm records worth effort

It seems like nearly every meeting and many conversations in farm country eventually work around to the question, “How can I remain successful and continue farming?”

As in the past, the scales are tipped in the favor of the efficient producer and solid marketer. How do Kansas farmers know where they weigh in on that scale?

Today’s efficient producers are low-cost-per-unit farmers. They achieve those low costs by producing high yields – bushels per acre, pounds of gain per head, pigs per litter or milk per cow.

The other half of the equation consists of holding down costs. That means securing low costs per bushel, per hundred-weight of cattle or milk produced.

Finding out where you stand on the production-efficiency spectrum calls for comparing your production costs to some yardsticks. These indicators can be state averages for farms of similar size and type. Better yet, compare your actual performance to goals you’ve set for yourself.

Solid marketers receive higher prices for commodities they sell. These prices can be higher than your neighbors, higher than similar-size and type farmers or higher than your goals.

John Schlageck

- Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

Determining where you stand on these performance measures call for keeping and analyzing records. This cannot be considered a chore today. If you are facing challenges, examining your records is the best way to help you out of a fix.

While visiting with farmers, stockmen and a farm appraiser at a recent meeting, all agreed they kept concise, comprehensive records. Gone are the days when farmers skated by with few records other than check stubs. Lack of record keeping has a direct correlation with failure in farm country.

As the appraiser said, “You have to know where you are before you can chart a course to move where you want to be.”

Record analysis can help you do both.

The farmer or businessman who does not have solid production marketing or financial management skills faces several tough questions.

How well or bad off are you?

Your analysis will tell.

Do you have a large equity base to hold your operation together while you develop those skills?

What changes can you make to improve your farm’s performance? What will it take to make them? Are you willing and do you have the resources to make those changes?

The swift do not always win the race. The strong do not always win the battle, but that’s the way to bet.

In farming, the smart money is on those with the best production and business skills.

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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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area

should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

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Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

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