

Volume 122, Number 76 Friday, May 13, 2011



Pay cap needed to speed legislature

Sen. Carolyn McGinn has the right idea. McGinn, a Republican from Sedgwick, recently introduced a proposal to stop pay to legislators past the 90th day of the session.

Cheers to you, senator. It's ridiculous that lawmakers have put themselves in jeopardy of not finishing within the standard 90-day window.

Let's not forget that it costs Kansas taxpayers \$60,000 per day to run the session, which goes not only toward compensation for legislators but for support staffing and miscellaneous needs.

At a time when the state budget is \$500 million toward the bad and many taxpayers have been buffeted by layoffs, wage reductions and furloughs, it's a slap in the face that lawmakers are suggesting they may remain in session for more than 90 days - consuming precious tax dollars in the process.

It's safe to say working Kansans are making darned sure to get their tasks done in a timely manner these days, knowing the consequences of failing to do so could be dire. What's more, many wage earners have even taken on additional duties because of work force reductions, yet they're adapting.

Hmm, but the Legislature hasn't downsized lately, has it?

There's rarely been a year when lawmakers more sorely needed to stick to the basics, work quickly and bang the gavel as soon as possible. Going into the session, Gov. Sam Brownback gave legislators some very sound advice by urging them to focus on the top challenges at hand – creating jobs and reenergizing the Kansas economy.

Yet somehow, despite having overwhelming Republican majorities in both chambers, the Legislature has managed to find a way to possibly not complete its work in 90 days.

Shame on them.

McGinn's proposal would not only help lawmakers save face, it might give them the motivation they need to wrap up the session and get out of Topeka.

Makes sense - or it does, at least, outside of the Statehouse. Inside, it appears the proposal faces an uphill battle. House Speaker Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, already has dismissively referred to it as "window dressing."

Wrong. It's a meaningful and responsible gesture at the very least, and it might just be the kick in the pants that lawmakers need.

- Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774 roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/



Where's YOUR birth certificate?

Unlike the president of this great country, the contents of my wallet include four vital documents:

1) A copy of my Standard Certificate of Birth, 2) A copy of my Certificate of Baptism, 3) An official notice of my confirmation, and 4) An official notice of marriage.

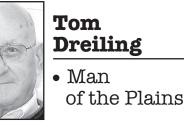
President Obama was under fire, and continued to be under fire, until he came up with and displayed his certificate of birth. Even that raised questions, such as, "How many different versions of his birth do they have?" I happen to believe him when he tells me he was born in Hawaii. I am not a birther, but a believer.

If this Man of the Plains can carry four things that tell of his birth, baptism, confirmation and marriage in his wallet, surely the commanderin-chief can carry one - his birth certificate. He should and every time the issue is raised, all he would have to do is pull out his wallet and show the doubters.

The more the birthers drag this issue around in these many months leading up to the election, the better it is for him. The election will be all about the economy, about jobs. Not where the president wore his first diaper.

Plus, even birth certificates can have inaccurate information. Take mine as an example. It lists me as being born at home while my mother said several times that I and the other two youngest kids in the family were born at the hospital.

tificate is Mary Eichman. Actually her name was Molly or Mollie (the spelling of her first soil. But because his parents were citizens of Norton Telegram, and a former long-time ediname differs in our family). But when she joined the Catholic faith in order to marry my father, she had to pick out a saint's name to be baptized. She chose the name "Mary."



The thing that really caught my eye when a copy of the certificate came into my possession in the mid-1950s, however, was the date of my birth.

Family records show, and mother would recall, that I was born in 1935. An aunt who maintained records of everybody's birth, death, anniversaries and other pertinent dates also dated my birth as 1935. But the birth certificate, filled out and signed by the attending physician, noted my birth as Nov. 25, 1934. So, each Nov. 25, I can be older or younger, my choice. Cool! Some family members will send me cards with two ages, and ask that I circle one.

And the marriage thing lists me as marrying Edna Jean (Eberle) Schroeder on June 17, 1967. Edna? Don't think so. I truly loved and married Elva.

Yes, records contain errors, as you just read. And the president's birth certificate might contain errors, too.

And one more note: Sen. John McCain, if My mother's maiden name on the birth cer- you remember, was not born in the United States of America. He was born on foreign

born outside the U.S. of A.

Snippets:

"Libya. Syria. Egypt. Afghanistan. Iraq. Pakistan. If the bad guys can suck us into two more wars, we won't have any military left to protect us on the home front, and that's when the bad guys will do us in."

"I take it you don't like Gov. Brownback. While you patted him on the back in a recent column for his rural incentives law, a sentence or two later you criticized him for not moving some of his family into far western Kansas, one of the areas that law was intended to help. You can't have it both ways.'

"I read a while back where you said Aurora was the third biggest city in Colorado. Although I don't live in Colorado anymore (Kansas now) I can remember as a young man you could toss a baseball from one end of that town to the other. I'm 86.'

"The smart voter will elect Congressman Ron Paul president in 2012. His vice president hopefully will be Congressman Paul Ryan. Conservative leadership at its best."

'Those air traffic controllers who sleep on duty should be locked up for a while without pay for endangering the lives of people who depend on them to keep them safe taking off and landing."

Snippets to milehitom@hotmail.com.

Tom Dreiling of Aurora, Colo., is a former publisher of the Colby Free Press and Inlife-long Democrat, a curmudgeon come lately and a newly minted Coloradan.

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick. billinger@house.ks.gov

Colby Free Press

155 W. Fifth St. Colby, Kan. 67701 (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701. PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

this country (his father was in the military), he tor of the old Goodland Daily News. He is a automatically became a citizen and qualified to be president. I would think the same rule would apply to the president if, in fact, he was

Kansas dollars go everywhere else

About \$42 million in federal taxes paid by Kansans went to pay for the education of students in a dozen other states.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$5.3 billion in six grant competitions including "Race to the Top." That tax money came from citizens in all 50 states. But nearly all of the payout went to the handful of states that agreed to comply with new federal education policies. This included paying teachers for raising students' test scores, ditching teacher tenure and other changes.

Criteria for the federal "competition" were mainly written for states with larger urban populations. Kansas and some other rural states opted to not compete in the final round. Predictably, no grants were made to western states.

The Feb. 23 issue of Education Week details the distribution of federal education money. Citizens most states, including Kansas, should be unhappy.

Kansas is just under 1 percent of the U.S. population and pays roughly that proportion of taxes. The Kansas portion of tax support for the education competition should be about \$53 million. And Kansas did receive \$11.2 million for data systems, or \$23.73 per student. That means that about \$42 million in Kansas taxpayers' money went to underwrite implementing federal education policy in other states. Who were the "winners"?

Florida got over \$900 million, or \$344 per



student. The District of Columbia, probably in a gesture to Michelle Rhee's tough stand on failing schools, got \$1,532 per student.

Pork tastes pretty good in Tennessee too, where ex-Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander's state saddled up to the trough for \$533 per student. Hawaii received an extra \$417 per student. Delaware got \$949 and New York, Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, Rhode Island and Massachusetts from \$516 down to \$244 per student.

These awards were not given based on need to help states where many students live in poverty and schools cannot hire superior teachers. If that were the case, states such as Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana would have headed the list.

Many Kansans might see a compassionate need to help out a disadvantaged part of the country. But no, these grants went to some fairly wealthy states merely because they were willing to roll over and implement federal education "reforms."

Before those of us in Kansas begin lament-

ing how four-fifths of our tax contribution to this effort went to other states, consider the plight of Alabama, Indiana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming. Their share of tax money paid toward this effort got them nothing in return. Those 10 states received no competitive grant money at all.

Will federal extortion of education policy end? Not according to the 2011 State of the Union address given just three months ago: '... instead of just pouring money into a system that's not working, we launched a competition called Race to the Top. To all 50 states, we said, 'If you show us the most innovative plans to improve teacher quality and student achievement, we'll show you the money."

"Race to the Top is the most meaningful reform of our public schools in a generation.... And Race to the Top should be the approach we follow this year as we replace No Child Left Behind with a law that's more flexible and focused on what's best for our kids."

But the figures provide a better argument for eliminating the U.S. Department of Education and returning the money to each state that provided it.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

