



Other Viewpoints

Time has come to expand dentistry

A toothache in Kansas can be more than a pain. The state has a severe shortage of primary care dentists, especially in rural areas. Of the state's 105 counties, 93 are underserved and 15 have no dentists at all. The problem is most severe for low-income residents, as only about a quarter of the state's dentists accept Medicaid coverage for children. Those who do often hear stories of patients forced to travel hours for a simple procedure. Now a coalition of health and consumer advocates along with safety net clinics wants the Kansas Legislature to create a new category of dental professionals to help fill the gap. It's an excellent idea.

Lawmakers should pass legislation enabling "registered dental practitioners" to be trained and licensed for some routine procedures, like filling cavities, that currently must be done by dentists. Practitioners would train with dentists and work under their supervision, although not necessarily at the same location.

At a recent legislative hearing, Edward H. Hammond, president of Fort Hays State University, said his school was preparing a degree program to train and certify registered dental practitioners. The university in western Kansas is an excellent choice to start such a program because its graduates are more likely to remain in underserved areas.

The Kansas Dental Association opposes the idea, saying bills introduced in the legislature give technicians too much responsibility to perform procedures that, if done incorrectly, cannot be fixed.

"We think it's too broad," said Kevin Robertson, the association's executive director. However, he acknowledged that no research backs up the association's contention that dental practitioners could compromise patient safety.

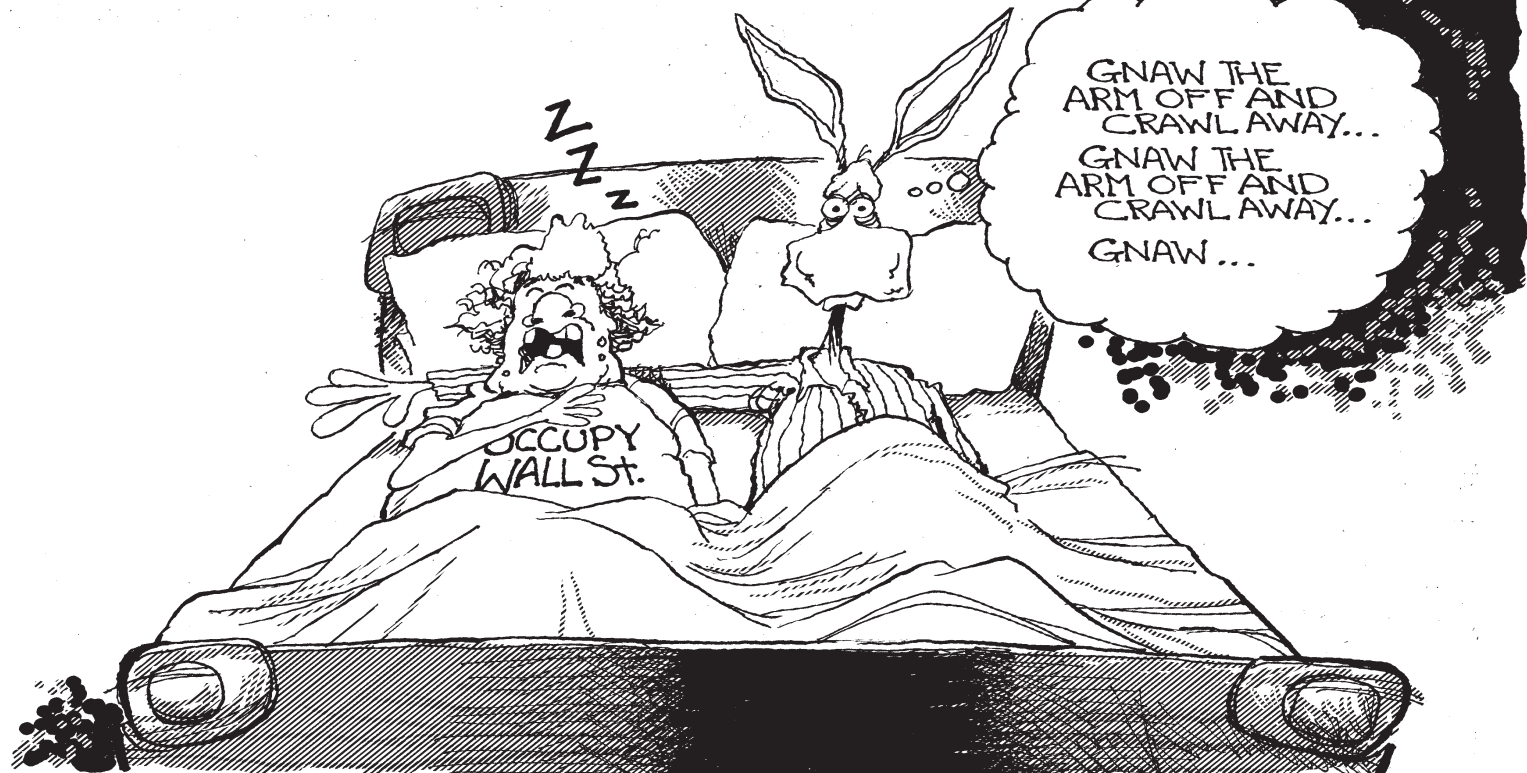
Champions of the idea, though, say a number of studies show registered dental practitioners as a group provide safe and effective care, and in some cases have contributed to markedly better dental health in communities.

Dental practitioners have served for years in a number of other nations. They are just beginning to be licensed in the United States.

Kansas has a chance to get out in front of a healthy trend. Lawmakers should get to work on a sound bill that enables well-trained clinicians to serve the basic dental needs of Kansas citizens.

— The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press

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THE MORNING AFTER THE ONE-MONTH STAND.

Enjoy sunshine while it lasts

On an Indian Summer afternoon, it's hard to think about work or columns or news.

It's hard to think about anything except, perhaps, nestling into the hammock to read a good book. Heck, even a mediocre book would be OK on a day like this.

We've been blessed so far with a warm and comforting fall, but winter cannot be far away. In fact, by the time you read this, it could be snowing outside. That's the forecast, anyway.

And while the sun should return for the weekend, the days of balmy, summer-like weather may well be over. In just a few days (on Sunday, Nov. 6), Daylight Saving Time will end and sunset will start coming before 6 p.m.

Before you know it, winter will be here to stay, with its cold north wind and long, dark nights. Many days will be sunny, but we'll hardly notice as the shadows grow long by 3 p.m. and Christmas lights start to go up.

Many people, in fact, are getting a head start on the holiday lighting with orange Hallow-



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

een lights and big decorations out in the yard. That's OK, I guess, but it's hard for me to get worked up to decorate for a nonholiday.

Halloween, after all, is just the evening before All Saints Day. Candymakers are the only ones with a real reason to celebrate. Little kids have a great time and adults have fun watching them, of course. Our granddaughter is going as a little monster, which her mother says is typecasting, but cute.

At least we got to spend Sunday working in the yard — after the nap, anyway — and parts of Saturday outside, enjoying the weather. The last few weeks have amounted to a wonderful

October. Gardeners have had time to work in the yard, farmers to pick their abundant corn. We've had lots of sunshine and plenty of excuses to be out in it.

Sunshine may return for the weekend, but it won't be quite the same, not until spring. Warm days will be in the 50s and 60s from here on out, and cool nights will get a lot cooler. If you haven't picked all the tomatoes and squash and peppers, my advice is to get out there today and beat the coming freeze.

Our growing season has about reached the end of its string.

The dark months are coming. Christmas lights and holiday bustle will help us get through the rest of the year, but three months of winter can be a long time.

Here's hoping you got out and enjoyed the warm sun while it was with us.

Steve Haynes is president of *Nor'West Newspapers*. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

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- 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/
- 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

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Ferrets vs. prairie dogs: the other side

To the Editor,

On October 20, you printed a letter from Tim and Rebekah Peterson. The letter seems to be based on two articles from the *Hays Daily News* concerning the ferret/prairie dog issue in Logan County, which contained factual errors and omissions, as well as misleading information, which we would like to correct.

The Logan County Commission was not presented with a petition containing 6-8 signatures. They were presented several letters with 18 signers requesting they cancel the reservation of the county-owned 4-H building, since a county ordinance as well as a long-standing Kansas Statute has been violated in order to facilitate the ferret release.

The article omitted the fact the assemblies planned for the schools were restricted access, "available for students and school staff only," and "primarily hosted by the Nature Conservancy," which is America's largest environmental nonprofit organization by assets and revenue.

The Petersons took issue with petitioners "who were not all residents of Logan County," however, had they checked the facts, they'd have found all who called school officials were residents and all who made the request to the Commission were Logan County landowners and taxpayers.

The Petersons claim, "this group used economic pressure ... at a local business," but had they inquired, they'd have found the business owner was unaware initially what the reservation event was and when informed, he made the business decision to cancel out of respect for many customers who are affected by the release program's consequences. If the Petersons had made inquiries, they'd have found no one was intimidated; reasonable points were presented with supporting facts, so informed decisions were made.

Furthermore, the Petersons write as though they've spoken with this group and can speak to our thoughts on the matter, yet none of this group has spoken with either Peterson.

The Petersons claim we hate prairie dogs, but had they talked to any of us, they'd have discovered we've repeatedly stated, we would not care if The Nature Conservancy, Haverfield, Barnhardt and Blank maintain prairie dogs (classification: rodent) and therefore ferrets, if they could confine their rodents, the diseases they transmit or carry (bubonic plague, rabies, tularemia, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, hantavirus) and the land damage to their own properties.

Kansas State University conducted a study



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

of the vegetative barrier around the Haverfield release area, which proved it completely ineffective at confining prairie dogs; they cannot be confined anywhere than rats or mice.

As for the nearly \$100,000 a year in free prairie dog control claimed, only \$19,055 was used for control; the remaining \$80,945 went to program administration and support, annual salary and benefits, transportation, lodging and per diem, etc. in the first year, while non-release area landowners purchased more than \$27,000 worth of control product from Logan County during the last 12 months. This amount does not include product purchased from other sources.

The amount purchased in the last 12 months is considerably lower than previous years (from Oct. 1, 2009, through Oct. 1, 2010, over \$80,000 was purchased) due to the drought-induced hibernation last winter of the prairie dogs. Furthermore, we all pay federal and state taxes, so the "free prairie dog control" isn't free considering the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides \$35,000 a year (federal taxpayer) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks also provides \$35,000 a year (Kansas taxpayer). The Nature Conservancy provides the remaining funds.

As of May, 2008, more than \$30 million or \$40,000 per released ferret of federal taxpayer funds had been spent on the ferret program. The gas, food or lodging expenditures they tout are exorbitantly expensive for the release neighbors and taxpayers.

Finally, it was not disclosed that the Fish and Wildlife Service will now use only zinc phosphide or shooting for control. Zinc can only be applied one time each year, has no antidote and a 50 percent mortality rate if a human is accidentally exposed.

Wildlife Biologist Dan Mulhern was quoted as saying, "...I would think they would be satisfied with someone else taking care of their prairie dog problem." He fails to acknowledge the enormous amount of money and time neighbors are burdened with to deal with repeated reinfestations by prairie dogs from release sites or that neighbors wouldn't have

a recurring prairie dog problem, if the ferret releases weren't being used to block the enforcement of Kansas law.

Instead, the Fish and Wildlife Service is exploiting The Nature Conservancy, Haverfield, Barnhardt and Blank's willingness to defy the law. A neighbor completely encompassed by the Haverfield release site has pasture evaluated by Natural Resources Conservation Service to have lost 30 percent of grazing to bare dirt from prairie dog burrows.

Our ultimate goal is to conserve the short-grass prairie and cropland, but bare dirt from burrowing leaves it vulnerable to wind erosion and greater loss of grasses and crops.

Ironically enough, Pete Gober, the Fish and Wildlife Service's project leader for the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Program has stated in an interview, "I don't expect the ferret ever to be recovered to the point where it can be downlisted from endangered to threatened."

A research report said, "He [Gober] is starting to question the wisdom of putting so much effort into a species whose needs are so specialized that it may need constant attention from people just to survive."

It seems unwise to cost non-release landowners enormous amounts of money and land damage, which will take decades to recover from, or to invest enormous amounts of taxpayer money into a species, which even those involved with do not believe can ever be self-sustaining.

Logan County Landowners/Tenants

- Sheila Ellis, Mark Ellis, Doug Mackley, Sharon Mackley, Darrel Dirks, Diane Dirks, Linda Sowers, Lynn Kirkham,
- Loren McDaniel, Reta McDaniel, Joyce Kreigh, Virginia B. Beamer, Bob Mackley, Tracie Mackley, Brittan Ellis, Scott Schertz,
- Mike McDaniel, Diana McDaniel, Larry Bergren, James Ludolph, Jeff Mackley, Sherri Mackley, Mike Kough, David Stoll,
- Jeremy McDaniel, Krista McDaniel, Mark Hanson, Jill Hanson, Garry Berggren, Shirley Berggren, Mason Mackley, Jena Mackley, Keith Edwards, Lori Edwards, Steve Schertz,
- Dianne Schertz, Jacob McDaniel, Rachel McDaniel, John Lamb, Tonya Lamb, Dane Mackley, Mary Ann Froelich,
- Morris J. Froelich, Eve L. Wells

Editor's note: The articles and letters referenced in this letter appeared in the Sept. 27 and Oct. 17 editions of the *Hays Daily News*, the Oct. 20 Colby Free Press, the Jan. 19, 1999, New York Times and a study by Karl Hess, <http://www.ti.org/bffshort.html>.

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.