

Other Viewpoints



Teacher's exclusion shouldn't surprise

The president of the Kansas National Education Association and a lobbyist for the group are more than a little upset they weren't allowed to provide input into a bill about teacher's collective bargaining rights.

Without taking a position on the bill itself, it's safe to say the association's President Karen Godfrey and lobbyist Mark Desetti shouldn't be surprised by how the bill was drafted and moved along.

It isn't unusual these days for bills to be drafted without soliciting input from those who might find reason to object to the purpose and intent of the legislation.

And to be fair, it should be noted legislators drafting a bill to make Kansas a union state rather than a right-to-work state likely wouldn't seek input from the Kansas Chamber of Commerce. That comparison may be a stretch, but the point is most legislation is drafted to reflect the ideas of those sponsoring or supporting it.

The voices of those not "on board" with a bill - including legislators - generally are heard during legislative committee meetings. Opposing legislators also can be heard on the floor of the House or Senate.

The bill on collective bargaining rights, House Bill 2027, is still in play and will come up for a committee hearing somewhere, during which supporters and opponents may offer testimony. For Godfrey and Desetti, that will have to suffice, and they aren't alone this legislative session.

Godfrey and Desetti said they had been deserted by longtime allies - the Kansas Association of School Boards and Kansas School Superintendents Association - who had collaborated with Rep. Marvin Kleebe, R-Overland Park, on the bill concerning collective bargaining rights.

The spokesman for the Association of School Boards acknowledged he had been asked by Kleebe to offer language that the organization could support and did so. But the spokesman said the association's position on collective bargaining was well known and what he did was no different than discussions he's had with other legislators.

That's an indication Kleebe knew what he wanted the legislation to accomplish, where he wanted to go for input and where he didn't want to go.

There are many bills floating around the Statehouse that reflect the wishes of those proposing them. Not a lot of input is being sought from people with opposing viewpoints.

That's the way it's going, and no one should be surprised.
- The Topeka Capital Journal, via the Associated Press

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155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
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Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
friedlander@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter
colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor@nwkansas.com

Heather Alwin - Society Editor
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard@nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
medmondson@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

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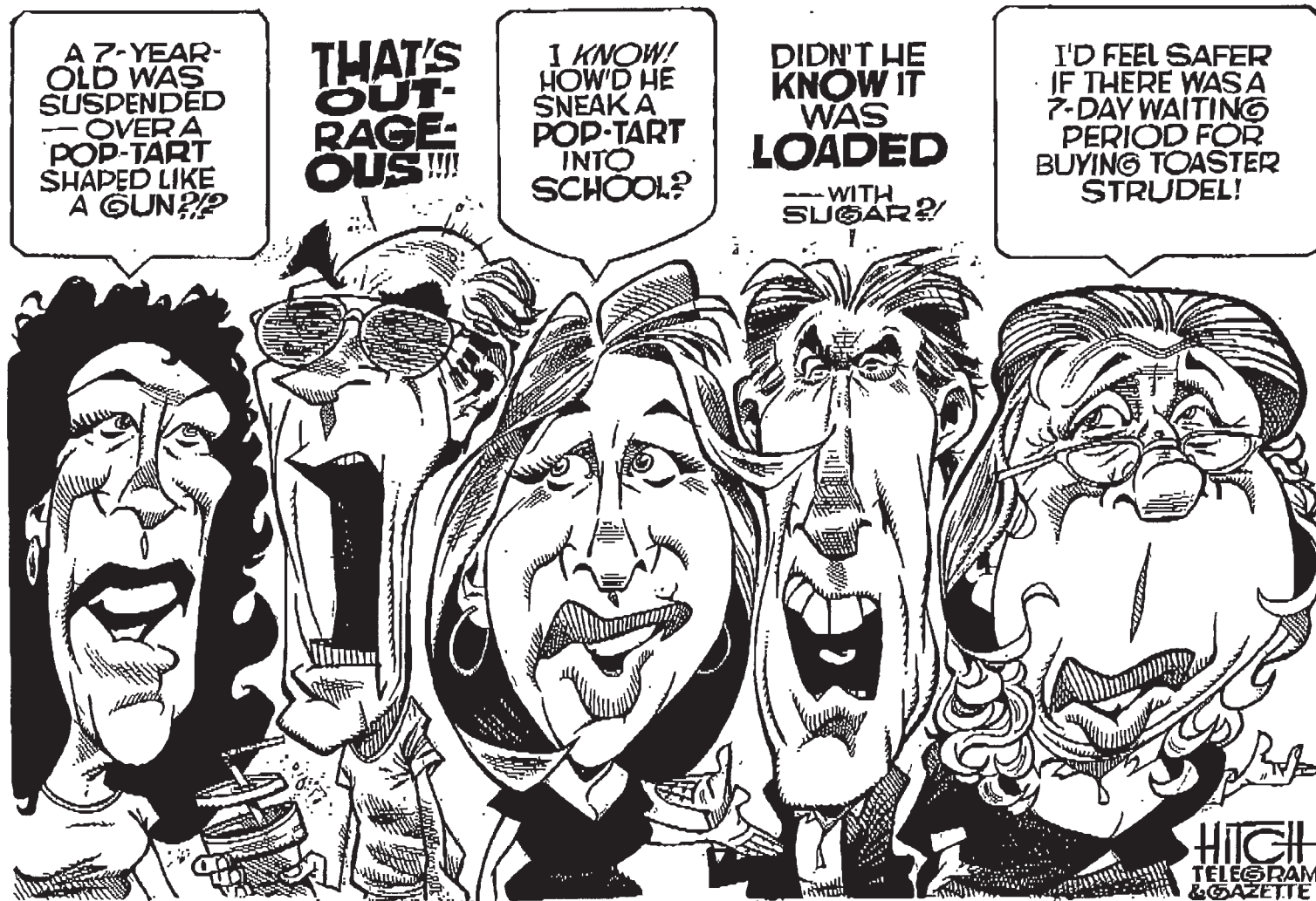
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Dog's world starts with cold, wet nose

My world according to Noah is a really fun place to be. Well, fun if you don't mind a cold, wet nose in the most unexpected places, soft chuffing in the wee hours and bays that will waken the neighbors.

I'm sleeping so peacefully when the softest chuff and warm breath waken me. I try not to open my eyes or he will see me and know I am awake.

My pillow sinks and I know he has flopped his head down and is staring at me and just waiting for the slightest motion to begin his high-pitched whistle. Sooner or later I will have to get up, but for the moment I am enjoying the warm covers.

Noah is not very patient when trying to get me up, and I know that what comes next is the big paw. I may as well get up, because when he resorts to the paw on the bed he is not going to give up until my feet hit the floor.

As I try to swing my feet to the floor, Noah shifts and tries to get into my lap. Now we are in a contest to see whether I can get up or he can make me pay closer attention to him.

He wins! Yep, it is so much easier to hug him and be allowed to get out of bed than to try it any other way.

One thing you can say about bloodhounds is that they are stubborn. Now that I am up and moving he runs to the kitchen, where he knows I am headed to flip on the coffee maker. I am not sure which of us is more predictable, mutt or me.

After he goes out, if it is chilly, he comes in



Sharon Friedlander

• Musings

only hope is that you are in front of him and not to the side when he shakes his head and slings the drool in every direction. Eating dinner is a challenge to not feel guilty that you are eating something good and the "poor" doggie is being left out. Sometimes he moans to let me know he is still watching, and other times he just sits there and drools. When he knows I am nearly finished, he jumps up and begins to bay at me as if to say "hurry up."

He races me to the kitchen to see what tasty morsel will hit his bowl. Even a teaspoon of goodies is OK, and he will root around in his dry food to make sure that nothing is missed. If you want a home free of dog hair, then a bloodhound is not for you. On Saturday, I took him out in the front yard and groomed him. The birds love it when he is groomed, since they grab the hair piles and line their nests with it. The yard looked like I had scalped him, but, alas, there is plenty of hair left. Luckily, he is very tolerant of being brushed and loves baths even more. For now I will just have to be satisfied with brushing, since the baths happen in the front yard, too.

Later, as Noah rests in his recliner, I realize how lucky I am to have my life shared with this hound. Can't wait to see what he comes up with next!

Bloodhounds are driven by their noses and their oversized curiosity. Even if I say I am going to get coffee, he follows. I guess he thinks I will have a treat and not include him. Any little treat is a big deal in his world. He starts drooling while he watches you and sometimes looks like he swallowed a sneaker with the strings hanging out of his mouth. Your

only hope is that you are in front of him and not to the side when he shakes his head and slings the drool in every direction.

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Sharon Friedlander, publisher of the Colby Free Press, enjoys reading, hot rods and critters. Contact her at sfriedlander@nwkansas.com.

Congressional battles painful to watch

A few weeks ago, the survey firm Public Policy Polling made headlines when it released a poll comparing Congress's standing to a variety of unloved things. Respondents did prefer our national legislature to the ebola virus, but otherwise the news was grim: Americans, the survey suggested, have a lower opinion of Congress than of head lice, Genghis Khan, used-car salesmen and root canals.

I'll admit it: I chuckled, though I don't really agree. Having experienced both, I put Congress well ahead of root canals.

Still, in the years since I left Capitol Hill my frustration with the institution I admired and loved has grown; watching it now is painful. Congress has shown a dispiriting unwillingness to reckon with tax reform, rein in the deficit, find ways to spur economic growth or make any of the other tough decisions that face it. When it does make a decision, it tends to limit its reach - thus, over and over, avoiding the real issues.

Its constant partisanship, lack of urgency in the face of looming fiscal threats, posturing and finger-pointing even at moments when the national interest clearly demands a resolution - all these have made it appear uninterested in actually governing.

Yet people do not run for Congress so they can become unpopular. They don't go to Washington because they want to accomplish nothing. They don't take the oath of office, surrounded by reminders of the distinguished men and women who came before them, just to disavow Congress's rich history of accomplishment.

Rather, they get caught in a destructive cycle whose dynamics are often shaped by political forces out of their control - by the demands

Other Opinions

• Lee H. Hamilton
Center on Congress

of party loyalty or the arm-twisting of caucus leaders, by the threats and blandishments of special interests or the fear of well-funded opposition in the next primary. The challenge facing members of Congress is to rise above all this, to find a way to reassert the values and aspirations that first brought them to national office.

How can they do this? I'm convinced that it comes down to attitude.

To begin, they have to put the country first. Not their party or their re-election or their political ambitions, but the nation's best interest. The surest way I know to earn the respect of voters is to put responsible governance first.

In part, this means acting with the future in mind. Thomas Jefferson in his first inaugural address looked toward "our descendants to the thousandth and the thousandth generation." That may be a longer time frame than is politically realistic, but at the moment I'd even settle for just the thousandth and the thousandth day, which is more far-sighted than most members' obsession with the next election. Americans care about their country's future, and they want their representatives to do so, too.

This means that members of Congress need to accept responsibility for resolving the nation's challenges, whether they're in the ma-

ority or in the minority. Our country simply cannot survive the current reluctance to meet our problems head on or Capitol Hill's tolerance for the sort of brinksmanship that leaves the nation on tenterhooks and difficult issues put off for another day.

Members have a responsibility to make the government work, and they need to square their shoulders and step up to it: to make decisions, to vote on the issues that need addressing - rather than on legislation designed to give them political cover or to pander to deep-pocketed interests - and to move the country forward.

To do this, they will have to work out their differences - through skillful negotiation, patience, understanding, accommodation and compromise. Being a member does not mean treating adversaries as enemies to be defeated and humiliated; they are colleagues with whom one must cooperate on the larger goal of searching for a remedy to the challenges that beset the country. Focusing on the facts - rather than on scoring ideological points - and working together to build consensus based on those facts is the only way our representatives will be able to take on the responsibilities Americans expect of them.

That is what Americans are looking for. And that is what Congress needs to deliver if it wants to be more popular than root canals.

Lee Hamilton is Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

