

from our viewpoint...

Federal mandates raise living costs

If you've every wondered why it's so expensive to live in this country, just say the words "federal mandate."

Besides taking 15 to 30 percent of everything you earn, your government drives up the force of living by passing endless and needless regulations that force everyone from businesses and banks to local government to raise the price of just about everything you buy.

It always sounds like a good idea when government passes a regulation, but at that point, nobody's counting up the costs.

You need look no farther than your own local courthouse and city hall to see how this works.

One area city put a hefty hike in water rates into the new budget to pay for a \$4.3 million water treatment plant. Why?

To meet "new federal regulations."

And that much is true. The feds, through the state Department of Health and Environment, have tightened regulations for both waste water treatment and for contaminant levels in drinking water.

That means that the town's old sewer plant no longer met standards for discharge water. The city had to build a new plant. Otherwise, hypothetically, the state might shut the city's sewer system down, though Lord only knows what they'd do with the waste.

Some would argue that tighter regulations were necessary to protect the environment. Those people won't pay your sewer bill, however. Others would say the old standards had done a lot and were good enough. It's hard to tell.

On drinking water, it's a little easier to see the light.

People have been drinking the water out here for a century or more. Until the last few years, no one could tell you how much uranium was in it. No one cared.

With modern equipment, though, scientists can find the uranium. They say it might be bad for you. New federal standards were written, and those pretty much force the town to build the water treatment plant.

Otherwise, the city's water won't comply with federal standards and the state might sanction the city if it used the water, safe or not. Users have no say in this; they just get to pay the bill.

So after financing a \$3.5 million sewer plant, the city will go into debt to build a water treatment plant.

Then there are federal regulations requiring expensive and unneeded voting machines in county elections, fancy checks with printing on the back, endless notices to the Internal Revenue Service, the list goes on and on.

Every one costs you money. Congress never hears how much that burden will be. Neither do we until it's too late.

But the costs are adding up and no one has the nerve to stand up and say ENOUGH. Like sheep, we just comply.

How long can we afford that? — Steve Haynes

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: <star-news@nwkansas.com>.

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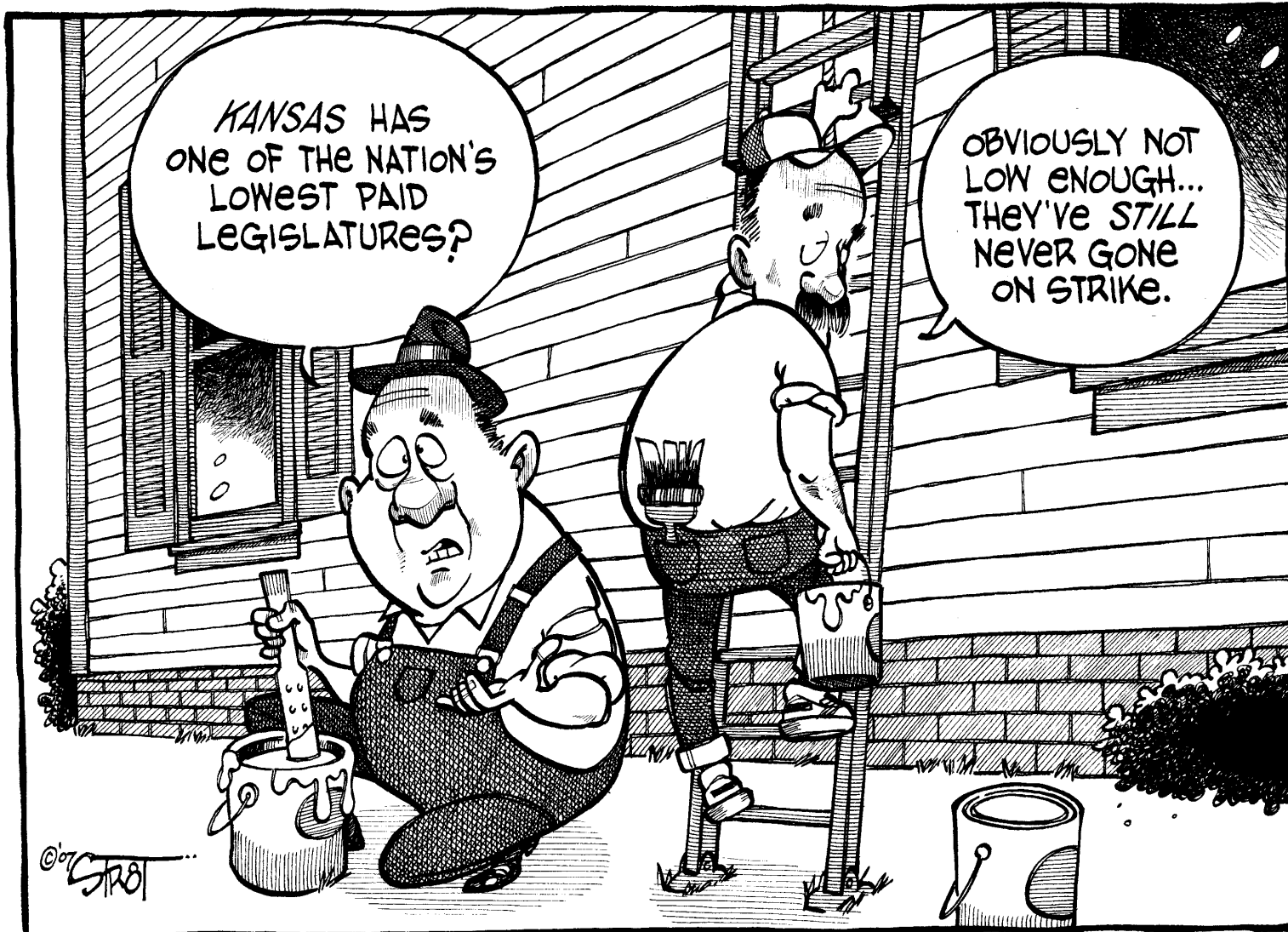
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I am really an 'animal' person

Steve accuses me of being a cat lady, but that's not really true.

I'm an animal person. I like almost anything that walks, crawls, wiggles, squirms, swims, climbs or hops.

Yes, we have three cats, but only two are ours. The third belongs to youngest daughter, although she'll never reclaim that kitty because her fiance is allergic to cats.

We also have a dog, a pet toad and half a dozen spiders.

Annie, the dog, belongs to Steve, but I help walk her and make sure her pen is clean and she has plenty of fresh water and food.

The toad is a fairly new addition. I spotted this little guy hopping in the street about a month ago and picked him up and brought him home. Now he lives in the garden and helps with pest elimination. We saw him last week, when he hopped out on the patio. He's obviously doing his job. He's really grown.

The spiders aren't really pets. They're just interesting ornaments for the back porch and garage. It's fun to watch them spin their webs and do their spiderly things — a little gross perhaps, but nature isn't always neat and it's no worse than some of the dead things the cats bring home.



cynthia haynes

• open season

Boy, can they hop on a bug that lands in one of the webs. It's something to watch.

When I was young, we always had a dog and a cat or two around the house. Over the years, we also had squirrels, a prairie dog, a raccoon (for a very short time) and an assortment of turtles, lizards and goldfish.

I once mousesat for a friend when she went on vacation.

When I was in college, one roommate had a collie and the other a pair of hamsters. My pet was a three-foot bull snake. I kept it for three years. The month before we got married, I took her out to a sand pit and released her in a nice big weed patch.

When my children were young, we had an assortment of cats but didn't have a dog until the oldest came home with a puppy under her coat one day and that "can I keep it?" look. So Rusty joined the family and a couple of years later Honey came to live with us when her

owners couldn't find another home.

Now, I lie. We did have a wippet named Waldo for a short time. It was an unfortunate alliance and it's amazing we ever got another dog.

While the children were bringing home dogs and cats, I kept an aquarium in the living room with a garter snake — actually several over the years. We also had a collection of lizards.

Bunsy was a stowaway in our barn, so we added a white rabbit to the cats, dogs, snakes, lizards and turtles living on the premises.

I've been known to smuggle a tarantula into a hotel room in Kansas City so youngest daughter, then a biology teacher, could take it to her science class.

I also hid a couple of my son's little lizards in a cubby in my office one year. We had exterminators at the house and I was afraid the chemicals would be bad for the little fellows. I believe in live and let live, but I'm not going to share quarters with either cockroaches or termites if I can help it.

I had to hide the lizards because Doris the proofreader was terrified of reptiles and I didn't want to distress her.

Mostly now I stick with cats and things that live outside. It's easier, since I really need a prufreeder.

Regional thinking our 'key to success'

To the Editor:

The Goodland Star-News ran a column, "Cooperation key to success," on June 20 by our governor, Kathleen Sebelius.

"It used to be that our state's major competitors in the hunt for new jobs and businesses were our immediate neighbors," she wrote. "Now Kansas communities are in competition with communities all over the world for jobs."

The governor then began to specifically orient her insight to the Greater Kansas City area, where Kansas and Missouri used to wrestle over new jobs and businesses, often resulting in little or no net gain to either. She finalized that cooperation today by both states to enrich "the region" was needed to enhance growth and greater prosperity for both Kansans and Missourians alike.

In today's world, sounds like sound advice, huh? Cooperation for the betterment of all. But why limit such to eastern Kansas? Why shouldn't northwest Kansas and northeast Colorado take heed to such sage advice? Aren't both of these areas trying to stave off a potential slow death?

Population declines are hitting most towns in both of these areas. Since my wife and I came here nine years ago, we have heard of and seen "fingers pointed" in all directions from and by Goodland, Colby, Burlington and residents of other smaller towns about how great each is.

An atmosphere of constant competitiveness exists while we all slip further down the slippery slope. We hear how great northwest Kansas is, the Tri-State area, the High Plains, etc., but seldom do we see any signs of intercity cooperation to make such claims a reality. Often even intracity cooperation is a challenge.

And all too often we see closed stores in downtowns, limited restaurant and shopping choices, and lots of our people leaving the area to spend their available money to acquire necessary living needs. Old limited-locality thinking continues to keep us in a hanging-on mode. Just think: Where would Goodland be today if I-70 weren't there?

Recently, we were in a competition situation for a Veterans Affairs Community Outreach Clinic. Burlington was selected for the site. Instead of being grateful that the region now has a clinic that is much more accessible to hundreds of veterans than Denver or Hays, we complained that it was such a shame that Goodland didn't get it.



from our readers

• to the editor

Considering the recent history of the Veterans department and the economy, we are very lucky to get a clinic in the area at all!

Yet we continue to think "me," "selfishness" and "competition" versus "us," "the greater good" and "cooperation." The former thinking accelerates the problems of old, while acceptance of the latter could lead to improvements in new jobs and businesses for all of us in the region.

We need to cooperate with our neighbors, not continue to compete with them in an atmo-

sphere of continuing economic interstate and inter country challenges. We need to think and act as a region. Just ask Gov. Sebelius.

Randy J. Coleman

Goodland

To the Editor:

Thanks for the wonderful story about the American Legion picnic on Page 3 of Tuesday's edition of The Goodland Star-News.

It was a fun event, but we could not have done it without Carol and Ken Baum's splendid backyard. A special thanks to them.

The American Legion will march or ride — for those who can't march — in the Northwest Kansas District Free Fair parade on Saturday. We will gather about 4 p.m. at the lineup area at 17th and Main.

Mary Lycett, post commander

Goodland

