

from other pens...

Should we fight Civil War again?

Many legislators use "local control" to hammer down requirements that benefit the general population. We're seeing that cry from Kansas lawmakers who think local officials should decide where to make their legal information available to the public.

A bill introduced this week in the Kansas Legislature would allow cities, counties and school boards to stop publishing their legal notices. Instead, these would be posted on some government-controlled website.

What a joke.

Do we really think our local city council members, school board members and county commissioners will fight the battle for transparency in government? Hardly.

The problem is, this "local control" cry sounds good. But the sound of "states' rights" reverberates in my ears when I hear it. Sometimes I think today's conservatives want to fight the Civil War all over again.

Kansas newspapers know how to handle information in legal notices, print or post it accurately, keep good records, provide affidavits to prove that public notice took place, and we don't care whose ox is gored in the notices we print.

Most elected officials would just as soon NOT publish budgets that show increases in levies or tax percentages. They would prefer NOT to make public bids that might include their friends or family members. They think the names of delinquent taxpayers are nobody's business.

While a few of them might use the internet every day, they wouldn't know up from down about how to get information gathered, formatted and posted accurately. That has always been the job of the local newspaper, and it should remain so.

— Rudy Taylor, Taylor Newspapers, southeast Kansas

Editor's note: The Legislature is considering several bills this session that would change how public notices are being done, and allow cities and counties to post the notices on a web site and reduce the number of times printed in a newspaper.

For many the idea is that public notice is too costly, and most people do not read those notices.

We know people do read the notices, and the cost of many of the public notices are paid for by those involved such as those requesting zoning changes.

The total expense for legal publications for the city and county are a small percentage of the total budget. In a time of trying to cut the budget it does not make sense to cut the public's right to know what the elected officials are doing and what they are spending money on.

We hope the legislature takes a second look at these and does not slash the people's right to know in the guise of saving money.

— Tom Betz

Letter Policy

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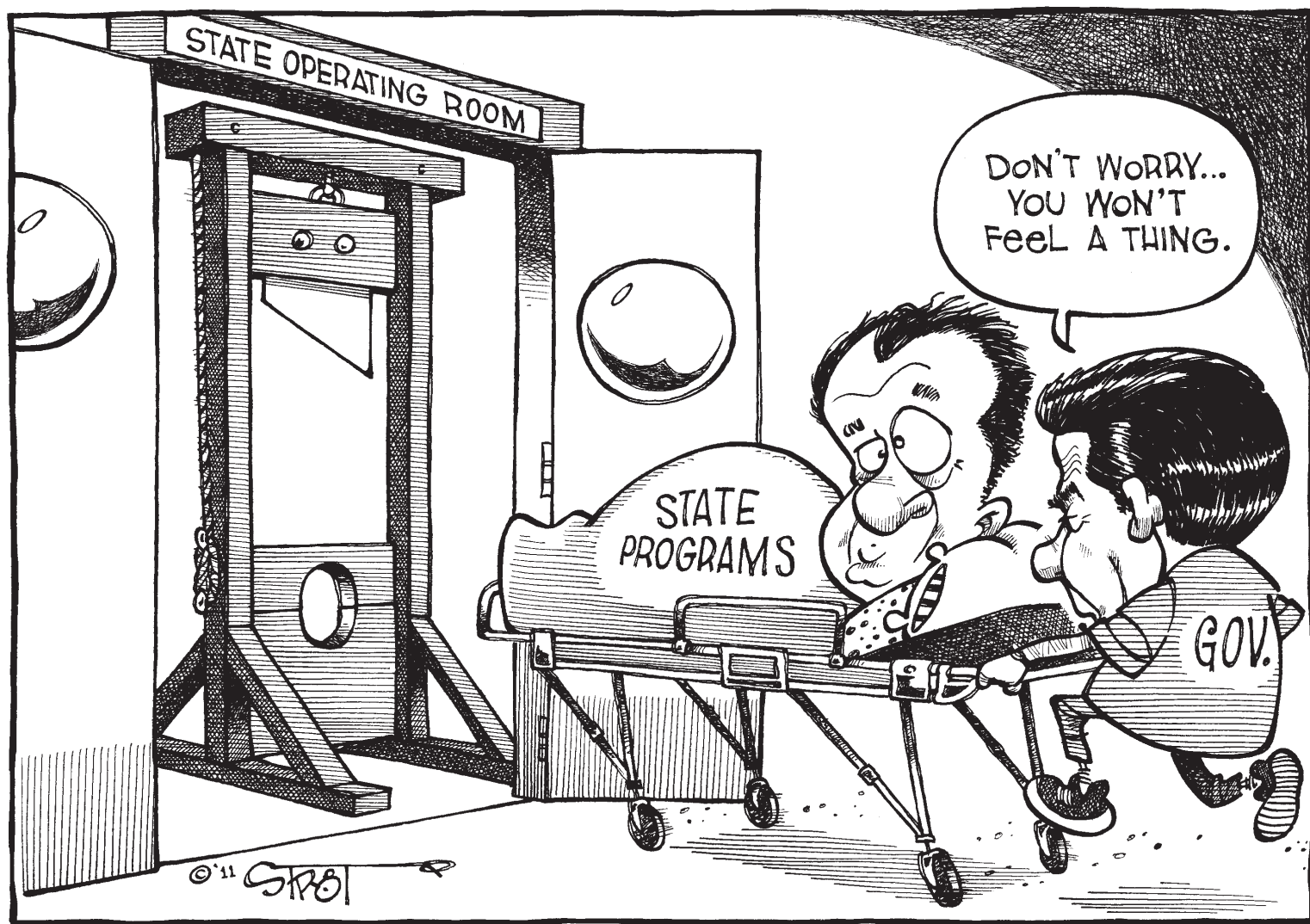
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Thinking about how we evolve as parents

Watching a video of my son-in-law with his hands inches from my granddaughter's behind as she climbed her first set of stairs got me to thinking about the evolution of a parent.

Son-in-law is a normal overprotective first-time father. He's crazy about his little girl and worries that she will somehow hurt herself. Of course, she's a 10-month-old who spends her days trying new and dangerous things.

My daughter is actually a lot more calm about the whole process than I expected. Maybe those three years of teaching helped to mellow her.

She still didn't know how to get her daughter to take a pacifier, though.

I did.

I crammed it into the baby's mouth and put it back in every time she spit it out until she gave up and started to enjoy a nice suck.

I wasn't nearly so determined with my own first child. She wouldn't take my breast and she



cynthia haynes

• open season

wouldn't take the pacifier. She didn't want to be held while she ate and she sure didn't want to suck on anything that didn't have food in it.

I let her get away with it, a mistake I refused to make with my granddaughter.

So, anyway, here is my evolution of a parent as seen through pacifiers.

Baby spits out pacifier and it lands on the floor.

1. Newest parent – immediately grabs pacifier and boils it to disinfect.

2. Mostly new parent – grabs pacifier and runs it under hot water to disinfect.

Winter kill



Insight this week

• john schlageck

There's a whole lot of wheat in the western third of Kansas that looks mighty tough. Some of the crop is barely out of the ground. Other fields have a bit of green but very little growth. More alarming are quarters and half sections with no wheat visible at all.

One thing is certain, this year's crop is low on moisture, has little if any root growth, is fragile and vulnerable to winter kill.

Travel west of Dodge to Ingalls in Gray County and most of the better wheat has received less than an inch of rain since the wheat was dusted in last September. Not nearly enough to send this year's crop into the traditionally dry months of January and February in a vigorous condition.

While some of the crop received approximately two inches of snow New Year's Eve and another dusting a week later, this precipitation was hardly enough.

"So far our wheat crop is not looking good," says long-time Gray County farmer Joe Jury. "This country always blows this time of the year and that spells problems."

Most farmers chem-fallow, minimum till or no till in this region of Kansas which builds crop residue on their soil to prevent wind erosion and save moisture. Valuable lessons were learned during the five-year drought period between 2001 and 2005 when many producers didn't harvest a wheat crop.

"Today we try to save every bit of moisture," Jury says. "We attempt to manage our crop residue and moisture much better than we did 10, 15 or even 20 years ago. With the new biogenetics we can raise so much more on less moisture."

In spite of the rough looking winter wheat crop, Jury still hopes to receive enough

moisture to raise an average crop. The Gray County producer isn't ready to give up on the crop yet.

Further west in Stanton and Morton counties, a couple miles from the Colorado border, Jim Sipes rates the wheat crop below average. Sipes says much of this entire region of the state wasn't able to establish a good stand, with some of the wheat acreage yet to sprout.

As of the first week of January he rated his crop below average and the entire region, "poor." Being a certified wheat seed dealer, Sipes sells wheat to growers across this entire area of Kansas. He talks to many more.

To date the moisture pattern has been extremely dry. For the wheat crop to turn around, weather in southwestern Kansas is going to have to change.

The southwestern Kansas seed wheat producer believes the continued lack of moisture could be devastating for yields in this part of the state.

"While no one can predict what will happen to this year's crop, my fear is with temperatures dropping and nights have dipped below zero, this wheat crop is not protected. I'm afraid we're probably going to see a lot of winter kill this year."

Sipes foresees many acres being destroyed and producers will look to plant summer crops on those failed acres. On the remaining acres, he believes many producers are looking at a winter wheat crop next summer of less

3. Somewhat new parent – worries less and less about the temperature of the water.

4. Kid's been around for awhile – wipes on shirt.

5. Second child – hands pacifier to oldest child with instructions to wash. Watches oldest child go into bathroom knowing full well she can't reach the sink.

After giving you the punch line, I came up with two other pacifier stories.

One new mother I know uses pacifier wipes – specially made for cleaning pacifiers.

Well, that's better than the machine for warming baby wipes, but only a little.

Another friend says that if the baby spits out the pacifier, she picks it up, wipes it off, puts it in her own mouth to disinfect it and gives it back to the baby.

That might be carrying the maternal spit bath a little bit too far if you ask me.

than half of a normal yield for this region of Kansas.

If there is a bright side to this grim picture in western Kansas, it's this – if there's ever a good time to dry it's this time of year. That's because the winter wheat crop is pretty much dormant and isn't using moisture.

That could change quickly if the dusting of snow vacates this part of the state and temperatures climb back into the 40s or above. That's when the crop will start growing again.

Should this occur, and the weather continues with a warming trend, insects begin to show up – especially in February. That will mean scouting fields and the possibility of spraying to control these pests that have the potential to lower yields even more.

"The problem then becomes, can I afford to drop more money into an already sinking ship," Sipes explains. "It's always a difficult decision."

Both farmers are hoping and praying for additional moisture in the form of snow to insulate the fragile crop and moisture in the form of rain later in the year. And while winter wheat prospects look bleak today, they know this crop is resilient.

"There's an old saying you have to kill wheat at least nine times before you really kill it," Jury says with a chuckle. "If we receive timely spring moisture and it doesn't kill out this winter, we may still grow some average wheat – and that's better than no wheat at all."

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

News from the state Senate

I joined a group of senators introducing a bill to substantially change existing abortion laws in Kansas. SB-146 will provide better protection to our most vulnerable citizens, the unborn children of Kansas.

Over the last 10 years we have passed these six options, only to have the governor veto them each time. We are combining these six issues into one bill which would be Senate Bill 146: reporting requirements, civil cause of action, parental consent, partial-birth abortion amendments, woman's right to know act and terminology amendments.

Minors need to have parental consent to have their ears pierced so why would we not want them to have parental consent to have an abortion. The same language is in House Bill 2035 and has passed the House with really strong majority. There is no doubt the Govern-



Ralph Ostmeyer

• state senator

nor would sign in a timely manner.

Next week the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee will begin hearings on Senate Bill 54 with proponents one day and opponents the next. The bill allows convenience stores and grocery stores to handle single malt beer, wines, and spirits. Beer and wine are 40 percent of liquor stores' revenue and no doubt, passing it could close a lot of small Mom and Pop businesses.

Although there is some interest in grocery stores only having beer and wine sales, I

don't believe this is good for our small liquor stores. In most of my small communities we're lucky to have a small grocery store and small liquor store. I'm not convinced my grocery stores want to handle liquor because of the danger of closing down small liquor stores. I don't believe most of my small community grocery stores are in favor of shutting down another business for their success, because they know the value of businesses in small rural America.

I'm still not convinced this is the direction we need to go. I would only ask each one of your economic development directors and county leaders visit within your communities about whether this is the direction to proceed. I really need to get more feedback on this issue. So far there hasn't been a lot of interest in adopting this new policy.