

from our viewpoint...

Upcoming meetings deal with area future

Four upcoming meetings will have a major impact on our county and region. For people in two towns the meetings are a last ditch effort to keep a post office open in their community.

Another of the meetings will have larger impact on the area with redistricting of the state legislative districts. It is certain the number of rural legislators will dwindle when the maps are redrawn.

The fourth meeting may provide some uplift and have some positive ideas for the future with direct impacts on the area.

The first meeting will be from 9 to 11:30 a.m. on Thursday at the Colby Community College Cultural Arts Center. At this meeting the Special Committee on Redistricting will be taking public input into how the legislative districts can be adjusted to meet the population balance required. The districts have to be adjusted after every census, and while the state as a whole gained 6 percent in population the western part of the state lost population.

On the State Senate side Sen. Ralph Ostmeier of Grinnell, who represents 18 counties in the 40th district, is on the committee. Figures estimate the ideal size for the senate districts is 70,986 people, but presently Ostmeier's district has 62,105 leaving it about 8,000 short of the ideal figure.

To meet the balance Ostmeier may have to stretch to cover 19 or 20 counties.

On the House side the ideal size is 22,716. The 121st District represented by Rick Billinger of Goodland has 19,113, or about 3,000 short. The district includes Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan and currently part of Graham County. To reach the ideal size it is possible the district will expand to the rest of Graham County, or possibly even further east if the maps continue to be drawn west to east in this region.

The meeting in Colby is the only chance people will have to address the committee directly. The committee will draft a proposal for the next session, and if approved the boundaries will be in effect for the elections next year both primary and general.

Citizens in Kanorado and Edson have known they were facing the closure of their post offices since the U.S. Postal Service announced plans in mid September to close 3,700 post offices - mostly rural - as a money saving measure. A special meeting is to be held for each community to give citizens their chance to convince the postal service to keep the post offices open.

The Kanorado meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 25, at the Kanorado Senior Center with a special community meeting beginning at 6 p.m.

The Edson meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 26, at Cochran Farm Supply a mile east of town.

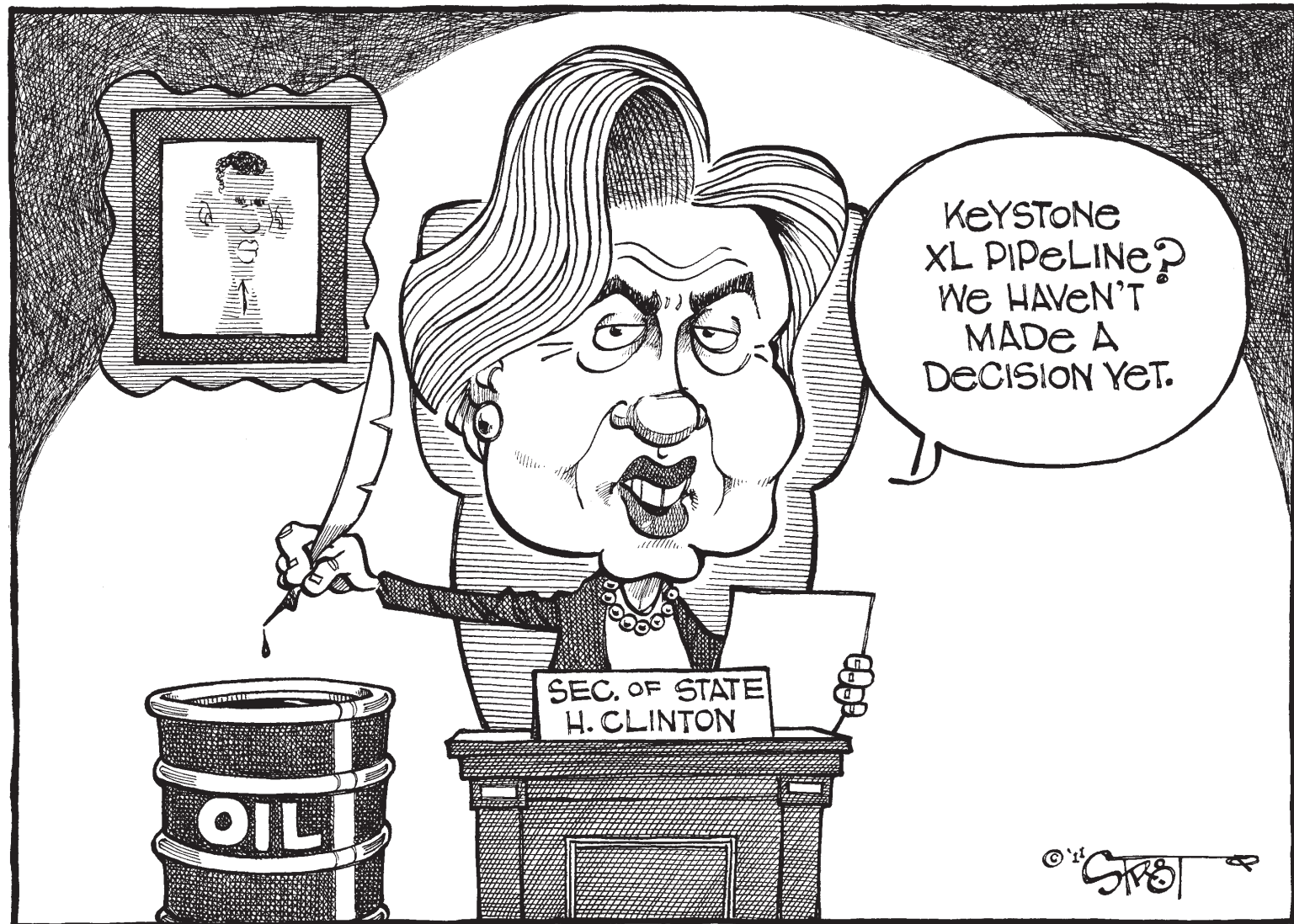
Some options will be discussed including closure of the post office, moving it to a contract location or possibly rural or cluster box delivery.

The fourth meeting is the "Technology in education" conference to be held Friday morning at Northwest Tech.

This year speakers include State Budget Director Steve Anderson who will talk about Gov. Sam Brownback's Rural Opportunity Zone program. Another speaker will be Dan Senstock, account executive in higher education with Apple, Inc.

This conference can provide some uplifting insight to how technology changes can expand area economic opportunities.

These are all important meetings, and we urge people to attend and participate because the future of the towns, county and region depend on what comes out of these public events. If you believe in public action these are where the action begins. - Tom Betz



Let's celebrate return of black-footed ferrets

To the Editor:

Recently a small group of people applied political pressure to force the Oakley school superintendent to cancel a planned school program with the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The school program was to provide information to students about the recovery from near extinction of the black-footed ferret. Later, the same small group, who were not all residents of Logan County, petitioned the Logan County Commission to withdraw approval for the use of the Logan County 4H Building to make a presentation to the general public. Finally, this group used economic pressure to keep the program from being presented in a meeting room at a local business.

This group is actually angry about prairie dogs. They hate prairie dogs with such a passion that any reason to justify the existence of a prairie dog colony must be rejected. The problem for this group is the fact that the black-footed ferret only eats prairie dogs. This rare and specialized carnivore must have prairie dogs to survive. Apparently this group believes that neither creature should exist in their natural habitat.

Most ranchers believe that prairie dogs cause economic damage. Sometimes prairie dogs move from one property to another. The prairie dogs then compete with livestock for grass and damage rangeland.



from our readers

to the editor

Everyone knows this, but how many people know that the organizations which are trying to reintroduce the ferret invest \$100,000 in Logan County each year to control prairie dogs that move from ferret reintroduction sites? This money is also used to control prairie dogs already present within three miles of the two ferret sites. This service is free of charge to landowners. Unfortunately, this is the kind of information certain opponents want to stifle.

The black-footed ferret is extremely rare. There are only 19 sites in the entire world where this ferret can live in the natural environment. Logan County has two of these sites and they are considered to be the best new reintroductions. These ferrets and the diversity of other wildlife associated with prairie dog colonies represent a world-class tourism resource that many communities would love to have.

The democracy we cherish in our United States demands free and uncensored exchange of information and ideas. If a small group of people are able to keep their fellow citizens from this information by intimidating school boards, county commissioners, and private

business owners, then something is very wrong.

We must respect the thoughts and opinions of everyone involved with the difficult issues related to the stewardship of private land and the preservation of our wildlife for future generations. It was wrong to deny access to the amazing story of the black-footed ferret to our school children and other interested people in the community. It is wrong to only allow one side of this issue to be presented locally.

Finally, there is an even bigger issue that this small ferret represents: We have been called by God to care for His earth. We have been given dominion over the animals that He has created and dominion does not mean to kill them all.

We need to celebrate the return from near extinction of one of God's creatures. It is an incredible story of luck, hard work and courage. Please join us for this celebration at our farm located five miles west of Monument on Saturday, Nov. 5 from 1 to 7 p.m.

Come with an open heart and mind to visit with friends, and see a black-footed ferret from the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. There will be other animals from the zoo along with tours, food, games, prizes and maybe some live music.

Bring the kids, have some fun, and explore the prairie we all love.

Tim and Rebekah Peterson

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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

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Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

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Insight this week

john.schlageck

a lasting relationship between you and the landowner.

Agree on who, and how many, will hunt on the land. Specify number and furnish names. Talk about specific times and dates you plan to hunt.

Contact the landowner each and every time before you plan to hunt, and let the landowner know of your intentions. The landowner may have forgotten about your original conversation. It's just common courtesy to say hello before hunting and ask again for the opportunity - or privilege, as I consider it - to hunt on someone's property.

Determine the exact location on the land you have permission to hunt. Some areas may be off-limits because of livestock or crops.

Always, and I can't stress this enough, leave gates the way you find them. If they are open, leave them that way. If they are closed, shut them after you pass through.

If you ever leave a gate open and a farmer's cow herd gets out of the pasture, "Katy bar the door." You'll never be invited back to hunt.

In less than a month the Kansas fields, hills and woods will awaken to the sound of booming shotguns and barking dogs. Saturday, Nov. 12, is the official opening day of upland game hunting. Hunters and their canines will once again swarm the countryside searching for pheasants, quail and prairie chicken. Duck and turkey season is already in full swing.

Farms and ranches have always been a handy, ready-to-use outlet for many urban dwellers who travel outside their city homes in search of recreational hunting. On opening day of the upland game season the interstate and U.S. highways will be a steady stream of pickups, SUVs and cars headed for central and western Kansas.

If you plan to hunt on private land remember one key word as you embark on this season's sojourn. That word is consideration. It means thoughtful and sympathetic regard.

In this country, wildlife belongs to the people, but landowners (farmers and ranchers) have the right to say who goes on their land. If you are interested in hunting, make arrangements before you hunt.

Don't wait until the day you plan to hunt someone's land and then knock on the door at 6 a.m. By now you should have already asked to hunt.

After you've secured permission, here are some suggestions to follow that will ensure

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; E-mail address - <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=EmailPat>

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966. E-mail address - <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., 20575-1601. (202-225-2715) E-mail address - <https://huel>

skamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking State Office Building Rm 724, Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7659, cell (785) 899-4770, home (785) 899-5824. E-mail rick.billinger@house.ks.gov.

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785-296-7399; e-mail ostmeier@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

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