

'Run for the Oval' getting quite crowded

The name of the game is not, "Who will run?" but, "Who is in?" Speculation the past couple of months has given away to reality and now the number of people wanting to become president of this great land collectively includes 20 bodies.

Latest to announce formation of an exploratory committee are Kansas Sen. Sam Brownback, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton. Brownback is a Republican and the other two are Democrats.

The "Run for the Oval" (as in oval office) is shaping up as either one terrific experience for the country, or one massive nightmare. Certainly, not all of those faces seriously believe they have a chance.

Right?
Wrong!

They point to a little known governor from a small state who won the White House against all odds. That little known governor was Bill Clinton of Arkansas. And he served two terms.

At this point in time, Sen. Clinton is atop the Democratic roster and Sen. John McCain atop the Republican roster. But that is now...not 2008. Clinton is being pressed by Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois. McCain hasn't necessarily been pressed by anyone until Sen. Brownback entered the picture. The Kansas senator is a true to form conservative while McCain is more moderate in his approach to issues. Of course former Massachusetts Republican Gov. Mitt Romney is being closely watched, too, having served a "Kennedy" state with much acclaim.

There will be more candidates forming exploratory committees as the days roll on. What is surprising is the number of senators eyeing the presidency. History tells us that sitting senators are rarely elected president.

So, if the two major parties were holding their conventions today, who would get the nod? If you believe in polls, Sen. Clinton and Sen. McCain would be heading into the ring to battle it out for all the marbles.

Who would be their running mates? Doubtless either would choose from the ranks of opposing candidates.

This race is going to be costly. Many, many millions of dollars will need to be raised. Sen. Clinton, according to reports, has a war chest in which she has many of those millions of dollars already stashed.

What does all this mean? It means we are getting started way too early on an election that won't be decided until November 2008.

It also means there will be a large number of people — people already elected to do a job — who won't be fully focused on that responsibility.

If you think you were tired of the bickering leading up to the November 2006 election — remember that one, just two months ago? — well, hold on tightly!

—Tom Dreiling

Senatorial "Anti-Iraq Strategy" Button



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Let kids be kids, parents be parents

If the world hands you lemons, make lemonade. If it rains on your parade, get an umbrella. And, if Mother Nature drops 10 inches of powdery snow on you, go out and play in it. It doesn't seem like kids play outside, in the snow, like we used to.

I think too many parents are worried that their kids will get sick if they play out in the cold. I always remember an old doctor telling me, "You don't catch a cold from being cold." Relax, Mom. Let 'em go outside. It'll be good for them.

Who remembers making snow forts and playing "Fox and Geese"? We didn't just make a snowman, we made snow families. Of course, we had real lumps of coal for the snowman's buttons and my mother sacrificed many an apron for Mrs. Snowman.

Coming home from chapel services Sunday, we saw two kids being pulled on sleds by two other kids on horseback. They had long ropes tied from the

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



saddleshorns to the sleds. Once the horse got up to speed, the rider would guide it into a turn and the person on the sled would get a wild ride as the sled swung in a wide arc. Half of the fun was when the centrifugal force would sling the sledder off the sled and into a snow bank. I wanted to be a kid again.

I don't remember ever using a horse to pull us, but I do remember my brothers taking an old car hood and pulling it behind a tractor. With a car hood, you could get about four people onboard at once.

Today, if a kid rode on a rusty car hood behind a tractor, some child protection

agency would probably slap the parents in jail for endangerment. These are the same people who want to make spanking illegal. Don't get me wrong, I don't advocate beating or hurting a child. But, a well-placed "pop" on the seat of learning certainly gets a child's attention. And, usually that is enough.

This proposed legislation is saying it would be illegal to spank a child under the age of 3. I say if you wait until they're 3, you've waited too long. I'm afraid there is confusion between discipline and spanking. Some think the two are synonymous. The mistake is made if a child is not disciplined at all. Parents don't want to hurt their child's little psyches, so they do nothing.

Big mistake; huge. You can't tell anyone else how to raise their children. And, I don't think the government should, either.

Bottom line: I'm glad my children are raised.

Inside look at Republican strategy

GOP protects education funds: In a swift and decisive move, the Senate passed last week a proposal to set aside enough money from this year's state budget surplus to fully fund all three years of the school finance law enacted last year. The measure, Senate Bill 30, was sponsored by all 30 Republican senators and was approved 37 to 1. Our hope is that the House also will act quickly so we can make it clear that we will meet our education promises and put this issue behind us and focus on other matters for the remainder of the session.

The urgent need for this measure was underscored in the governor's budget, which spends this money on other purposes this year rather than saving it for education.

Republican agenda: Senate Republicans have unveiled their Priorities for Progress, a bold agenda for the 2007 session. Also, House Republicans announced their agenda, which is similar to the Senate agenda.

State of the State Address: The governor last Wednesday night delivered her State of the State address, outlining several proposals she wants the legislature to consider this year. The tone of this year's speech was more cooperative than in years past, and on the substance, most — though not all — of the ideas she outlined were previously outlined already in the

Senate Doings Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer



Senate and House Republican leadership agendas. All of that is good news. It means the Senate, the House and the governor all are roughly on the same page in terms of state priorities for this year, and that should be a formula for compromise and accomplishment.

Governor's budget breaks the bank: The governor's budget was terribly disappointing. After all of the conservative talk, this budget would launch the state on a new spending spree. The governor provides no money for deferred maintenance on university campuses, no money for new prisons, and does not set aside money to fully fund the three-year school finance plan. Still, she manages to spend more than \$6 billion for the first time in the state's history and squanders the surplus, driving the budget more than \$100 million into shortfall the year after next (fiscal 2010). A budget profile shows how the governor's spending spree drives the bud-

get to a 2 percent ending balance in just one year (by 2009). The governor has unrealistically raised expectations, and Republicans are going to have to insist on fiscal responsibility.

14 Republican Priorities for Progress:

1. Public Education
2. Keeping our promises.
3. Reforming math, science, and early childhood education.
4. 21st century colleges and universities.
5. Health Care.
6. Government Reform and Reorganization.
7. Energy.
8. Public Debt.
9. Life Sciences — Animal Health Initiative.
10. Seniors & Retirees — Protect Social Security income.
11. Immigration
12. Environment.
13. Public Safety
14. Campaign Finance & Election Reform.

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ISSN 1063-701X
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654
Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002
Incorporating the Norton County Champion
Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



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