

### This could easily ruin home-owned carnivals

Here's hoping area legislators can do something about a bill requiring new regulations on rides which might put many of northwest Kansas' home-owned carnivals out of business.

The bill passed late in the session without the usual notice or a chance for public hearings. Carnival operators had little or no warning, and no chance to tell legislators how these citizen-run operations would be affected.

In fact, the measure, pushed by Rep. Tom Sloan of Lawrence, has failed every time it's gone through the committee process.

Some of the bill's provisions included a rule that rides would have to be inspected 30 days before they could operate, employees would have to be trained and certified and operators would need to carry \$1 million in liability insurance.

Members of the Decatur County Amusement Authority in Oberlin were shocked that the Legislature would do such a thing without looking into the consequences. It's just another example of a government "mandate" that "sounds like a good idea" when presented but in practice causes all kinds of problems.

State officials like to complain when the federal government does this to them, but the state itself is capable of all sorts of mischief.

This bill apparently was buried early in the session, then at the last moment was slipped into a vaguely related measure and rushed through the process in the final days of the session. Area legislators say they had no idea what was happening or what kind of problems this "good idea" might cause. One apparently was assured the law wouldn't affect nonprofit, home-owned carnivals.

That makes it just another example of the kind of awful work the Legislature sometimes does in the closing days, when everything is rushed and no one has time to read the details.

It's possible no one intended to put the home-owned carnivals out of business. It's also possible some slick lobbyist for traveling carnivals had just that in mind. Or maybe the whole thing is just a misguided attempt to make us all safer.

The thing is, there is no evidence at all that home-owned carnivals are dangerous. To the contrary, the ones out here have good safety records.

Because they operate only a few days out of the year, using volunteer labor, it would be next to impossible to have them inspect the rides, let alone get the hundreds of volunteer operators in each county out for training and testing beforehand.

And a million-dollar insurance policy could prove far too costly for the charitable groups that run these carnivals. The Decatur County group is paying \$9,000 per year now for only \$500,000 in insurance.

This is just a bad deal all the way around. We could wind up losing our fun-filled, family oriented carnivals, have no way to replace them, and all for nothing.

This law needs to be changed, and soon. Colby's Rep. Jim Morrison is preparing a fix.

But beyond that, the Kansas Legislature needs to put itself under rules that require real hearings for all bills and forbid late-night, last-minute passage of law no one has heard about, or worse yet, died in committee for good reason.

That's just government at its worst, and the legislators ought to put a stop to such practices.

— Steve Haynes

### Presidential debate gets C+ at best

Sen. McCain? Sen. Obama? Which one won the first of the three scheduled presidential debates last week? If you said McCain, you are wrong. If you said Obama you are wrong. It was, without doubt, a tossup.

McCain lost points because he stubbornly refused to acknowledge the presence of his opponent, giving him the cold shoulder throughout.

Obama lost points because he just doesn't seem to know when to quit talking. He apparently doesn't recognize the difference between debating and lecturing.

On the issue of commander-in-chief, either would serve that purpose well.

On the matter of the economy, both have faults.

On national security, McCain needs to get straight in his mind who runs what country, and Obama needs to convince us he has a better handle on that issue than does his challenger.

On earmarks, there are a lot of justified expenditures in that category, just as there are foolish ones, and if Sen. McCain plans to veto anything that smacks of an earmark, he might get smacked by Congress.

And on the \$700 billion bailout, both were, in some fashion or other, bailing out of telling us specifically how they felt or would vote.

We came away from the first debate no better informed than before. Both senators need to study, over and over, the tapes of their performances last week so they are better prepared next time around. We need shaper, to-the-point answers. Hesitation, skirting the questions and muttering an answer doesn't smack of leadership in our books.

Maybe the two guys who want to occupy the Oval Office will do better than the c+ we've given them on their first try.

— Tom Dreiling

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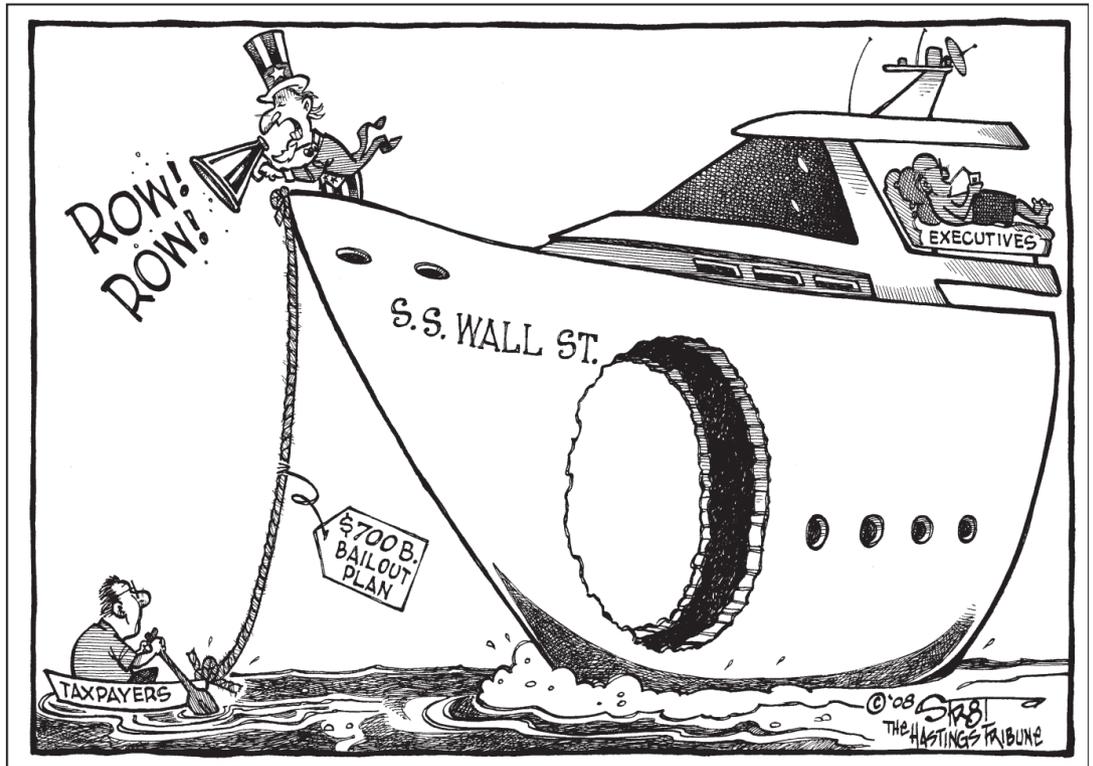
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### How about doing yesteryear's laundry?

Here it is Monday again. And that means laundry. Remember that childhood nursery rhyme? I don't know it all, but it went something like: "Monday, washday; Tuesday, green beans; Wednesday, soup." But, we always said, "Soo-ooop."

Actually, everyday could be wash day now. The convenience of automatic washing machines has seen to that. Sometimes I lament that we're wearing our clothes out washing them. I should just be thankful we have plenty of clothes to wear.

At the risk of sounding like an old lady, I remember what it was like when I was a kid and I got home from school. My mother would say, "Get out of your school clothes and put on your work clothes."

I don't think kids know the difference now-a-days. The clothes they play in are as good as the clothes they wear to school. In fact, they are one in the same. True, not many kids (unless they're lucky enough to live on a farm) have chores these days.

But, when I was a kid (Oh, my. There's that old lady coming out again.) there were cows to be milked; cream to be separated; calves to be fed; and hogs to be slopped. Not to mention gathering a bushel of corn cobs from the hogs' pen; getting a bucket of coal; and gathering the eggs.

At any rate, you did not wear your school clothes for every day. And, I know we wore our clothes more than once before they were washed. My mother raised all us kids without the benefit of running water in the house.

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



be full of alfalfa seed, dirt, nails, washers and bolts. Looking back, I think my mother occasionally "salted" the pockets with coins to insure my continued interest.

By the time the wash was done, that first water was pretty black. In fact, there would be a layer of mud on the bottom of the tub.

Wash day wasn't too bad in good weather. But, in the dead of winter, it was grim. More than once we brought sheets in off the line that were stiff as a board. I always wondered if they would break if you hit them with a hammer.

My mom never complained about the hard work, but when she started her job in town where there was a laundromat, the old Dexter was the first thing to go.

So perhaps, I shouldn't complain, either. Instead, I'll go push a couple of buttons and sit down for that second cup of coffee while the machine does all the work.

-ob-

We sure had fun Saturday night. It was the annual Lyle Community Building Fund Benefit and Potluck. It was home-grown fun at its best.

Of course, the food was fantastic. The tables were practically groaning with the load. After supper it was time for the entertainment. In addition to some great bluegrass music, we had a reading or two, some singers, a clarinet solo and a couple of girls who danced a jig.

We made some money to help operate the building for another year and had a good time doing it.

### There's professional help for this illness

The American Association of Suicidology recently observed National Suicide Prevention Week, with the goal of increasing public awareness of this topic. Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States, with over 30,000 people dying by suicide each year. There are almost twice as many suicides as homicides each year. It is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 24. In the elderly, the rate of suicide of people age 65 and older is higher than any other age group, and the suicide rate in the United States Army is at a 26-year high.

The stigma associated with mental health treatment is one of the primary reasons why people do not seek help, which is unfortunate because treatment does work. Most suicidal individuals really don't want to die. They want to live, but are unable to deal with the emotional

### Plain Sense Ken Loos

pain they are feeling and are unable to see alternatives or solutions to their problems. Warning signs may be present, but family and friends are often unaware of the significance of these warnings, or are unsure of what to do. These signs include depression, hopelessness, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, withdrawal from friends, family and usual social activities, and/or dramatic mood changes.

Someone who is thinking about suicide may also experience symptoms associated with depression including sleep disturbance, appetite changes, increased anxiety or irritability, indecisiveness, and

an inability to think or concentrate. The use of alcohol or drugs will contribute to the problem.

Friends, family members, and coworkers can help prevent suicide by talking openly and directly with the person about whom they are concerned. Be willing to listen and accept the feelings that are expressed. Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, or a plan for completing suicide need to be taken seriously by those in contact with the person. Offer hope and support, but also encourage the person to get professional help.

(Contributed by Ken Loos, High Plains Mental Health Center, 208 E. 7th, Hays 67601. You can mail questions to him at the above address, and questions will be formatted and answered in a manner that insures confidentiality. www.highplainsmentalhealth.com)

### Thumbs Up

To... **Mary Kay Woodyard**, for your column in the Sept. 26 edition of The Telegram, "When beliefs and laws clash." (e-mail Nancy Hagman)

To... **the letter writers** on both sides of the Obama/McCain race. It's great to have an opportunity to hear from differing viewpoints. (e-mail)

To... **Margaret Brethouwer**, for the recognition accorded for serving as a volunteer Foster Grandparent. We need more people like you. (called in)

To... **Norton Community High School**, on your Homecoming Week observance. (e-mail from a proud alum)

(To submit a name of names, please e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, call either 877-6908 or 877-3361, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654 or bring to the office. Thanks for your input. - td)