

Looking ahead at what awaits our money machine

Adam, "They keep talking about billions and trillions of dollars. Just give them a little time and those numbers will seem insignificant when they begin rolling out quadrillions!"
Eve, "Quadrillions? Come on, apple muncher, there's no such thing, right?"

Good Evening Norton
Tom Dreiling



Adam, "Sure, it's 1 + 15 zeros — 1,000,000,000,000,000."
Eve, "Boy and I thought *Deal or No Deal* was a big deal!"

Surely not?! While watching television Tuesday night, the channel I was watching suddenly went off the air (channel 7, CBS, KWCH-TV, Wichita). I was in the midst of watching the Craig Ferguson Show. I quickly tried another channel and it was working, ditto about a dozen more. I looked at the clock and it was just a bit after midnight. Then the thought came to me — Hmm. Some stations were eliminating their analog signals after Feb. 17, so perhaps this is what is going on. One of the channels I checked was channel 11, another CBS affiliate, I think, out of Nebraska and Craig Ferguson was doing his thing. So I watched to the end, shut off the tube and went to bed. When I got up Wednesday morning, I turned on the tv to check on channel 7. It was on. Maybe channel 7's problem had nothing to do with the switch from analog vs. digital, just a coincidence it went off at midnight. Matter of fact Nex-Tech was rewiring a week or so ago for this very purpose — to make sure their customers were all set for the changeover. Channels 2 through 13 have a lot of repeat stations, i.e., NBC, 2 & 8; CBS, 7 and 11; and National Public TV, 3 and 9. I like the 3 & 9 situation, because as a fan of national public television, I can watch my favorites because seldom do those two channels carry the same programs at the same time.

I think I watch too much television.

The little girl, as excited as she could be, rushed home from school to give her mother the good news. "Mom," she said. "today at school we learned how to make babies!" Her mother was nearly speechless, but once she recovered from the shock of her second grader delivering such a statement, she sat down on the couch, asked her little girl to climb on her lap and to explain how you make babies. "It's really simple, Mom," the child said. "'You just change 'y' to 'i' and add 'es'."

We have received a lot of positive comments on our Valentine Day project, whereby readers of The Telegram voted for the couple they thought should receive the title of "Sweetheart Couple of Norton County." The luck of the draw determined the winning couple. Ballots were deposited in the business places that co-sponsored the project with The Telegram. The ballots were then emptied into a large box, after which the lucky ballot was drawn. The contest was the result of a staff meeting during which we pondered a promotion for Valentine's Day. We wanted something different. Then the light in my head came on. The seed was planted, we all got behind it and we were happy it went as smoothly as it did. The first "Sweetheart Couple of Norton County" is Lyman and Georgia Rowh. Congrats!

I have a hunch this will become an annual event.

I watched A-Rod perform at his news conference earlier this week, trying very hard to convince you and me that he didn't know the drug he was injecting into his body for three years was a power enhancing drug. And he asked that we judge him by what he does going forward and not what he had done in the past. That's kind of like a bank robber telling the jury they should focus on what he does from here on in and to forget the fact he held up a bank. I hope A-Rod performs better on the field than he did at his news conference. It was one contradiction after another. But celebrity allows people like him to argue their case before millions of people. I think this attempt bit him where he sits.

Have a good weekend! And I take this opportunity to wish our Norton Blue Jay wrestlers all the best as they invade Ellis today and Saturday for the regional wrestling showdown. Go get 'em!

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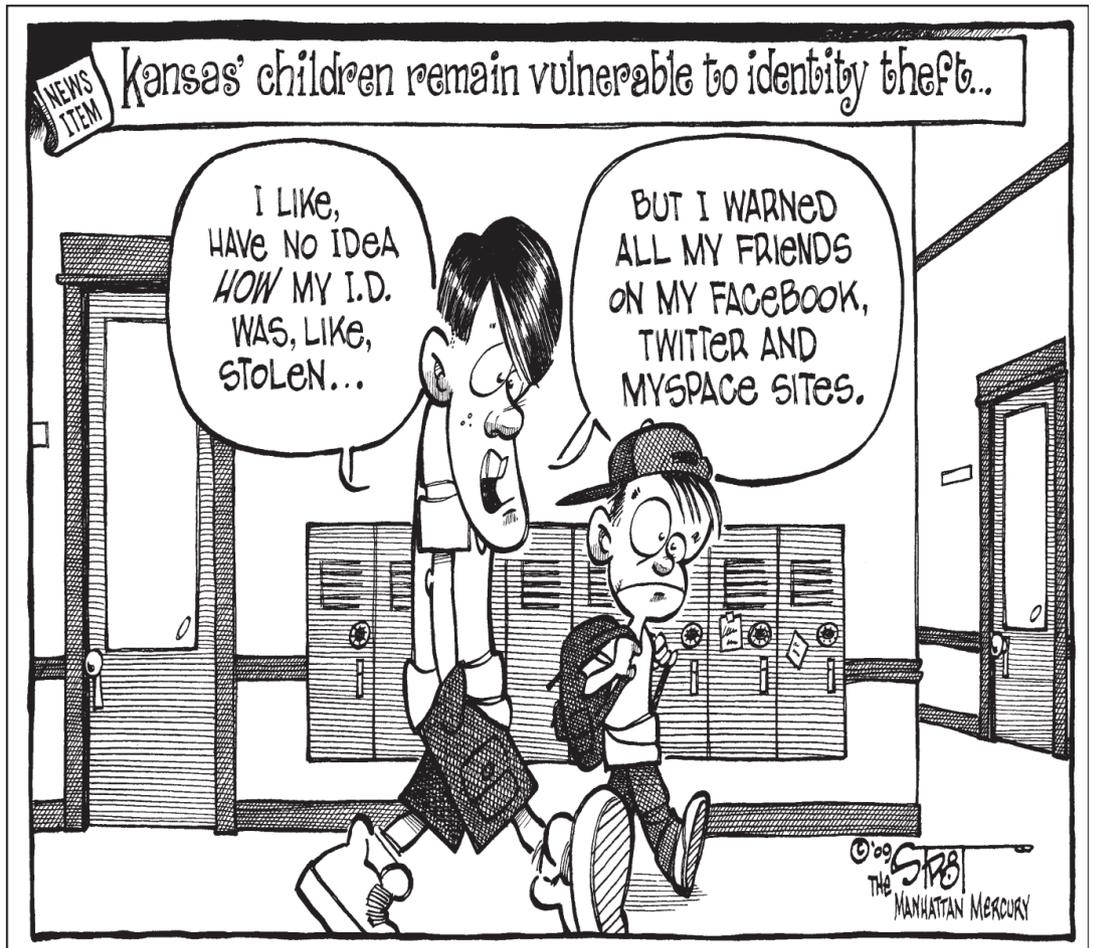
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Now they're targeting public notices

The centuries-old concept of giving the public notice of government and court action through publication in a newspaper is under attack in the Kansas Legislature. The push is coming from cities that see a way to save a little money and public officials who just don't like the press.

One bill (SF 164), sponsored by Sen. John Vratil, vice president of the state Senate, would allow cities to publish all their notices on their own websites.

This violates the basic principles of public notice, because a city website is not a neutral posting, because a website does not constitute a permanent record of the publication as a newspaper would, and because not everyone could get to the web page — or even know where it is.

It's better to have these notices delivered to taxpayers' homes, but some officials claim the cities will save money. The result for many small Kansas towns, however, might well be the loss of their newspaper.

This might not bother Sen. Vratil, who is from Leawood in Johnson County, and is known for his dislike of reporters and editorial writers.

It might well be a blow to small Kansas towns which already have lost many

On the Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



of their businesses and much of their identity.

While legal notices are but a small part of many newspapers' income, they might represent the margin of survival for the smallest papers. The Legislature would be wise to avoid finding out, at least from our perspective.

The "scorched-earth" bill is not expected to pass, at least not this year, but Sen Vratil is a powerful man and he might resort to late-session trickery to get his way. Our own senator, Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell, is on the Local Government Committee, which will decide this bill.

Another bill, SB 245, sponsored by the League of Kansas Municipalities, avoids the Internet issue and seeks only to save cities some money on publication of long ordinances. It would require publication only of a summary of ordinances, referring citizens to the city office for details.

This may sound like a good idea, but no one knows what damage it might do to those same small newspapers. People in the towns that would be affected probably would not be too happy to learn that their city is saving some money at the cost of their town's newspaper.

A better idea would be to require publication of a summary explaining the impact of every ordinance, along with the full text. Posting on the Internet along with newspaper publication would be a great idea.

The issue should not only be saving a little money, but making sure the taxpayers and voters know what their city is up to. Allowing the full text to be tucked away in some office to gather dust just goes against all reason. The very parts that will offend or injure taxpayers may well be buried where they will never make the summary.

And if the ordinance is not published, how will people ever know. Remember, the city itself will be writing the summary.

Voters upset by this kind of closed-government thinking ought to complain to their senator and representative. It's not right, but it's how public officials sometimes think.

Storefront Renewal Project wants you

Norton City/County Economic Development created the Storefront Renewal Project to beautify and renew the business districts, to promote further business development and to reinvigorate community pride in Norton County.

The Storefront Renewal Project offers a matching grant to Norton County businesses to beautify and upgrade storefronts, signage, and sidewalk approaches.

Each business may apply for up to \$1000 and the amount requested must be matched dollar for dollar.

For instance, if the total project cost is \$2000 or more, you may request the entire \$1000 grant. If the total project cost is \$800, the project is eligible for a \$400 grant.

Economic Development aims to fund projects in all of the cities in Norton County and will give preference to those projects in the central business

Something's Developing
Diane Becker



district that are compatible with the vision of the community and use local materials and labor.

To encourage participation in the Storefront Renewal Project, Economic Development is also hosting a workshop on Thursday, Feb. 26 at 5:30 p.m. to assist interested businesses with ideas for their storefronts.

We have invited local retail and service providers to present the products and services they have to offer in terms of storefront beautification.

Potential applicants will first listen to an overview and then will have the opportunity to meet individually

to discuss potential projects with the presenters. Register for the workshop by calling (785) 874-4816 or e-mailing nortoneda@ruraltel.net. There is no cost to attend.

As of now, *Here's Your Sign*, Norton Glass Company, Rawhide Iron Works and Colby Canvas Company have committed to presenting at the workshop.

If your business offers products or services relating to storefront beautification and you would also like to present at the workshop, please contact the Norton City/County Economic Development office.

Storefront Renewal Project applications are available at www.discovernorton.com under the Economic Development, Downtown Development tab. The deadline to apply is March 31. Applicants are encouraged to attend this workshop.

(nortoneda@ruraltel.net, or (785) 874-4816)

To... **Arlene Hix**, on your 90th birthday today. (e-mail)

To... **Prairie Dog 4-H Club**, for the goodies! How tasty! (Telegram staff)

To... **Sen. Ostmeyer and Rep. Faber**, for lending your ears. (called in)

To... **Mr. Yeager**, for the beautiful stained glass picture. You have a wonderful and valuable talent. (regular mail)

To... **the student body** at Northern Valley High School, for the "Tough Enough To Wear Pink" day, in support



of teacher Staci Montgomery, a breast cancer survivor. What a class act you all are! (called in)

(To submit a name or names, please e-mail tom.d@nwkansas.com, call 877-3361 or 877-6908, fax 877-3732, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654 or drop by the office. This column can also be used for happy birthdays and happy anniversaries. It's what they call a 'good feel' column. Thanks for your input. '- td')