

Understanding the legislative process

I now have five weeks under my belt as a state legislator. I thought it might be interesting to share some information to help you understand the process I have been learning. There are twenty nine different committees, in the House of Representatives, working towards the goal of setting a budget and making good policy. The senate has committees doing the same thing.

News from your legislator
Ward Cassidy



Committees in both houses have been holding hearings on bills to allow all of the parties involved an opportunity to share their perspectives, concerns, and support. After holding a hearing on the bill, the committee is ready to "work the bill" or amend it before voting on whether to pass it out of committee. If a bill is voted out of committee, it goes onto General Orders and it is printed in the House Journal "below the line." This indicates that it is ready to be brought "above the line" at which point it will be debated by the full house. After the debate there is a vote, if it passes it goes on to the senate, and then to the Governor.

There are lots of things that can happen when a bill is debated on the floor. It can be changed dramatically by an amendment and can change drastically what the bill was originally intended for. I still find it hard to believe that, in a few weeks, we will be voting as many as forty times a day. I will not be told how to vote. I will study as hard as I can and vote for what I feel is in the best interest of my districts and Kansas.

The Governor has proposed a bill for the state budget for fiscal year (FY) 2011 to bring it into line with declining revenue. He calls it a freeze bill that combines fund transfers and \$52 million in the State General Fund cuts. This will turn the deficit into a \$35 million ending balance at the end of this fiscal year. The legislator refers to this process as the Rescission period. A point I did not think of about his proposal - for every dollar we save this year, it is actually two dollars - the one that we saved this year and the one we don't have to budget for next year.

The Governor has also authorized the sale of 10% of state assets to help with this year's cuts. I did not realize that the state owns the property our six Board of Regents colleges sit on. There are many other properties as well. We will see a list of proposed land sales and then decide.

When I agreed to serve western Kansas, as a legislator, I knew that I would try to promote and fight for our area with all of my heart. It is an uphill battle. There are very few western Kansas legislators. Due to population trends there are many legislators from the three biggest areas of the state. I have truly realized what a diverse state we are and how suitable for one is not necessarily suitable for all.

I do believe that western Kansas is deserving of the new catch word in the legislature, "suitable."

We deserve suitable in every aspect of our communities - hospitals, schools, courthouse services, nursing homes, and cities. Instead of just writing our local legislators, we should start enlisting the help of the thousands of western Kansas people that have moved to the larger metropolitan areas of Kansas. Our high school graduates are playing an important role in their new communities and I wish they would voice, to their legislators, that growing up in our towns and cities made them the good workers and people they are today. Sending tax dollars to western Kansas is a great investment for the future of Kansas. Ward Cassidy 120th State Representative



Valentine's Day, a day to remember

It's Valentine's Day and my sweetheart has done it again. He lit the 10-foot tall "heart" on the front of our barn. So, it's a Valentine I'll gladly share with anyone who wants to drive by. We've been together more than 17 years and Jim is as romantic as ever.

Some men are naturally romantic while others are like the old boy who told his wife, "Look, I told you I loved you the day I married you. If it changes I'll let you know."

That might work for some women but, most of us like a little more reassurance. Call it "high maintenance" if you like but, if a woman knows she's loved she'll follow a man about anywhere and endure almost anything.

-ob-

Talk about romantic! Jim and I watched "Gone With the Wind" again. It's been years since I had seen it and I had forgotten how manipulative and brazen Scarlett O'Hara was. To be sure, the world is too forgiving of a beautiful woman but, she changed men like you would change your

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



socks. Miss Scarlett was never satisfied. She didn't appreciate her first two husbands or what she could have had in Rhett Butler until she finally drove him away.

Oh, well. Fiddle-de-dee. Tomorrow is another day.

-ob-

My daughter, Halley, drove in from Dallas late last Monday night. Right in the middle of that awful snow storm. The wind was howling; the temperature was frigid; and, this mother was glad to see her child arrive safe and sound. We stayed up into the wee hours just talking and then slept in. Tuesday found us doing more of

the same. Talking, sleeping and eating. We didn't leave the house all day.

Halley is a storyteller. She is also a political person. Here's her version of what happened during the gall bladder attack that preceded her surgery.

She had been scheduled to see a doctor about her condition and increasing discomfort. However, the night before, she began to suffer from her worst attack yet. It was so bad, she drove herself to the hospital's emergency room.

The way she told the story she was practically on her knees begging for something to kill the pain. I know she's a little more stalwart than that but, I believe it really hurt. Anyway, after filling out all the paperwork and being examined by a doctor, she received the medicine, Demoral.

It didn't take long for it to "kick in" and Halley said she told the nurse, "If Obama cared he would just give everybody some of this stuff." I know. It was just the drugs talking.

Food Check-Out Week currently taking place

As many Americans continue to face economic hard times, there is no reason to compromise the quality of your family's diet. The cost of eating healthy hasn't changed as much as some less-healthy alternatives, though it does require strategic shopping.

Helping Americans learn how to stretch their grocery dollars with healthy, nutritious food is the theme of Farm Bureau's "Food Check-Out Week" next week. America's farmers and ranchers are committed to producing safe, healthy and abundant food. And they share a common concern with consumers when it comes to putting nutritious meals on the table while sticking to a tight budget.

Recent U.S. Department of Agriculture food price data show that prices for unprepared, readily available fresh fruits and vegetables have remained stable relative to dessert and snack foods, such as chips, ice cream and cola. Translation - the price of a healthier diet has not changed compared to an unhealthy one. Food Check-Out Week is aimed at

Insight

John Schlageck

helping American consumers learn how to shop wisely while putting nutritious meals on the table with fewer dollars.

Learning to use your grocery dollars wisely helps ensure nutrition isn't neglected. Fruits and vegetables - along with whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, fish, beans, eggs and nuts - are an important part of a healthy diet.

Buying fresh produce when it's in season and costs less, while buying frozen fruits and vegetables when they're not in season, is a smart way to stretch that dollar.

Consumers in Kansas and across this country share in this wealth of food every time they step foot in their favorite supermarket. Today's shopper is fortunate to reap the benefits provided by America's farmers and ranchers.

Crop and livestock producers are proud of their profession. Nowhere is this more visible than the Midwest, our home state of Kansas in particular.

Farmers and ranchers take great pride in producing the cleanest, most abundant crops, including wheat, corn, milo, sunflowers and soybeans. In addition, Kansas ranchers produce some of the best cattle, hogs and sheep.

Kansans are also proud that Food Check-Out Week is an idea that originated with Kansas Farm Bureau in 1997 and has since gone national. Neosho County Farm Bureau member Linda Reinhart, former chair of the Kansas committee of Farm Bureau Women and the American Farm Bureau Women's Committee, thought the concept was important and saw it through to completion.

The saga of the American farmer and rancher is truly a success story. Our farmers are the most productive in the world. Remember to help celebrate this story and the healthiest, safest food anywhere on the planet next week.



Thumbs Up for the Norton Telegram staff and all you do in the paper. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to Tom Dreiling and his excellent editorial "The National Anthem, sing it like it should be." Emailed in.

To render a Thumbs Up write:
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There is no charge to render a thumbs up; names of those providing the information are not used, only the method of transmission.

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Letter to the Editor,
If opponents of oil complain that our country is dependent and addicted to oil, then they must also complain that people are dependent and addicted to food. We need oil to operate and be productive, not to mention the tax income the government would realize from the producers.
Oil fuels the economy of the world and is the basis of the wealth of all of our country that we could easily satisfy our own needs and become a supplier to the rest of the world. Instead of our misguided government giving money we don't have to other countries to drill, we should start drilling here wherever we have reserves.
Obama's decision not to drill is a danger, an insult, and a slap in the face to our country.
R.W. Yeager, retired contractor

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