

We may be adding to fiscal concerns

What a second year in the legislature! I have seen firsthand how ugly politics can be. The whole issue of the redistricting process has amazed me. It amazes me how people can have \$100,000 to \$200,000 in their campaign fund for an \$88.00 dollar a day, ninety-day job. I am sure most of you have read how there is a strong move by the Governor and the strong conservatives in the Senate to move out the moderate Republicans. That has caused important issues, yet to be solved, to be put on hold.

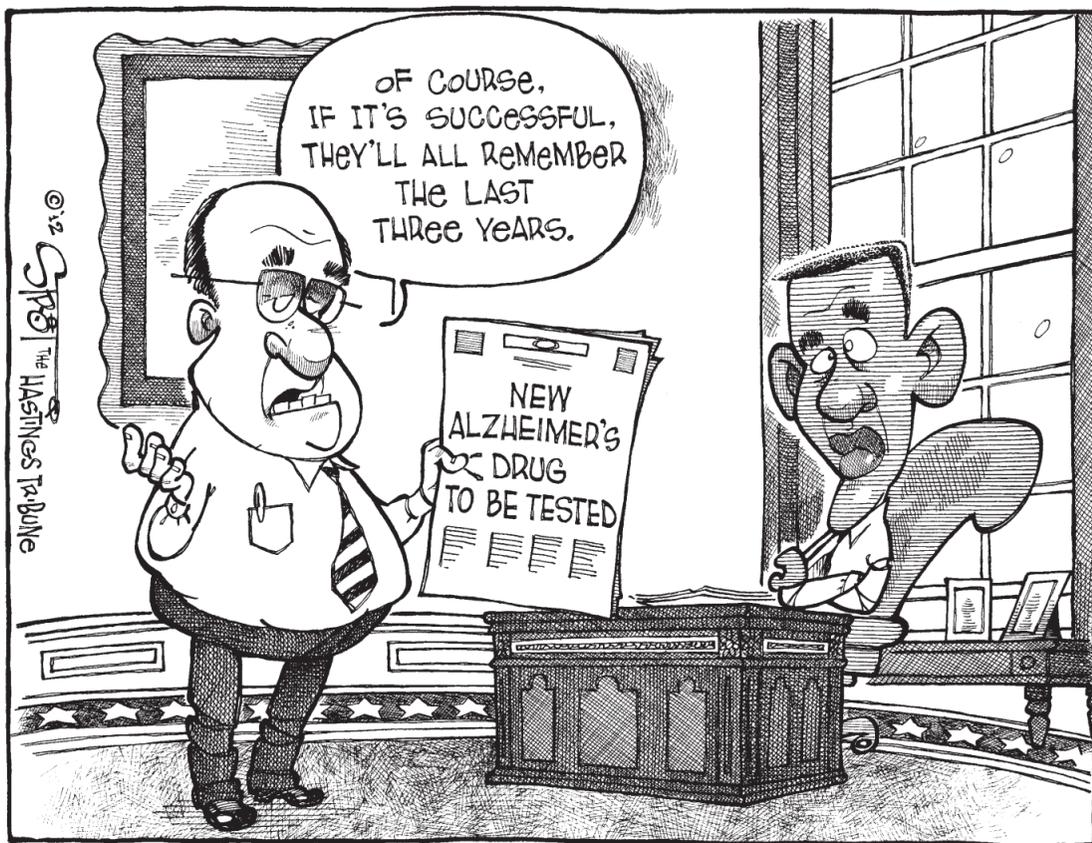
News from your legislator
Ward Cassidy



There is a compromise from the House and Senate on the important issue of our state retirement system (KPERS). I feel I will be able to vote for the compromise as it is at least a good first step. I have felt all along that by allowing new hires to remain in the current program, we are just adding to the fiscal concerns. Many of the concerns that the 120th constituents have expressed to me have been addressed in the compromise, other than putting a large chunk of money into the program. There will be over \$40m of ELARF money going into KPERS this year. The projections do show that the program is safe for thirty years and that if all projections hold it will improve after that. There will not be a (COLA) cost of living adjustment in the future. I will have the final KPERS compromise on my website after the session.

How is this for a predicament? Last week, I voted against the Senate tax plan because of my fear of the negative fiscal projections. The bill passed, however, and the Governor has said he will sign it. He would prefer that the House and Senate conference committee develop a different plan. The conference committee came up with a plan that I still don't like for NW Kansas. If I don't vote for this plan, the Governor will authorize the Senate plan that I really didn't like.

Friday morning, most of the representatives will wake up and have to move out of their apartments. There is a big race for rooms in Topeka, and all the available beds are sold out. That should help move things along. Who knows?



Being a good mother hen to the eggs

By this time next week the head-count at our house will have risen significantly. Hopefully, by 50.

That's the number of eggs I "set" in my little counter-top incubator. We'll see what happens because I haven't been the best "mother hen". According to the directions that came with the incubator, I was to turn the eggs twice a day at the same time. I always turned them at least once a day, but never at the same time.

I remember the summer our granddaughter, Chantelle, was with us. She was about 9 years old and loved, I mean really loved chickens. My friend, Suzy, had banty chickens and one of these little incubators. She gave me a dozen fertile eggs and the loan of the incubator.

Chantelle really was a good little mother, turning them every day. If I remember right we had to caution her to not turn them too often. When the chicks started to hatch it was all she could do to keep her hands off the struggling chicks. Naturally, your first instinct is to help them out of their shell. When, in fact, it's the very struggle that makes them strong enough to survive. Nature has its way.

Makes me think we should take a cue. Parents want to help their children too much. When, in fact, it's the struggle

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



that makes them strong and prepares them for the future. I used to tell my girls, "Just because you did it wrong, doesn't mean you don't have to do it. Try again."

Anyway, "little Chantelle" is graduating from high school this year. Her nickname was "The Texas Tornado." And she is still a very high-energy girl with a mega-watt smile. She was on swim team, in a service organization, has a million friends and kept her grades up too. She is planning a future in healthcare as a registered nurse.

Look out world. Here comes Chantelle.

-ob-

Coming home from town one night we spotted a herd of about 10 deer in the ditch. They barely lifted their heads as we passed. Before I knew it, Jim had pulled over and wheeled around. He said, "It's about time they get a taste of their own medicine."

We drove toward the deer and as

we got close he laid on the horn. They started to run back into a field, but it wasn't until I opened my window and gave them my high-pitched, crazy-as-a-loon, Basque yell that they really got scared.

I hope that put the fear into them and they'll think twice before venturing onto a roadway.

-ob-

Took a little trip down memory lane last week. I was writing a story about one of the anniversary classes from my alma mater. During my research I was going through some of the old newspapers and ran across one of my mother's columns.

She said my dad had tangled with a mad cow and lost, ending up with a couple of broken ribs. It was just a few days before alumni banquet and doctor's orders were to stay down and take it easy. When Mom suggested he skip the banquet his reply was, "I've never missed one before, and I'm not going to start now."

Which reminds me, I haven't sent in my alumni banquet reservation. It's not an anniversary year for either one of us, so we'll flip a coin to see if we want to be seated with the Class of '61 or '65. We both knew kids in the Class of '62 so, either way, we'll be close to them. Should be fun.



Great job to the 4th and 6th grade teachers and students on the 2012 science fair! So good to see the minds working and scientific ideas at work! Emailed in.

Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:
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Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

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Protecting and enhancing the farmer's assets

As Congress writes the upcoming farm bill, Kansas farmers and their contemporaries across our country will tell you that maintaining an efficient, effective and affordable crop insurance system is their number one priority.

You'll hear the same story throughout the Midwest and much of the country where agricultural producers believe federal crop insurance provides them with an effective risk management tool - especially when they are facing losses beyond their control.

Federal crop insurance also reduces taxpayer risk, makes hedging possible to help relieve market volatility and it provides lenders with greater certainty that loans made to producers will be repaid.

Farmer/stockmen like Keith Miller, Barton County, recently attended a farm bill hearing in Dodge City hosted by U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp. More than 200 people gathered in southwestern Kansas and Miller was one of 10 panelists who described what they would like to see in the next farm bill.

"Protection and enhancement of crop insurance programs ranks as the number one priority for a long list of farm organizations in the 2012 farm bill process," Miller testified.

Insight

John Schlageck



The longtime Kansas crop producer believes agriculture is a highly erratic industry influenced by a multitude of variables beyond the producer's control. Farmers can use top quality seed, fertilizer, chemicals and the best management practices and still not be able to control the weather and the markets. Profit margins in the agricultural industry make it critical that farmers have access to a strong, viable and flexible risk management program.

The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee recently approved its version of the 2012 farm bill. Sen. Pat Roberts helped spearhead the bipartisan effort that helped strengthen and preserve the crop insurance program.

"I'm proud because we've worked hard to produce not the best possible bill, but the best bill possible under difficult circumstances," Roberts says. "We've performed our duty to taxpayers by cutting deficit spending while

at the same time strengthening and preserving the programs so important to agriculture and rural America."

The Senate plan reduces this nation's debt by an estimated \$23 billion. Few if any other committees in D.C. have made the same cuts during this difficult budget climate.

Even though the farm bill's commodity title receives the lion's share of news, the conservation section of the bill is equally important to the future of this nation. Everyone must do his/her share to protect and preserve this country's natural resources or there will not be enough land to farm.

Conservation impacts everyone. We all eat, drink water and breathe air. With the ever increasing world population, keeping our food engine operating at peak performance has never been more essential.

While most believe the next farm bill is most important to agriculture, it impacts everyone in this country - rural and urban. There is a limited window of opportunity before the current farm bill legislation expires. It is key for work on this vital piece of legislation to continue. Each and every organization with a vested interest must continue to work to accomplish their priorities and move this 2012 farm bill forward.

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