

### Updates from the capital

By Senator Ralph Ostmeyer

The Legislature continued its work in the Veto Session. The Legislature is expected to return next week to wrap up the budget and any other key issues that need to be addressed before adjourning. Time is of the essence when legislators come back to Topeka on Monday and finalizing the budget will be a top priority in addition to these other priorities the Senate laid out at the start of the Session.

**Balanced Budget.** The Senate passed a balanced budget last week that reduces overall spending by \$324 million and calls for a \$457.7 million ending balance. The Senate budget takes into account anticipated cuts from the federal government and it restores some of the funds that had previously been cut in state aid to our local schools. During the economic recession, nearly \$18,000 was cut from every Kansas classroom. The Senate budget begins to restore some of those dollars to help alleviate larger class sizes, increased fees and teacher layoffs. The House adopted its version of the budget this week, allowing the two chambers to begin negotiating differences in their respective budgets. The negotiations will continue next week before a final budget can be voted on by both the Senate and the House.

**School Finance.** The Senate sent two bills to the House prior to the close of session addressing school finance. The first would put more dollars directly into the classroom by increasing the base state aid per pupil by \$74 over the next two years. This bill was sent to the House Budget Committee at the end of March. The other bill allowed for school districts to save up to 10% of the district's general fund budget in a contingency reserve fund. The option to set aside dollars for future operation expenses helps local schools plan for fluctuations in the economy without putting classroom resources, teachers, and other essential services at risk. These bills remain in conference committee where Senate and House members can negotiate a final plan.

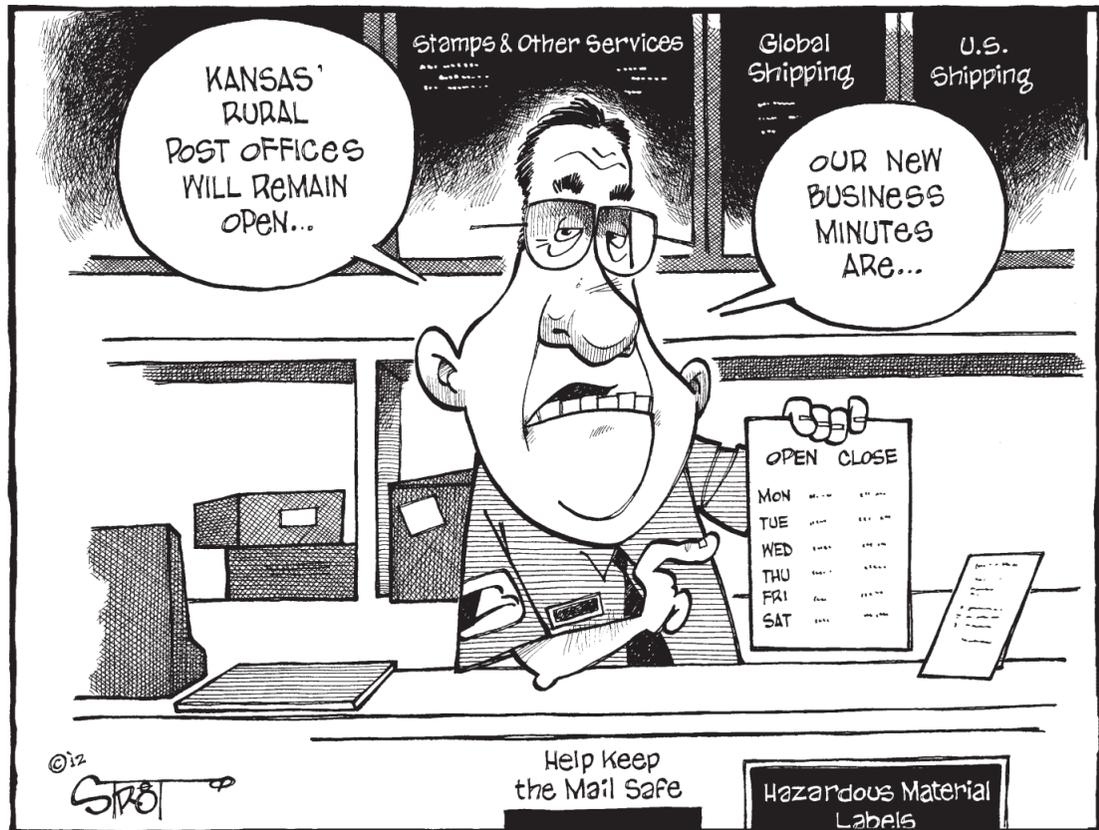
**Property Tax Relief.** Property tax relief was a priority for the Senate this year. Senators overwhelmingly passed a plan that will restore utilization of the Local Ad Valorem Tax Fund, sending \$180 million to local governments for the buy-down of property taxes. The dollars would be sent to cities and counties as \$45 million per year for four years. This was adopted in the Senate's version of the budget and, for each dollar paid to a county, there is guaranteed a \$1 reduction in local taxes.

**College or Career Ready.** This plan ensures each Kansas student has the opportunity to prepare for college or a career path prior to graduation. It also establishes an incentive program that awards school districts with \$1,000 for each high school student who graduates with an industry-recognized credential in a high-demand occupation. Based on the Governor's technical education plan, the intent of this bill is to support the preparation of our workforce in shortage areas - such as certified welding, automotive, aircraft, nursing and computer support - and to prepare students to go to work at these skilled, higher-paying jobs upon graduation from high school. The House adopted its version of the bill late this week and it will be sent back to the Senate for further consideration.

**Redistricting.** The committee met this week and passed out a potential Senate map. The map is located at <http://bit.ly/Bufalo20>

### ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- ★ **Governor Sam Brownback**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. [roberts.senate.gov/public/](http://roberts.senate.gov/public/) (202) 224-4774
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, Russell Senate Office Building Room C-4, Washington, D.C. 20002. [moran.senate.gov/public/](http://moran.senate.gov/public/) (202) 224-6521
- ★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 300 SW 10th St., Room 262-E-A, Topeka, Kan. 66612. [ralph.ostmeyer@senate.ks.us](mailto:ralph.ostmeyer@senate.ks.us) (785) 296-7399
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- ★ **State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka, Kan. 66612 [rick.billinger@house.ks.gov](mailto:rick.billinger@house.ks.gov) (785) 296-7659
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### The place we choose to call home

One of the hardest things about growing older is trying to adjust to change. I admired my mother in this regard as she always felt change was a natural progression of life. Some people, as they age, become cynical. They want things like they were back when, i.e. the good old days.

My mother used to say, "The good old days made better reading, than living." She probably knew what she was talking about, as she lived from 1904 to 2004, 100 years. She saw a lot of changes in her lifetime.

So what were the good old days? No remote, no cell phone service and poor television reception, polio affecting young people, no flu shots and a life expectancy of 66 for men, 72 for women. The Norton medical community working with little cooperation, a necessary tuberculosis center located just out of town and a group of people who, although the County population had dropped from 11,423 in 1920 to 8,035 in 1960, still believed this was a great place to live. Not only to live, but a place in which to invest time and, yes, money.

#### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



Do I think Norton is for everyone? No, but some of us choose to live here; in fact, I would say, we all choose to live here as we are free to live where we want. There are always choices and with choices come sacrifices. An example of choices facing the community now, is the subject of a new swimming pool. This is an issue which needs to be placed before the voters in November and then we live with the outcome.

There are those who oppose it as they feel the one penny tax per dollar is too much for them and they will travel out of town instead. Others feel few people will use a pool, because if they don't use it, it isn't needed. Still others feel Norton is on a downward trend so why do anything. Kind of like watering the

dry plant. But there are also those who believe in Norton. They have chosen to live here, not by default, but actively decided this is where they want to be.

Let me paint my picture of Norton as someone who grew up here, has lived elsewhere for 35+ years, and returned. I have grown children who did not grow up here but moved here and are raising their children in this community. What do I see when I look at Norton? I see a community with: seven day a week Meals on Wheels and Senior Citizen meals, two grocery stores when most communities are fighting to have one, up to date hospital with medical professionals, a theatre, an award winning school system and the list goes on, but what do I cherish the most? Safety, friendliness, and wonderful people who make this my home.

A wise man in our community once said, "Just as we pay rent to live in our home, there is also a community rent due to live in a community." Maybe it is time to pay the rent. Mail to: [mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net](mailto:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net)

### Finding a family member in Paradise, Kansas

Plagiarism is a serious concern to writers. It's practically a cardinal sin when it involves a family member!

Memorial Day weekend shaped up to be a fine one. Friday I got a successful haircut (two compliments before I even left town). My sister Sue was coming but Tricia changed the sheets after her recent visit. We were attending a big celebration on Sunday which required only a side dish so I didn't have to cook much.

It's true we are pretty sick of the wind! And the rock trucks: ten or so an hour going one direction or another on "OUR" road for the past three weeks!

I watered the yard; the county watered the road to keep the dust down. Living in Northwestern Kansas requires a rare breed of people. That combination of natural selection visa vie Darwin and the Law of the Jungle so eloquently stated by Rudyard Kipling.

Friday afternoon Sue e-mailed a tale of woe about the power steering in her car. Triple A was on its way to tow, a rental was arranged. She would arrive sometime Saturday.

Day dawned, the hubby headed off to trade some machinery. I watered the yard some more! The wind blew!

#### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



About 1:00 the hubby called. He discovered oil in Russell. Yes, there is a lot of oil around Russell. However this was all over the engine of his pick-up.

It would be a little out of the way but if Sue wasn't to Salina yet, she could get on I-70 and retrieve him. Russell is a logistical nightmare for us---you can't get there from here; not in a straight line on a paved road!

I called Sue, she was agreeable. Junior decided to buy oil and see if he could make some progress back north. The plan was: Sue would get off at Wilson and head north. In my mind Junior would head east when he got to K-18, meeting Sue at Luray. His idea was he would head west to Natoma and take the rock road straight north!

Sue had a rental car. Did she want to drive 50 miles on rock roads??? If only the strong survive I'm a little worried

because sometimes I can barely summon the courage to drive 4 miles to town.

The exchange at Wilson was closed so Sue soldiered on. The next exit promised she would find the Lake Wilson. She did, but she could not find her way to K-18. She retreated to I-70, on to Russell. With Junior heading west on K-18, it was no longer on her way.

After getting on to K-18 he stopped to check the oil and realized he best park the pickup and wait. Meantime I took a nap! They arrived home sometime between four and five.

Sue described the ordeal to family and friends ending the saga with these words, "I found Junior in Paradise!"

Hey---she stole my line. Maybe I never said it but I thought it many a time.

Putting the best spin on it, my solace lies in the fact my loved ones found each other in Paradise yet returned to earth!

The wind calmed down and (I'm not plagiarizing, I just don't know who to attribute it to): "We're one day closer to a good rain!"

Call Dana for your next ad. 877-3361!

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