

## Lobbying bill going nowhere

A bill in the Kansas Senate this year that would have prohibited lobbying by public agencies and local government apparently has gone nowhere fast.

While there are interesting arguments on both sides of this issue, it's hard to believe that lobbyists from cities, counties and school districts always represent the interests of "their constituents" when they gather at the Statehouse.

They represent the interests of their employers and/or members as public officials and public agencies, and that can be far different.

Public officials often want to spend more taxpayer money, for one thing, and their constituents may or may not agree with that. But when a city or county hires a lobbyist to argue for the ability to spend more on something, or make it easier to borrow money or raise taxes, there's usually no consulting the voters first.

In fact, the taxpayers' interests seldom come to the fore in these discussions – and may be diametrically opposed to the interests of public officials.

A lot of public-agency or local-government lobbying is conducted by associations which owe no allegiance to the voters. These associations, and their staffs, are beholden only to the municipal, county and school officials who elect them and hire them and keep them in office.

Their interest is in keeping their jobs and representing *their* constituents, the public officials who pay and hire them.

That doesn't make these groups bad per se, but it doesn't make them representatives of the voters, either. And while you'd think the legislators themselves would represent the voters, many of them are former city, county and school officials who see things much the same way these groups do.

When the lobbyists for local government come to the Capitol seeking a change in state law or to block a bill that might make it more difficult to raise taxes, it's hard to see them as representing taxpayers.

The same goes for state agencies that try to influence legislation. The Department of Revenue, say, may have an interest in increasing the tax take by changing certain rules. Who represents the taxpayers then?

Another thing local-government associations often want is more secrecy. These groups typically oppose changes in open meetings and open records acts to make information more accessible to taxpayers. They push to ease requirements for publication of public documents, reports on public spending and the like, and back proposals to allow local government to hide their "publications" on obscure city or county websites.

Voters pretty clearly need and want more information, not less, and these "public" lobbyists are not representing them in Topeka when they do this.

The idea of SB 109, which would have banned use of any public money to lobby the Legislature, may seem a little harsh, but in the current system, taxpayers' needs generally get lost among the wants and desires of their elected officials.

Democracy is best served by open government, a free flow of information and a regard for the voters' and taxpayers' interest that is largely lacking when local governments spend taxpayer money to lobby. It's a system that should be changed.

There should be severe limits on how a government agency can spend money taken from taxpayers in ways they may not approve.

On the  
Prairie Dog  
Steve Haynes



Steve Haynes



## Random acts of terrorism anywhere

A weekend email suggested I turn my attention to Benghazi, since I don't understand background checks.

First off, I would clarify one thing. I believe any attack on U.S. citizens, at home or abroad, is a terrorist attack. A terrorist is defined as someone who invokes extreme fear as a means of coercion. I don't think it matters if you are hiding in a closet in Libya or huddling in a classroom in Connecticut, you are being terrorized. I think, from Aurora to Tucson to 9-11 to Benghazi, all victims died at the hands of terrorists.

In our quest for answers, let's not forget the ultimate responsibility, the perpetrators of these crimes, the terrorists themselves. The events leading up to the attack hold clues and are more critical for preventing further attacks, than any subsequent actions.

The last years of the Bush presidency and throughout the Obama presidency there has been a call, from both administrations, to increase spending for embassy/outpost security. Congress,

Phase II  
Mary Kay  
Woodyard



however, chose to cut funding. Ask school officials what a budget cut of 10 percent does to a program and you get the picture.

The GOP demand to appoint another committee smacks of politics. If an investigation does not turn up the desired results, we appoint yet another committee. Sounds like government, doesn't it? Former Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton, as the head of the State Department, has already taken full responsibility. The initial investigating committee combined career diplomats and military personnel reflective of both parties. They made recommendations and found fault with lower level State Department

employees and procedures, however it failed to blame Democrats, therefore it must have been a faulty investigation.

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates served in many positions in several Republican administrations. At the request of President Obama, he continued as Defense Secretary in the current administration for two and a half years. His reaction to the response on Benghazi,

"Frankly had I been in the job at the time, I think my decisions would have been just as theirs were... I've heard 'Well, why didn't you just fly a fighter jet over and try and scare 'em with the noise or something?' Well, given the number of surface-to-air missiles that have disappeared from Qaddafi's arsenals, I would not have approved sending an aircraft, a single aircraft, over Benghazi under those circumstances."

He went on to say that those suggestions were a "cartoonish impression of military capabilities." Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

### Letter to the Editor,

A comment about Dana's story in the Fridays Telegram about the cat problem in Norton.

First off, I'm an animal lover. The kind of person that will stop for a squirrel crossing the street! I do believe we have a large number of feral cats in Norton. But I fear the article has opened the flood gates on killing cats in Norton. Whether it's a feral cat or someone's pet.

We have a Cat Problem! See a Cat, Kill a Cat!

A lot of people can remember Bob Barker from the Price is Right, closing every show saying, "Control the pet population...Have your pet spayed or neutered." That in itself is the answer to the cat population in Norton. As any pet owner knows it's NOT cheap taking your pet or any animal to the vet. Our new kitten's first trip to the Vet cost nearly \$200 dollars. It's not an expense most people are willing to pay for. So how do you get the owners to take responsibility?

Have the City offer spayed and or neutering for under \$25 dollars. Or better yet free twice a year.

Puff! In a couple of years, no more population problem.

You say, we can't afford it. Do the math! \$50 for lethal injection, for the feral cats you can catch. Or stop the problem at its source.

I also believe there is grant money available from different societys to help with such a mission.

Martin Harrington



## The wonder, strength and beauty of a new born child

The financial company, Trans America, recently launched a new ad campaign, featuring the question, "When did it become real for you?"

A man leaning over a bassinette says, "When I gave him my father's name."

My new grand baby has both grandfathers' names: Morris Eugene! He is real; arriving safely May 7. With apologies to Miss Manners ("Babies are not produce") he weighed in at 7# 2 ounces, 20 1/2 inches long.

Charles Osgood said: "Babies are always more trouble than you thought--and more wonderful." Morris is indeed wonderful

Jill Woodhull said: "Don't ever tell the mother of a newborn that her baby's smile is just gas."

Don't tell Jill but maybe babies are smiling about gas! Smiles come from pleasure and happiness. Maybe babies just haven't learned to filter their smiles. Sometimes a little gas feels good. A lot is downright hilarious! Hasn't she ever been around adolescent boys? Or men of any age?

How great it would be if we all smiled and laughed or even cried out of reflex, instead of hiding our feelings. The world would be a better place.

Clarence Day said: "Babies are unreasonable; they expect far too much of existence. Each new generation that comes takes one look at the world,

This Too  
Shall Pass  
Nancy  
Hagman



thinks wildly, 'Is this all they've done to it?' and burst into tears."

There is nothing like a baby to increase one's resolve to make the world a better place. Thomas Paine said: "If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace."

Tony Woodlief said, "Parents carry two buckets: one full of things we hope to teach them, and one full of things we hope they never learn from us."

Such are my thoughts, prayers, hopes and wishes as I contemplate my role in Morris' life.

The birth of a child is a time of demanding physical changes for mother and child and conflicting emotions for all involved. We are filled with anxious joy. Morris has ten fingers and ten toes. He appears perfect. We are proud to proclaim him as ours.

September 19, 1985 there was a devastating earthquake in Mexico City. One week later seven newborn babies were found alive in the rubble of a

hospital. It is thought they survived because without stimulation they remained quiet and calm as though they were still in the womb. They expended so little energy the fact they were not fed did not harm them. Only one baby lost more than the accepted ten percent from birth weight.

This event closely coincided with Patricia's, (Morris' mother) birthday, September 12, 1985. Upon hearing of those babies I recall looking at her and contemplating what a miracle life is!

I sometimes thought of those earthquake babies as my children grew up and away. The wonder of what their father and I created, what we claimed as ours was ours to nurture and protect for far too short a time. Ultimately their lives belong to them. They were stronger than I could hope or they could know.

When I was a child my father read to us every night. The Winnie the Pooh series by A.A. Milne was a favorite.

I would like to say to Morris as Christopher Robin said to Winnie the Pooh: "Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe and stronger than you seem and smarter than you think."

I will be forever grateful to be your grandmother! Have a wonderful life!

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A huge thumbs up to the adults and teens who helped the little tracksters practice and prepare for the Norton Rec Track Meet last weekend! It was a wonderfully successful day, and the coaches time and efforts were very appreciated! Emailed in.

Exceptionally good and entertaining vocal concert by the NCHS and NJHS choirs on Monday night! Great job students and Ms. C. Emailed in.