

The system won't allow it

On the Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



Editorialists wailed and gnashed their teeth.

Kansas, they said, could become a dictatorship when Gov. Sam Brownback got his friends in control of both houses of the Legislature. He'd be able to pass any bill he wanted, and that would be too much power for any one man.

The governor's agenda would have "smooth sailing" during the 2013 session, one "expert" predicted.

Ha!

Anyone who thought that might happen hasn't spent much time around legislatures or politics. There's a dynamic that makes senators and representatives independent from the governor, and one house poles apart from the other, no matter who's in office.

In fact, that's what the Founding Fathers hoped for when they created our three-part government, featuring executive, judicial and legislative branches sharing power in a rough balance.

No branch completely trusts the other, each is jealous of its independence and all fear one of the others might become too powerful. Each house of a legislature eyes the other with suspicion, casting a wary eye on the other side.

That's just the way things are, even when all three are run by members of the same party and even when, as the governor and his allies did last fall, one group becomes more powerful and gangs up on another.

The governor and other conservatives campaigned successfully to oust liberal Republican senators who blocked many of Mr. Brownback's plans in the Senate. The old Senate leadership was ousted, replaced by a group closer to the governor's way of thinking. The Democrats, as usual in Kansas, were left with too few votes to count much.

So, this year, everyone expected great (or terrible) things from a new conservative alliance dominating the Statehouse. It never works that way, though.

The governor and many legislators saw eye to eye on many things, and his new allies in the Senate backed his plan to hold onto much of the remaining state spending while continuing to cut income taxes. Cuts would be paid for by retaining a 1-cent increase on the state sales tax passed under Gov. Mark Parkinson which otherwise would have expired next year.

Some reporters billed this as a \$700-million tax increase, though tax rates were going down, not up. The House balked, though, mostly because conservatives there felt they have made a promise to let the sales tax go down.

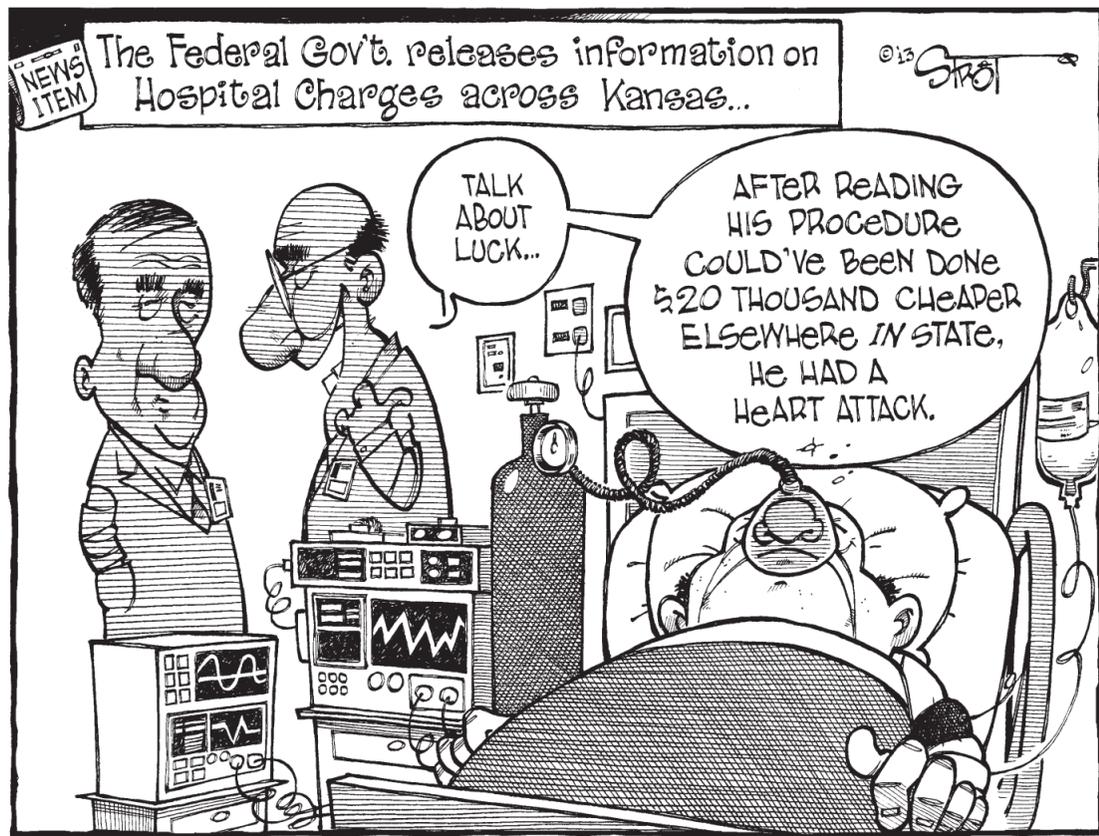
The deadlock left the session incomplete as the 80-day goal for adjournment leaders had announced came and went. Soon, the 90-day limit set by law passed. Still no agreement.

Finally the houses compromised, shaving the sales tax to 6.15 percent and setting a schedule for further income-tax cuts. So much for the governor's unlimited power.

Will Kansas be better off for the changes pushed by Gov. Brownback? Only time will tell. But for sure, we're in no danger of him becoming some sort of all-powerful dictator.

The system just won't allow that.

— Steve Haynes



Nothing is ever as it seems

I remember being in awe of our country a few days after the 9/11 attacks. Once again, the skies were filled with planes and those planes with passengers.

It said to me, "We are a nation of trust and we will not let a bunch of thugs deter our activities or limit our lifestyle."

A young NSA contract worker claims the government has gathered and stored sensitive data from our personal records. Whether he is a traitor or a hero remains to be seen. Although I do not approve of his tactics, it is good to have the debate over the PATRIOT Act reignited.

President Obama campaigned, both as a Senatorial candidate and a Presidential one, on limiting the powers of the USA PATRIOT Act. The initial Act was signed on October 26, 2001, shortly after the devastating attack on the Twin Towers. The acronym

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



substitutes for the wordy phrase, Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism. No, I didn't make that up. I'm sure only a politician could piece together such a phrase.

It was legislation formed out of fear and anger. It provided law enforcement, more particularly the agencies devoted to terrorism and national security, to collect information, much without court action. Federal agencies speak of the important data collected and the possible terrorist attacks averted

because of the PATRIOT Act.

I have opposed it since its inception, however it seems neither the President nor the majority of Americans share my concern. Is it harder to catch terrorists without the Act? I'm sure. Are we safer with the Act in place? One would think so, but the data gives no clear indication that we are.

President Obama has done little to limit the sweeping powers of the Act. Some of those who were involved in the writing of the law, now say they didn't intend for it to be so far reaching. Probably what they mean is they never intended for another administration to use it. Perhaps the two most important lessons we can take from this situation are 1.) Nothing is ever as it seems, and 2.) Just because we can change something, doesn't necessarily mean we should. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

The drama involved with preparing for a wedding

Is summer over yet?
110 degree weather, check!
Vacation, check!
What else could there be?
Oh yes, harvest!
Irrigating!
Wedding! In FIVE weeks!
I'm not panicking yet. Or maybe I am.

I called to get some appointments with the hair dresser for the bridesmaids. Sweet Erin, always looking out for me said, "What about you?"

Oh, no, says I. I cannot be sitting in a salon waiting for my hair to be done. I'll do it myself.

And she said, "How long does it take me to style your hair?"

Okay----pencil me in! Although, I'm still contemplating buying a hat or a wig or something!

Bride Elizabeth was listening to the conversation. She gave me the look, you know the take a deep breath, mom, look!

Well, one of us needs to worry a little don't you think?

The dress was easy. We're picking it up this week. Mai promised it would be cleaned, pressed and "aisle" ready!

I love the sound of that!

The bridesmaid's dresses are another

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



story!

Ordered from a website there was no way to try the color out! When I looked at "my cart" the picture indicated they were brown with champagne sashes. That was the default setting but also the colors we wanted.

I don't know how it happened but when they came one was brown with a champagne sash. The other was chocolate with a champagne sash.

The bride said it was fine with her if her sisters agreed. The sisters sweetly demurred, "We will wear burlap if that is what Elizabeth wants!" interesting, burlap seems to be a big trend in weddings at the moment, so it is a possibility!

All was well until Kate actually tried the brown dress on: Talk about drama!!!!

"I can't breathe! It hurts! I'm going to pass out!"

It looked lovely and we didn't have

to use a shoe horn to zip it. Why can't they all behave like a middle child?

Patricia just had a baby so I figured we'd wait awhile to try that dress out.

However, that dress was larger so just to get a handle on how it might work, Kate tried it on! I thought it looked big, but she was comfortable!

And everyone liked the chocolate color better so why not return the brown dress, order another chocolate dress and make everyone happy?

Great idea except even though I ordered the dresses by size off the rack, not by custom fit, the company had a strict no return policy on ALL dresses!

My stress level is high but I'm forever grateful I can sew. A little ripping revealed more than generous seam allowances. Those dresses will be aisle ready by 1:00 p.m., July 20, I guarantee! The ceremony isn't until 2:00!

Our vacation was our bi-annual cousins get together. When we planned the trip we did not know there would be a baby in May and a wedding in July. If I had known I would never have committed to an early June vacation.

But perhaps it was just what we all needed.

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