

## Governors plan to appoint judges, will it work

We will wait for history to judge Gov. Sam Brownback's plan to appoint Kansas judges, with approval from the state Senate, but the governor could and should have done a better job of setting up and selling his plan.

Kansas once elected Supreme Court judges, as some districts still do their trial-court judges. We gave that up for a supposedly better plan, where appellate judges were nominated by a panel made up mostly of lawyers, who supposedly know a good judge when they see one. It's an elitist scheme that has produced think-alike judges.

The governor got to choose from among a panel of three nominees to fill each post, but the process left the state's chief executive with little real power in the matter. Left completely out of the process were voters, who get only to approve "retention" of judges at the end of their terms. No judge has ever been bad enough to merit that sanction.

This year's Legislature changed the process, at least for judges of the state Court of Appeals, whose selection is governed by law. (Supreme Court judges are chosen by the same process, but under a section of the state Constitution, which cannot be so easily changed.)

First of all, after promising openness, the governor made his selection almost completely behind closed doors, revealing only the name of his ultimate nominee. Despite calls to disclose the names of other applicants, the governor refused, claiming that to do so would drive away qualified candidates.

Do we want a judge who can't stand public scrutiny, anyway?

While the way he went about the nomination is the same as governors have used to fill most state jobs for years, the secrecy looked bad when compared to the open nature of the old application process for judges. It just didn't look right, and there was no good reason not to keep an open list of applicants.

Then, the governor chose one of his closest associates to fill the first post. While there was nothing "wrong" with that, nothing illegal or unethical, and while the new judge, Caleb Stegall, seems well qualified, the appointment left both open to charges of cronyism. Mr. Stegall was the governor's office attorney and a close adviser.

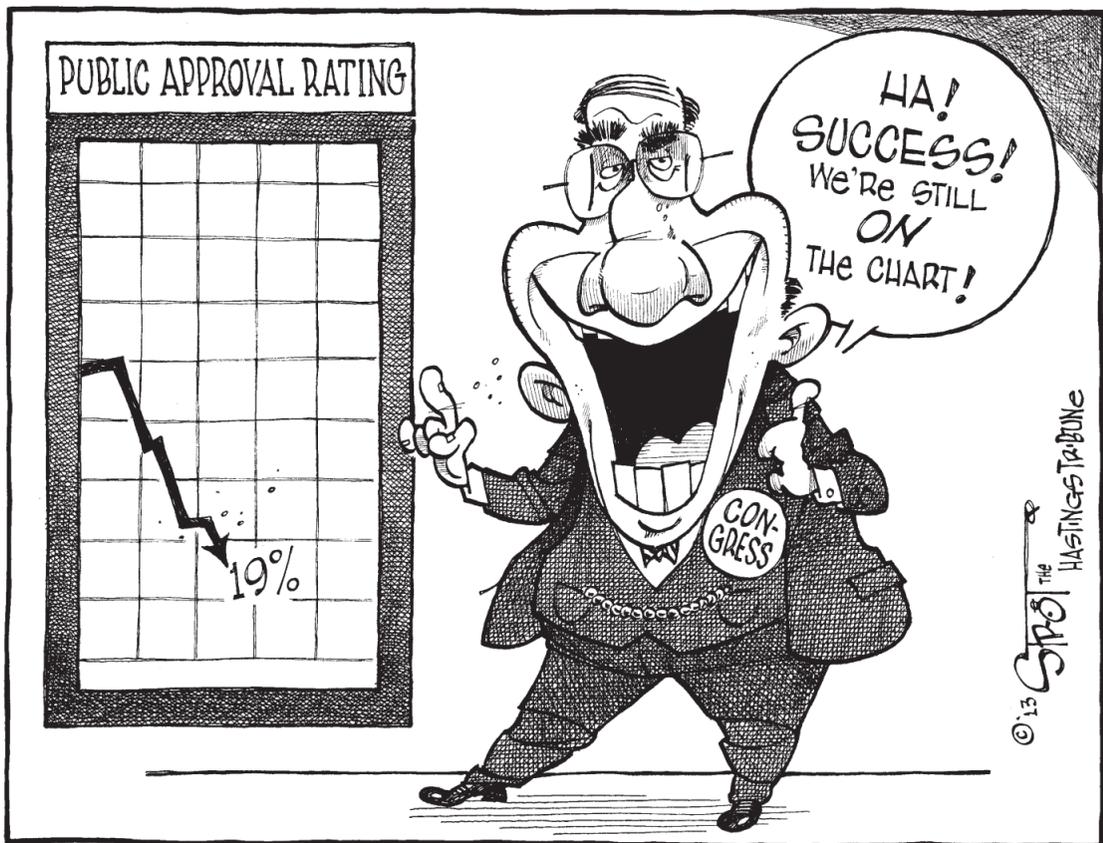
Better that the governor had chosen someone with more academic or judicial experience and fewer ties to him personally for the first seat.

While Sam Brownback is a good enough politician to have gotten elected to most everything he's run for, including the U.S. Senate twice, at the Statehouse, he's shown some ineptitude. His series of closed-door meetings with legislators last year, in possible violation of the state Open Meetings Act, showed that. While there was much argument about the possible violation, both he and the Legislature should have avoided even the appearance of impropriety.

Same with the judicial appointment. It just muddied the water for his change in the selection process. And government just runs better without this sort of thing.

— Steve Haynes

On the  
Prairie Dog  
Steve Haynes



## Too much time being spent at hospitals

Not that I'm much competition, but don't tell Gurney's or Burpee or any other seed house that I am in the mail-order seed business. Perhaps "business" is misleading. That would entail the exchange of money. Let's call it "seed distribution."

Who knew when I wrote about having an excess of hollyhock and cone flower seeds that so many would actually want them. I'm still filling orders, so if you sent that self-addressed, stamped envelope, I will get it returned. Promise.

-ob-

Normally Jim and I try to avoid hospitals. But recently we seem to spend an inordinate amount of time in them.

We've visited our nephew, Brian, at least once a week since his wreck a month ago which still has him in its rehab unit. One of our next-door neighbors had an episode that required her to spend two days in the hospital and I went to see her. And the patient in the room next door to her was an old friend of mine, so I got two visits for the price of one.

Finally, Jim had gall bladder surgery last week. He had never had the typical, painful attacks associated with gall bladder trouble, but it was contributing to other symptoms and the advice was, "It had to go."

So "go" it did. He had to have the old fashioned incision due to so many previous surgeries, but he is recuperating

Out Back  
Carolyn Plotts



very fast and is itching to get back to work. He only had to stay in the hospital overnight. His doctor said he could be miserable at home as easily as he could be miserable in the hospital. That 32-hour stay still gave him time to get plenty of sleep and tease his nurses.

Bless their hearts. They all laughed at the silly joke he told every one. He asked them, "You know what an EEG is?" They, of course, would answer that they did.

Next he asked, "And you know what an EEG is, right?" They all nodded in the affirmative.

Then he asked, "But do you know what an EEG is?" Looking a little baffled, none of them knew what it was.

Then he would delight to tell them, "That's what these hospital gowns are....EEK!"

-ob-

One more hospital story and then I hope I can quit for awhile. Jim was out of surgery and I had texted and phoned friends and family that he had come through with flying colors.

Later in the day, Jim's sister, Mary, called. When I answered, I didn't even say, "Hello," I immediately began to tell her that I was just about to call her with an update.

Mary said, "No, no. I was calling to tell you that my son has been in a wreck and he's on his way in an ambulance to the hospital you're in."

I promised Mary that I would wait by the Emergency Room and give her a status report as soon as he got there. But I waited and I waited. Nothing. Finally, I asked at the desk and they had no record of any accident admissions nor of any ambulance enroute with an accident patient.

Right then Mary called to tell me he had been taken to a different hospital. Whew! What a relief. I didn't know how I was going to tell her I couldn't find her son.

We went right by that hospital on our way home so, of course, we had to stop and see Jim's nephew. It turned out to be a longer walk than we expected and with Jim just out of surgery he began to have second thoughts about the wisdom of our drop-in visit. However, I stopped a nurse in the hall, explained our situation and he quickly found us a "loaner" wheelchair to complete the trek.

I know we'll go visit Brian again, but for the time being, I don't need to see another hospital for quite awhile.

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Thumbs up to Teresa Schulze for Kansas Teacher of the Year. This as an honor to our school. Your outstanding work and dedication to your students and USD 211 do not go unnoticed Mrs. Schulze. Brought in.

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.

## Farmers ask to make the farm bill a top priority

Talk to anyone in farm country and next to concerns about the need for more rain, the farm bill remains at the top of the list of things Congress must do before the end of the year.

Unfortunately, the farm bill doesn't seem to be a priority in our nation's capital. At the present time Congress is mired firmly in the matter of whether we use military action in Syria.

With every passing day, the likelihood of a farm bill extension increases. The current extension of 2008 farm program authority expires September 30.

The fly in the ointment has become the continued debate over whether the bill must include nutrition programs and the formation of a conference committee to work out differences between the Senate and House versions of the proposed bills.

Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts told a full house at the Farm Bureau leadership breakfast during last week's State Fair the farm bill debate is a perfect storm.

"The Senate won't pass a farm bill without what they consider to be an appropriate food stamp program," he said.

Roberts promised to do what he can to protect, preserve and strengthen crop

Insight  
John Schlageck



insurance and to stop using it as a bank for other programs.

Allowing the current extension to expire is not an option, he added. This would leave the 1949 farm bill to fill the void. If that happens, farmers and consumers will be in trouble because programs from conservation to research will disappear.

Policy reforms, such as a larger role for crop insurance as part of the farm safety net, more equity across crops and increased support for fruit and vegetable growers, will not be possible if the current farm bill is extended.

In addition, some commodity prices could soar because they would be tied to farm productivity from the 1940s. Milk, as an example, could double or triple at the supermarket.

"I don't want to go back down the road where farmers plant for the gov-

ernment rather than planting for the market," the Kansas' senior senator said.

A new farm bill will provide farmers the certainty they need to plan their crops and obtain financing. This is the number one reason a new farm bill must be hammered out in Washington. Another extension will not do so.

Additionally, a new farm bill provides stability to an industry buffeted by volatile weather conditions, erratic world commodity prices and international trade scenarios that cause spikes and valleys in world food markets.

It also helps ensure this nation's domestic food supply. Every U.S. citizen benefits from quality, affordable food.

Consumers understand deep in the pocket what it feels like to be dependent on oil from the Middle East. The farm bill ensures Americans can depend on American farmers to feed them.

Since the Second World War, nearly all nations help their farmers in one way or another. The United States does so with its farm bill.

"We need a bill, we'll get a bill, rest assured, with your help we'll live to fight another day," Roberts said. "We'll try to make this farm bill more market oriented as we go down the road."

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