

## Is the governor's plan better than what we had

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.

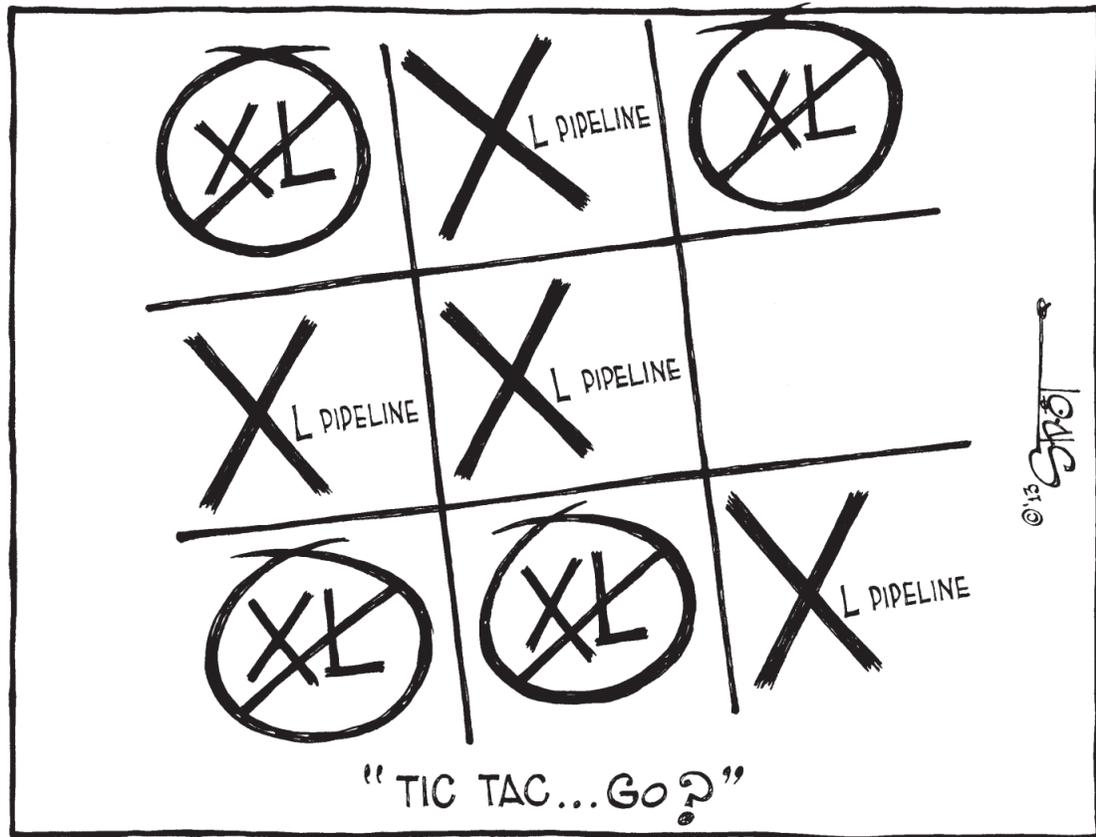
Then, the governor chose one of his closest associates to fill the first post. While there was nothing "wrong" with that, nothing illegal or unethical, and while the new judge, Caleb Stegall, seems well qualified, the appointment left both open to charges of cronyism. Mr. Stegall was the governor's office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

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



## We are part of the problem

So what can I write about today? The elephant in the House? It is hard to ignore the current event at the forefront of the news. I said last week if any of us thinks our party is blameless in this fiasco, we are part of the problem. The stalemate reminds me of when two of my young sons were fighting nonstop. My breaking point came the day after school recessed for the summer. My solution? I sat them facing each other on their respective twin beds. I told them I didn't care if they sat there all summer, they weren't coming out until they could get along. It worked. Within about 45 minutes they were playing together like long lost friends and a peaceful summer ensued.

This is the 18th government shut down. I understand how government workers feel. I can remember that "kicked in the gut" feeling of wonder-

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



ing if and for how long Jack might be furloughed. It is not a good feeling.

At the heart of these budget talks is the push to dismantle Obamacare, even though it was the primary issue of President Obama's campaign and his re-election. The Supreme Court has upheld its constitutionality. Is it the best plan for universal healthcare? Not a one of us knows, but it is a start. After its passage, then we can fine tune based on the public's evaluation.

Fiscal accountability is a driving force for both sides. It is the road we take that is a stumbling block. Thirty-one percent of voters say they see the Tea Party (TP) in a favorable light, over 54% are disenchanted with the group's message and see them unfavorably. So what exactly is the problem? We frequently speak of a generation feeling entitled. Entitled to the life they want, entitled to their own way, just entitled in general, and this is exactly what is happening now. Too many arrogant heads on one shared body.

The TP, although opposed to the current legislation, does not want Social Security or Medicare changed. Why? They, mainly 45-65ish, feel they paid into it and deserve it. See what I mean by entitled? mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

## You can't save them all

### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



We often find ourselves engaged in discussions about mental health. Why are there seemingly so many mass shootings? What causes autism? Why do so many young people find it difficult to transition from childhood to adulthood?

It is staggering to compare the difference in "markers" of adulthood: a career path job, marriage, parenthood and home ownership; for this generation versus any previous. Young men in particular are falling behind. The phenomenon manifests itself in social problems, lack of purpose and depression.

I have my own theory that many of these conditions were underdiagnosed previously. Also the "comfort" of modern living manifests behavioral disorders.

When society was largely agriculturally based children had lots of chores. Restless young boys may have had to milk cows or feed livestock before going to school. They might have been just a little tired by the time they sat down at a desk; grateful for a reprieve.

The school year was not as long and there was less to entertain kids outside of school. School was the place to establish friendships and relationships outside the family.

As we depend more and more on electronic communication, relationships do not develop as they did before the I-Phone and Facebook. Kids do not learn to interact face to face.

We have lots of information about others but we do not have the connection. We do not see the emotions of others. We are not sharing their experi-

ence.

I strongly feel when there were still frontiers; that is where the misfits went. They sailed the ships to the new world. They were the soldiers, cowboys and mountain men. Their lives were fraught with danger and many times ended prematurely.

They may have been considered expendable. Evidence? From an ad placed for Pony Express riders: "Young skinny wiry fellows not over eighteen. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred."

Temple Grandin, PH.D, is a professor at Colorado State University. She is an expert on livestock handling and responsible for countless improvements in pen and slaughter house design. She also has autism.

She was the subject of a 2010 HBO film. I highly recommend it. In July she gave two presentations in Dodge City: one for the livestock industry and one to speak out about autism.

At Dodge City Grandin said of autistic kids, "You've got to start teaching these kids work skills. We've got to start thinking more about what they can do when they grow up."

Additionally she said, "(Being) fixated on video games does not turn into a job."

"Then there's another (individual) who goes to the basement and plays video games and draws a Social Security check---that drives me insane."

Grandin believes other autistic individuals can find success in agriculture just as she has.

"These feedlots need the labor." She points to jobs like pen riders. "That would be a great job for somebody that's a little quirky."

A few years ago when awareness of autism was in its infancy, I read some quotes from a psychologist lamenting our need to label kids. It comes from the need to make education generic. One size fits all.

He pointed out the charm of eccentricities. "Whatever happened to being quirky?" he asked.

Indeed! They have always been with us. Some days "quirky" is a fair and generous description of everyone I know, including and especially myself!

There is value in attempting to predict behavior. It is perhaps worthwhile to dissect events and see if we can prevent similar tragedies.

But nowhere is our human frailty more apparent than when we decide we are going to fix everything. Sometimes our focus when dealing with troubled people is not what is best for them but what is best for us. It would be easier to manage the classroom if there were no disruptive students. It would be less embarrassing for me socially if my kid didn't act out. And so on.

As a dear compassionate friend once told me (after relaying a tale of woe, involving his ministering to a troubled person): "You can't save them all!"



Thumbs up to the City of Norton for the great mosquito eradication this year! Brought in.

Thumbs up to the city street crew for the terrific job they did cleaning out the drainage ditch at the corner of Middle Street and Sunset Drive. Called 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.

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