

Real crisis in education created by school lawsuit

Appalling. Greedy midsize school districts that have been pushing for more money have asked the Kansas Supreme Court to take over Kansas schools and order the Legislature to spend nearly a billion dollars more on education this year.

We hope the court will realize the wrongness of this position, but there are no guarantees in the crazy age we live in.

It's time for Kansas taxpayers to wake up. There is no crisis in education, except the one created by this lawsuit.

Kansas schools function well. They are among the best in the nation.

Sure, they could use more money. Couldn't we all?

But it's the Legislature's job to divide the pie, and the Legislature has done what it can for schools without raising taxes.

There is no way to get the billion dollars these greedy school districts want without a huge tax hike. The people running them don't care. They just want money.

Rural school districts and school boards ought to wake up, too.

The money the midsize districts want is the money our schools used to get for "low enrollment weighting." This is supposed to cover the extra costs of running a small, isolated district.

The latest school finance bill does away with this differential and covers it with a one-time increase in the per-pupil base. That's a scam that will come back to haunt rural schools.

To be fair, the midsize districts are not really out to destroy western Kansas schools, but we will suffer for their wants.

Their real targets are the growing, popular "ex urban" districts that surround city schools in Salina, Topeka, Wichita and other eastern cities. The districts lack the "city" problems like drugs, violence and crowding that plague larger districts. They draw students — and money — from city schools. And because of low-enrollment weighting, they get more money for each student.

City schools see this. They hate these smaller neighbors.

Make no mistake. This is not about the disadvantaged or the downtrodden. It's not about minority students or special education.

It's the money. And if we don't do something now, our schools out here won't have any.

The way our government is supposed to work, the Legislature decides how to spend the state's money and how much to tax citizens. Not the courts.

Unless we want to be taxed to death, that's the way it should stay.

The Supreme Court needs to keep out of school finance and let the Legislature do its job.

This is a money issue, not a legal problem, and the court needs to see that.

Otherwise, we are facing a constitutional crisis in this state.

—Steve Haynes

Make every gas dollar count

The other night, I asked Jim to take me someplace expensive. He did. To the gas station.

Did you ever think you would live to see the day when \$2-a-gallon gas sounded like a bargain? I hate to be the voice of gloom and doom, but prices are expected to peak at \$2.35 a gallon this summer.

A very smart lady talked to me the other night when we were eating at a local restaurant. I know she was smart, because she agreed with me. She, too, had been practicing the "slow down" theory of gas consumption. She is a stay-at-home, home-schooling mom who can make a tank of gas last more than a week.

I can't top that, but I am definitely getting more miles out of each fillup. Jim sleeps while I drive, anyway. This way he gets a longer nap.

—ob—
For some time, Jim and I have discussed the pros and cons of eliminating television from our lives. We have lots of friends who have done it, and their lives seem better for the change. We're both kind of "news junkies" and couldn't bear the thought of life without "Fox and Friends" or Bill O'Reilly. Jim is a history nut, and I can't get enough of "Decorating Cents" and "Clean Sweep."

One week, two days, four hours and 19 minutes ago, we decided to go "cold turkey" and give up television.

Actually, that's not quite true. To say "we decided" is somewhat of a misnomer. The satellite company actually decided for us. I guess I misplaced the bill (it got lost on the



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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table), it didn't get paid and our reception was discontinued. After much discussion, our decision was to NOT hock the family sterling to get enough money together to have the service restored within the hour.

It's going pretty well. We're rediscovering the art of conversation. Jim says something, I reply. Then I say something, he responds. It's really quite something.

I'm reading a book. I love to read. Always have. But, over the years, I claimed to never have enough time to read. It's true. I didn't have enough time ... I was wasting it all watching TV.

I'm not to the point where I'm ready to say, "Sell the TV set! We're never watching it again." But, I think we're both ready to say, "Let's not ever allow that little box to control our lives again."

—ob—
Did you remember we are feeding

two baby calves? From the first day we had them, Jim began calling one Suzy-Q, which left the other needing a moniker. Our granddaughter Alexandria usually names them, but she conceded when a friend, who demanded to remain anonymous, came up with a name for the other calf. He suggested Barby. You know, Barby-Q.

It stuck. But out of respect, and so they don't get nervous, we just call them Suzy and Barby.

From the Bible

Therefore you shall love the Lord your God and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, His commandments always.

Deuteronomy 11:1



Latest cat snack not appreciated

One of my cats killed the Easter bunny.

How do I know this? I found its headless little body in the middle of my sitting room Saturday morning.

This was not the first body that I've attributed to the feline contingent in our house. All the others, however, have been birds. Most of them have been dead, but at least two were alive, and I was able to capture and release them outside.

While the dead birds presented quite a feather-removal problem, the rabbit was worse.

There was blood all over my new tan carpet.

I was, shall we say, less than thrilled.

Since I was on my way to work, I removed the body, using some tissues, to the wastebasket and removed the plastic liner to the back porch.

Since then, I've been checking every red spot of lint in the house to see if it's a blood stain. So far, it's only the carpet in the sitting room. I'm not sure how the cat — whichever one it was — got a half-grown rabbit without a head up the newly carpeted stairs without getting any blood on them, but apparently it did.

Steve and I have washed out the evidence using cold water and carpet cleaner, but every time he passes



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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through the sitting room, he chuckles and says something about, "I told you so."

He did warn me. In fact, everyone warned me.

"You put in a cat door," they said, "and you'll have more than cats coming in."

I thought they meant skunks, raccoons or maybe a toy poodle.

I took care of those problems by putting the door up near the rafters in the basement. A cat can easily get up and down, but a skunk or poodle would have trouble. I'm not sure about raccoons. I just didn't think we had too many of those in town.

Of course, as soon as the first dead bird appeared on the kitchen floor, there was laughter and "I-told-you-sos."

Actually, dead things aren't too much of a problem for me. I can deal with dead.

I'm not too fond of living things, however.

Birds I can handle, but I dread the day they bring in a rat, mouse or a bat.

The cats have caught and killed several bats over the past few years, and the last one they left on the back porch hissed at Steve when he walked past.

I don't do bats. Neither am I crazy about live mice or rats.

I had a cat that brought a live rat into the house once, about 30 years ago. I screamed. The cat looked up and dropped the rat, which immediately ran under a bookcase.

Needless to say, it was a long night. In the end, the cat and rat were both put out.

I'm not looking for a repeat of that process, but since I'm the one who has to change the cat box — and with the cat door, there's a lot less to change — I still like that cat door.

I just wish they'd keep them off the new carpet, please.

Democracy taken for granted

Americans prize our democracy, but sometimes we seem to take it for granted.

In our region, there are dozens of townships, small towns, school districts, even cities the size of Oberlin where no one bothers to file for office.

Local office doesn't pay very well, if at all. Some entities, such as smaller townships, don't do very much.

People complain about the lack of interest, but nothing much changes.

Most towns and schools eventually get a full compliment of board members. Most of these boards to an admirable job.

But why don't people care enough to run?

Why do so many incumbents stand for re-election unopposed?

Does anybody really care?

Here's a proposition that would get people out to run for office.

Let's make it state law that for any county, city, school district, township or special board where no one files for each seat in an election, that district, city or county stands to be dissolved.

There would be a question on the ballot, "Should this 'name of entity' be dissolved according to the law of the State of Kansas?"



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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Oh, I can hear the howls already. But it would put voters to the test. Do they care?

Do they want the schools to stay open? The township to grade roads? The city to maintain its services?

Or would it be better just to let things go?

My guess is few questions would ever make it to the ballot, at least in cities and school districts.

There might be some townships that would just go away. A few school districts have dissolved already, though not for lack of interest.

People loved them. Lack of kids did them in.

The way things are, people get elected to some boards with just a few write-in ballots. That's not the way democracy is supposed to work.

Voters don't really have much of a choice. Things usually work out,

sometimes surprisingly well. But we can do better.

It allows small groups to get together under the radar and plot things out. Voters don't know what to expect. A few people can "railroad" a stealth campaign and get a slate elected with a minority of the vote.

It may be legal, but it's not good government.

If a town or school faced dissolution, my guess is people would get their names on the ballot. Voters would know what is coming. Interest would increase, and elections would mean more to the average person.

If not, people could vote yes or no on the district or township.

And if no one cared, then we'd be rid of some excess governmental baggage.

And that might not be all bad, either.

Support child safety with ribbon

To the Editor:
April is Child Abuse Awareness Month. During this month and throughout the year, the Decatur County Interagency Council is dedicated to raising awareness about child abuse and neglect and what each one of us can do to help keep children safe.

Throughout the month, coalition members will be passing out blue ribbons to raise awareness of positive steps that can be taken to prevent child abuse.

Letter to the Editor

Please wear a blue ribbon to support a standard that every child should grow up in a loving, safe, nurturing home.

For information on programs and how you can help prevent child abuse, call Roxy Cabral, Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center, at (785) 462-8152, or Pastor

Charlotte Strecker-Baseler, Decatur County Stand Against Violence, at (785) 475-2053.

Where's your blue ribbon?
Peg Smith, member
Decatur County Stand Against Violence

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