

Congress clings to pork despite pleas for change

Well, so much for doing away with earmarks, the convoluted system by which congressmen and senators slip money for their districts into the bowels of government spending bills.

Despite lofty arguments, and demands from many citizens, the Senate voted 71-29 to kill a bill which would have banned the practice. After that vote, Speaker Nancy Pelosi saw the light and quietly shelved plans for House action.

Last year, members of Congress gave out \$18 billion in this pork, ensuring their own popularity back home. One problem is the same voters who say they're offended by this kind of spending often demand it.

As with many things in public life, your view of earmarks may depend on whether your ox is being gored. Everyone decries "wasteful" spending in someone else's home town.

Thus, conservative Oberlin voters might laugh at the infamous "Bridges to Nowhere" in Alaska, serving an island with 51 residents, while in the same breath praising a member who would write an earmark to build a new airport runway.

Many earmarks, in fact, support worthy projects. It's the system of uncontrolled spending, where any individual member can spend millions with little or no review, that bothers us.

Oberlin's airport project, for instance, has a lot of state and federal support, but it could take several years to get the \$5 million or more needed for the job following normal procedures.

An earmark could get it done in a year.

With uncontrolled earmarks, though, there's no guarantee that every project is worthy. Far from it.

Part of the problem is that in Congress, you can attach any law to any bill. There's no requirement that amendments be "germane" to the main bill.

Thus, a civil rights change can be slipped into a defense bill, bypassing committee hearings and public scrutiny and a possible presidential veto. Spending measures, like earmarks, can be put in any appropriations bill without scrutiny — and without veto.

Another problem is that, unlike many state governors, a president has no power to pick out parts of a bill to block. This so-called "line-item veto" for spending bills could quickly end earmark abuse, but Congress isn't about to reduce its own power by giving some to the president.

In this case, though, it'd be a good idea. The line-item veto could shave billions off the federal deficit.

But we've already seen that our congressmen and senators value their spending power — and the magic it gives them at election time — far more than they value fiscal sanity.

The system in Washington depends on spending and more spending to keep incumbents comfortably in power. Until we, the people, demand change, it won't happen.

And unless we refuse to be bought off with earmarks, we can't have the change we should be shouting for.

Or should we wait until we get that runway built? — *Steve Haynes*

Every minute in her plans

After this next week, I should be fully qualified as a cruise ship activities director.

On board a ship, I've heard, every waking moment is scheduled. As I planned a week-long trip to see family and friends, I don't think I've spared one single minute.

I almost forgot to save time for sleep.

We had promised my cousin Barb that we would help her and her husband Art move to western Kansas from Alton, Ill. They live only two hours from where Jim's son James is, so we made plans to see him.

And of course, since we were practically in the neighborhood, we decided to visit dear friends in central Wisconsin.

If you know anything at all about geography, you know that Wisconsin is a long ways from southern Illinois.

After studying our route on the map, Jim said, "I feel like a billiard ball ricocheting off the side of the table."

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It was good to see my cousin after all these years. The last time we saw each other was at my mom's



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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funeral.

I can't believe that after 10 years, the first words out of my mouth to her were, "Oh my gosh. You look so much like your mom." To which she replied, "I think you look like G'ma Davison."

It's true for both of us. The family gene pool runs deep and strong.

We laughed and talked and ate. Our husbands hit it off, talking sports. I think we're going to have great fun.

Barb keeps reminding me she's a city girl. More than once she's asked me, "Are there any snakes out there?"

"Yes, but none in town," I answered her.

No sense telling her about the rattler sightings last summer. She also doesn't need to know about the

occasional skunk or raccoon that wanders into the city limits.

She'll learn soon enough.

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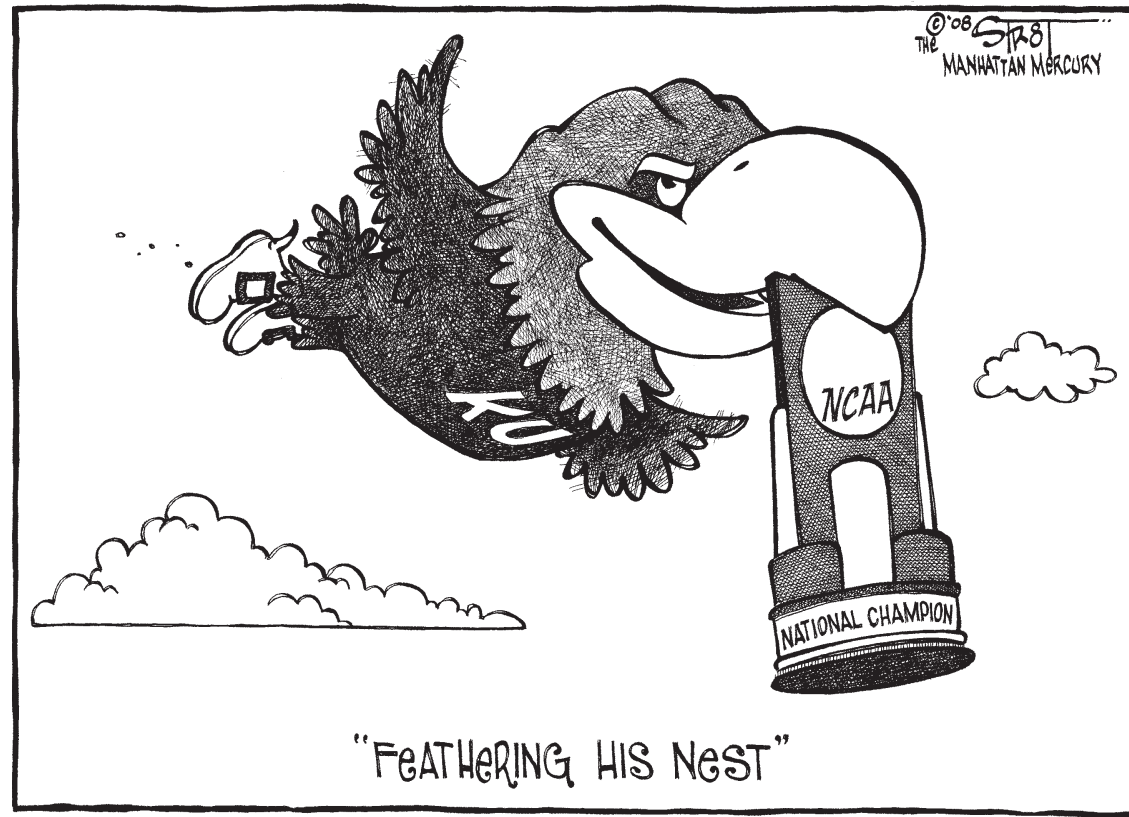
By the time most of you see this in print, we will have Barb and Art's belongings loaded on a rental truck and be headed west.

The first day, we'll drive to my brother Jim's home. After a short visit with him and Linda, the next day we'll come the rest of the way.

Hopefully, we'll have Barb and Art settled in their new home by sundown. So, if you see a nice-looking man and a woman who looks like my Aunt Bernice taking a walk with the biggest chocolate Labrador retriever I've ever seen, stop and say, "Welcome to town."

From the Bible

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?
1 John 4:20



Is it spring? Check tomorrow

Has spring sprung, or did it just peek around the corner and run away?

While it didn't seem very springy last week, I wore a pair of sandals. I almost froze my toes off — and that was before it snowed.

Still, I keep looking around for those telltale signs that spring has indeed arrived despite the vagaries of the weather.

The wheat crop is a pretty good indication of the time of year. When it gets all green and furry looking, spring is here.

Other good signs are the red-wing blackbirds. When those fellows start showing up to build a nest and raise a family, summer can't be far behind.

The male red-wing finds a conveniently tall weed, fence post or low branch to perch on while guarding his nest. In the spring, these guardians can be seen along the highways, keeping a close eye out for predators in the wheat fields.

Robins, of course, are a good sign of spring, but give me a row of red-wing blackbirds guarding their homes anytime.

Mr. Robin's just a show off. The redwings are heeding the call of duty to protect their home and their children.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Another sign of spring is noisy nights.

On Saturday, we were headed home from Junction City and we could hear the first frogs of summer. While it snowed out here, it just rained in central Kansas, and the frogs took the resulting puddles as a sign it was time to come out of hibernation and start croaking.

I just hope when it got colder that night, they were smart enough to dig back into the mud — if not to go back into hibernation, at least for a little nap.

Out in my yard, the daffodils are blooming — the ones along the wall, the ones in the back yard, those along the front porch, and even the ones in the lily beds.

I know that the crocus is supposed to be the first spring flower, but the ones in my yard are so tiny and spread out they're hardly noticeable. The daffodils come a little

later, but they make a brave show and can be seen from both the street and my bedroom window.

When I look outside in the morning, it's spring in my back yard. At least after the snow melts.

Then, of course, there are people's allergies. As the trees do a spring fling with their pollen, half the population seems to be sneezing, wheezing and grabbing for a tissue. You can really tell that spring is in the air when the sale of decongestants jumps at the drug store.

So I'm sure that spring is here.

I know it. I'm ready. I've got my pink, yellow and light-blue sleeveless dresses, my capri pants, my sandals and my tank tops ready. Now, would someone explain to Mother Nature that it's time to bring on the warm weather.

The blackbirds, the frogs and I are getting impatient.

People could help cemetery

To the Editor,
Alan Boyle followed the flight of the Cheyenne Indians from Oklahoma to Nebraska in his book, "Holding Stone Hands."

Oberlin was the only community he wrote about, and of the cemetery he wrote, "the cemetery at Oberlin is as pretty as the rest of the handsome town. The cool, manicured trees might be mistaken for a park."

Financed and maintained solely by the city of Oberlin, the cemetery is the final resting place for a majority of county residents. With its links to the history and culture of the community, it is an important part of our social fabric, a place where we all leave a "footprint on history."

With the foregoing in mind, the city council has developed a long-range plan for landscaping, growth and maintenance. The basis of the five programs is increased participation by citizens and community organizations in developing the cemetery as a positive asset and a place of remembrance. The following are the programs:

Letters to the Editor

•Heritage Program: Plan presently in place for new and replacement tree plantings around the periphery, roads, memorial area, parking areas and both sides of Martin Avenue. The trees are purchased by the donor from the city, planted and maintained by the cemetery sexton.

•Heirloom program: For the older, more filled in sections. The original eastern section, with its scattered plantings on family plots, has a peaceful, pleasant park-like atmosphere. The newer section to the west is neat, flat, featureless and barren, almost baking on a hot summer day. New and replacement trees are purchased, planted and maintained on family plots or other areas by the donor with the supervision and advice of the sexton.

This was the practice in the early days of the cemetery and created the original park-like appearance. A balance needs to be maintained

between efficient grounds maintenance and family remembrance.

•Medallion Program: Encourages individual planting of peonies at ends of memorial stones by families. Contributes to the overall beauty of the cemetery, protects the dignity and solemnity of the final resting site from inanimate over-decoration, yet creates a living memorial to the person. Metal, ceramic and other hard ornaments make for increased difficult mowing time and present a danger to the mowing.

•Regency Program: Donor constructed, planted and maintained raised floral gardens throughout cemetery as circumstances and maintenance allow. Responsible individuals or organizations recognized.

•Hedge plantings around the un-walled boundaries of the cemetery.

Jay Anderson

Woman praises Lutheran pastor

To the Editor:
I am writing this letter to let everyone know how much I have appreciated having the Langness family as members of the Star Valley 4-H Club.

Pastor Richard Langness and his family have been a great asset to our club. They have participated in meetings, committees, mowing and any other activities the club has done. You can always count on them to be there.

I would like to say that Pastor Langness has represented his church, St. John's Lutheran, in the best way possible. The congregation can be proud to have someone like him as part of their church. Pastor Langness has always put his church first.

Even when his family was able to

attend events, he could not always do so because of his work. I have seen him be a wonderful husband to his wife and a loving father to his children. He shows respect and supports his wife Kim in things that she does. He has brought the kids to activities when Kim could not attend, and stayed home with sick kids so the rest could go.

He has always helped with setting up and putting things back after our meetings. He has never been too

proud to wash dishes, vacuum, or do anything else that needed to be done after a meeting.

I have never heard him say anything against his church or anyone in the community. He never complains. I believe he truly wants to do God's will and will seek God's guidance to do this. This is the person he has portrayed to the community through our 4-H Club. I am honored to know him and his family

Debra Helm, Norcat

News crew came on its own

To the Editor:
Just in case there is a misunderstanding about who knew what and when, the N-TV crew from Kearney, Neb., came to Jennings on

March 24. Jennings was one of the towns drawn for a video for "The Roads Less Traveled."

A Jennings citizen visited with the cameraman and suggested that he might like to visit the museum. The museum had no knowledge of this visit until the cameraman came in while Bob and I were working. We showed him around, and he was impressed.

The video was aired on Channel 13 on March 26 at 5, 6 and 10 p.m. The video was professionally done and a credit to the City of Jennings.

Heritage Associates of Jennings Czech Memorial Museum
Neoma Tacha, president

4-H work brings flowers

To the Editor:
I would just like to tell the Stick-To-It 4-H Club how much I appreciate the beautiful flowers that are blooming in front of the library and down at the park. All your work and effort last fall has blessed our community this spring.

Gladys Geis
Oberlin



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