

Raising the speed limit bad idea for rural areas

One of the worst bills to come up in the current session of the Kansas Legislature is one to raise the speed limit on four-lane divided highways to 75 mph.

This may sound like a feel-good exercise in freedom, allowing people to drive just a little faster, but it is a dagger aimed at the heart of our rural towns.

While it may be appealing to be able to get to Hays a few minutes faster, the net result will be to divert even more traffic off of two-lane highways, where the state has excess capacity out here, and concentrate it on the freeways. And those can get pretty crowded in some areas.

Less traffic on the two-lane roads means less business in our towns. And the towns on the Interstate already have most of the business as is.

On a trip to Kansas City, driving 75 mph rather than 70 might save 15 to 20 minutes. The change could cost rural Kansas towns millions in lost sales over the next decade. We doubt the time saving is worth the pain, but unfortunately, little consideration has been given to rural needs in this debate.

The 70 mph speed limit on Kansas freeways

and expressways was carefully thought out back in 1996, after the government finally allowed states to raise their limits. Sen. Stan Clark, who represented this area at the time, and other rural legislators crafted a 5 mph differential to keep some traffic on the two-lane roads.

Now that agreement is about to be undone by a bill that seemingly appeared out of nowhere. Most legislators voting today may never have heard of the agreement created back then, or the reasoning behind it.

Worse yet, the bill would effectively establish an 85 mph limit on our freeways. One provision would establish the “grace” allowance for speeders at 10 mph, rather than the 5 mph often used by officers today.

The combined result would be a 15 mph increase in the allowable speed on our Interstates and four-lane state routes. That’s way too much.

We’d all be better off – and safer – if we just leave things the way they are.

Rural towns have taken enough hits without this added insult. Leave the speed limit alone, please. — *Steve Haynes*

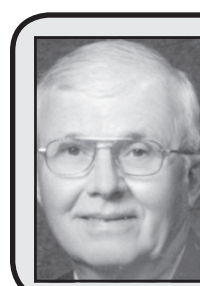


Demolition policies may relax

A Senate committee passed SB188, which would expand the Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s authority to approve the disposal of the demolition waste from buildings or structures at, adjacent to or near the site without a solid waste permit.

The bill also would add additional evaluation criteria that the secretary must consider when determining whether to approve a request for off-site disposal. These would include public safety, proposed plans to redevelop the demolition site and the capacity of nearby landfills. I appreciate the good-faith efforts of the department to relax demolition policies that will ultimately help small rural towns.

The House passed HB2088, which would permanently restrict cities and counties from requiring installation of a fire protection sprinkler system in a single-family structure. The bill also would prohibit requiring such a system as a condition for approval of a building



Letter from Topeka

By Sen. Ralph Ostmeier
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permit or plat.

The 2010 Legislature approved a one-year prohibition, which was at the time, and still is, a compromise. Originally, fire officials wanted to require sprinklers in all one- to four-family units. In the spirit of compromise, different groups agreed not to oppose the requirements for three- and four-family units but opposed requirements for one- and two-family units. HB2088 eliminated a sunset provision inserted into the bill.

The bill doesn’t prevent a homeowner from installing a sprinkler system. We just need to make sure

cities and counties don’t require them. Smoke detectors have a survivability rate of 99.45% and sprinkler systems 99.80%. That’s a very small gain, if any, at a tremendous cost to new-home buyers.

It basically boils down to allowing anyone who wants to have a fire sprinkler system in their home, and is willing to pay for it, to work with their builder to have this feature installed. However, this should remain an option and not a law.

If you have comments or questions regarding these or other issues, contact me at Ralph.Ostmeier@senate.ks.gov.

Arts patron says thank you

To the Editor:

Thank you, Oberlin, for two weekends of exceptional performances in the arts. Thank you to the Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission for the dinner theater and performance by jazz pianist Ronnie Kole on Saturday, Feb. 19, at The Gateway. What a night!

The evening began with one of the best dinners I’ve had at The Gateway in quite awhile. Hats off to City Administrator Karen Larson, Chris Ward and their staff for a superb meal and cheerful staff who attended to us. Delightful dinner music by Mr. Kole put the icing on the cake. His performance of “Around the World on 88 Keys” in the theatre afterwards was incredible, bar none. It was truly a “Grand Evening of Dining and Entertainment Featuring New Orleans’ Best: Ronnie Kole.”

Mr. Kole also blessed our com-

Letters to the Editor

munity by performing at the Good Samaritan Center on Saturday afternoon. What a giving person to share the gift of his music with our seniors while he had some time to spare in Oberlin.

Thank you to the Oberlin Rotary Club and the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. for sponsoring the simulcast presentation of Haydn and Mahler by the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Yannick Nezet-Seguin, on Sunday evening at the Sunflower Cinema.

Through the wonders of technology now available to us at the Sunflower Cinema, we now have better than front row seats at the symphony. To view and capture the intensity and emotion of the

musicians, and the musicianship and charisma of this young and energetic international conductor, there are no words for this. It was an overwhelming experience for me.

The lobby of the cinema was transformed for an intimate gathering of friends and neighbors prior to the performance. It was all tastefully done and much appreciated. Thank you!

Out here in the hinterland, the opportunity to experience cultural events of this caliber are few. Both events were a big WOW for my husband John and I, right here in Oberlin, Kan.! Our spirits have been refreshed.

Charlotte Strecker-Baseler,
Oberlin

Reader has election idea

To the Editor:

Note that the primary election for mayor and members of the council will be held on Tuesday. (Actually, there was no primary for council seats. The general election will be Tuesday, April 5.)

Since I am no longer a resident of Oberlin, it is probably not appropriate for me to make a public statement about the candidates. On the other hand, it might be appropriate for *The Herald* to mention that the Addlemans were early settlers in Decatur county and that when Rusty retired, his pharmacy was the oldest business in the same family in the county.

I believe Rusty and Calvin Ufford are the last living members of early settlers’ families still living in Oberlin. Calvin’s grandmother and her brother, my grandfather, arrived with their family in 1873, together

with the Stiner and Riley families.

Jack O’Toole’s grandfather arrived, but I know he was elected county clerk in February, 1880.

Oberlin deserves to have a council member with the historical ties and obvious love for and loyalty to Oberlin.

John E. Love
La Verne, Calif

From the Bible

And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them. Being “grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

The Acts 4: 1-2

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses which do not pertain to a public issue.

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Storm slows their trip home

Shades of blizzards past. Last week, a blinding snow storm dumped almost eight inches of snow on parts of this country. Jim and I were caught in a neighboring town.

It seems like 50 years ago we had more blizzards. Perhaps it was just that it didn’t take that much to make us stay home and we didn’t “go” as much. Or, we didn’t have the four-wheel-drive vehicles we do today.

But during this storm, it wouldn’t have mattered if you had a Sherman tank. Visibility was zero and nobody was moving. Well, they were moving, but it was more like sliding.

While waiting for the snow to ease up, we opted to kill a couple of hours at a restaurant. Big, fat snow flakes were falling so fast that in the short distance from the van to the restaurant’s door, I had an inch accumulation on top of my head.

Vain person that I am, I hate to wear scarves, caps or stocking hats because they mash my hair. But, in retrospect, mashed hair would have been preferred to the “drowned



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
quality-pro@webtv.net

rat” look I had to sport the rest of the day.

Later in the afternoon, we headed home. The highway was snow covered but passable as we inched our way along. Imagine our surprise when, five miles from home, the snow almost disappeared. Our little town only got about two inches. Cold and windy, to be sure, but nothing like our neighbors to the east.

It’s said that it rains on the just and the unjust alike. Guess that applies to snow, too.

-ob-

It’s tax time, and I just finished my annual bookkeeping marathon. Every year around this time, I vow to keep up with the accounting month by month. But I never do.

Jim says I live by the Procrastinator’s Rule: “Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow?”

I still have the dream of a real office (not the dining-room table) and have been accumulating color coordinated organizing containers for months. When my office is finally done, I may not be any more organized, but at least it will be beautiful.

-ob-

We are planning our spring Mexico mission trip against the wishes of our family. Their mantra has been, “Are you sure you have to go?” Yes, we’re sure we have to go. For some reason, we have been called to do this house-building work. And, if not us, then who?