

Republicans shooting themselves in the foot

Sometimes you have to wonder at the stupid things supposedly smart politicians do.

Take, for instance, the Kansas Republican party. No, really; you can have it.

The party is sitting in the catbird seat, or should be. The Republicans own Kansas as they never have before: All state elected offices, all but 33 seats in the House and all but eight in the state Senate, all four congressional districts, both U.S. Senate seats.

What could be wrong, then? And why would Republican leaders send a "loyalty" oath to legislative candidates, demanding that they pledge allegiance to the party's leadership in the House and Senate if elected?

The first thing you have to understand is that Kansas, for years, has had not a two-party system, like most states, but a three-party system where Republicans divide at the drop of a hat into conservative and "moderate" factions.

The conservatives hew to strict beliefs in social principles, including opposition to abortion, while the "moderates" have been known to align with Democrats on votes involving social issues and state spending.

These moderates, for the most part, aren't flaming liberal followers of Kathleen Sebelius, but compared to some of the conservatives, they can look pretty left wing.

And that chafes the conservatives.

Some claim these moderate Republicans are people who would have become Democrats in any other state, but knew they'd never get elected to anything in Kansas that way.

The conservative wing controls the House and at least a share of the congressional delegation. It controls the party leadership and

would like to run the Senate, too. The Senate divides more evenly, with just the eight Democrats, about 14 conservatives and 14 moderates on any given vote, plus four or five members who float back and forth.

Gov. Sam Brownback is the darling of this right wing. Conservative groups led by the state Chamber of Commerce have recruited House members to run against some of the more liberal senators.

Whatever prompted the party to dream up this loyalty oath, it's a mistake and not likely to help the conservative cause. Any legislator or candidate who'd sign such a thing would be giving up the ability to vote as his or her constituents want. And that may not be blindly to follow the leadership.

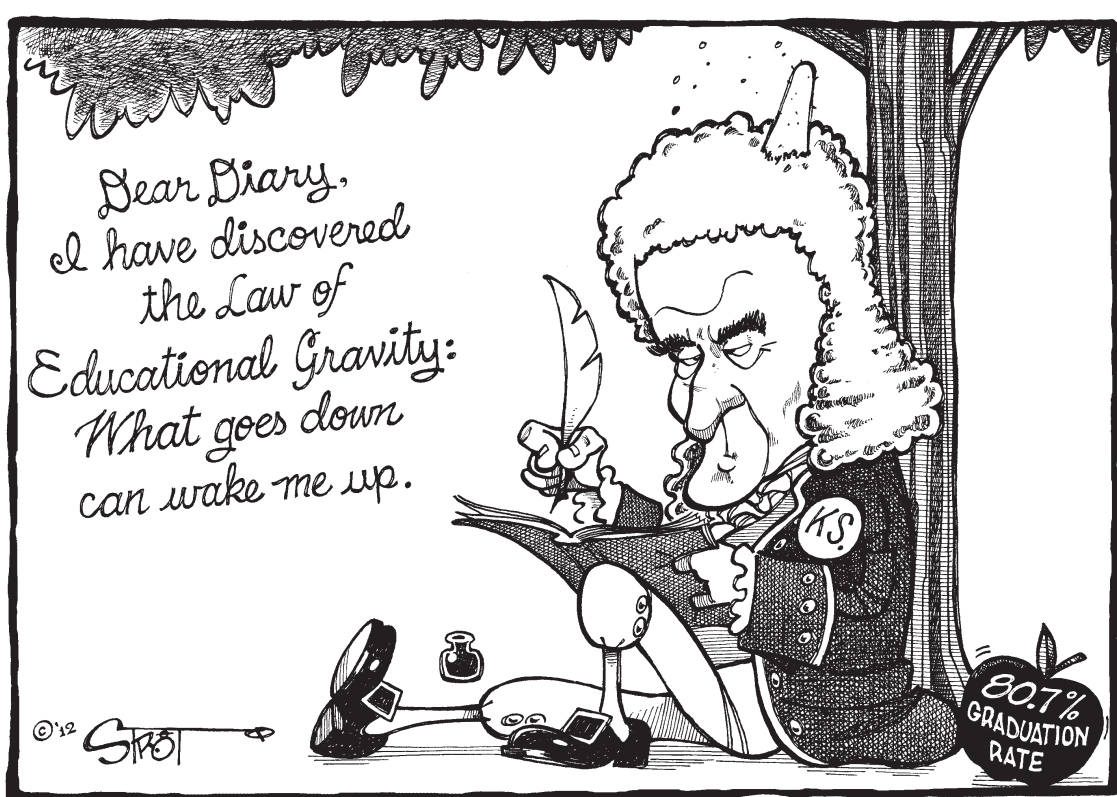
There is nothing wrong with being conservative or wanting conservatives to control the Legislature. Kansas is a conservative state, and voters gave the governor a huge majority in voting two years ago. They elected a conservative House and mostly conservative state officials.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to shift the Senate to the right, either, but there's a way to go about consolidating your position, one that might work. Then there are other ways.

And when you do something as undemocratic as putting out a loyalty oath to bind supposedly independent legislators, you've crossed a line. Like the heavy-handed plan to target all the supposedly liberal senators, it's a move that could backfire.

In August, we'll see just how successful these tactics have been, but from here, the oath looks like a loser.

— Steve Haynes



It takes too long to get there

It seems like it takes forever to get to Kansas City, but we made the trek east last week to see our son and attend the annual Kansas Press Association meeting.

I was about ready to jump out of my skin waiting for Steve to finish up with Thursday's *Colby Free Press* so we could get on the road. The minor detail of missing lunch was probably mostly to blame for my bad mood and snappish disposition.

I was also afraid we wouldn't get to Lawrence in time to take son out for dinner. We had promised him several weeks ago that we would have dinner before continuing on to Overland Park, where the convention was.

I should have relaxed and had some lunch instead of waiting around until 3 p.m. when Steve finally showed up. Steve had called son, explained the problem and they had it well in hand.

Once fed and on the road, I was in a better frame of mind when we called our boy and he gave us two late-dining choices □ Chinese or Mexican. Both, he assured us, were excellent new restaurants which were building good reputations for interesting and tasty food.

We chose Mexican, and it was tasty and interesting. The restaurant specializes in dishes from all over Mexico and was a great change from



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkans.com

our usual Tex-Mex fare.

Son made off with my leftovers, which I would have happily taken home to have the next day — if I had been going home. Steve had no leftovers, but he accidentally left his credit card behind after paying the bill.

He didn't discover this minor detail until two days later when again it was time to pay for dinner as we were about to leave the city for home. It didn't take too long to think back to the last time he had used it, so we headed back towards Lawrence.

We had to return to Lawrence anyway because we had promised son we would bring him barbecue from one of our favorite KC eateries — Gates Bar-B-Q.

While we had a little trouble finding a parking place on Thursday night in Lawrence, Saturday night was a total zoo. There were people in everything from tuxes and formals to shorts and T-shirts. It was Satur-

day night in a college town, and it was hopping.

So, I hopped out of the car while Steve circled the block to check on the AWOL credit card. The restaurant had the card safe behind the counter, so I was able to grab it and we were off to hand over the barbecue. As we passed the Sand Bar, we noticed a bunch of folks in straw hats and paper leis getting on a bus. Seems Jimmy Buffet was playing in Kansas City. Wish we could have gone, but home was calling.

Somewhere outside of Manhattan, we pulled into a rest area and ate a picnic supper from the barbecue we had bought in Kansas City.

We got home a little after midnight.

It's a long way to Kansas City, but if you go, you might meet some nice, honest people along the way and get some really wonderful barbecue.

I think I'll do it again — but maybe not until next year.

Chickens dominate speech

Who knew the chicken would have such an impact on the English language.

Think about it. There are many references to chickens. If a husband is dominated by his wife he is "henpecked." If a woman hovers too closely over her children, she is said to be a "mother hen." When a short man walks with an attitude, he is said to be "strutting like a banty rooster."

If someone really messes up a performance, they "laid an egg." If your handwriting is illegible, you are said to have "chicken scratches." If you are a morbid pessimist, you are a "Henny Penny." In the 1960s, a cute girl was a "chick." A person with a pleasant demeanor is a "good egg."

Staying in the fowl family, a new father is "proud as a peacock," a homely girl is an "ugly duckling," a ballerina "graceful as a swan" and a smart man "wise as an owl."

And you thought they were just chickens.

—ob—

Since I'm thinking of our livestock, here's an update on Rosy and Flossy. If they were old enough to give milk, it would come from contented cows. They have adapted to us quite nicely, and they have been eating to their hearts content. So much so that when I came into their pen with some sweet feed (a pellet-and-grain mixture topped off with real molasses), they got to their feet when I called them. Rosy took a



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts65@gmail.com

few steps toward me, then decided it wasn't worth the effort and laid back down chewing her cud. Life must be pretty good when you pass up dessert for green veggies.

—ob—

If every flower, bulb and vegetable I planted makes it, I will be adrift in a sea of petunias, vincas, marigolds and broccoli. I ordered flower bulbs this year as part of a fund raiser for the Haven House we help operate. It was a good excuse to buy bulbs I always wanted but thought I couldn't afford. You know the old "it's for a good cause" excuse. It is a "good cause," but the point is, I wanted the flowers.

I bought hostas, gladiola and lots of other bulbs whose names I don't remember. Even had Jim till up a new flowerbed in front of the bay window. I hope it will be as beautiful in reality as it is in my imagination.

I still have hanging baskets and some pots for the front porch to fill. Once everything is mulched, it shouldn't take too much water. At least, that's my hope.

I use the newspaper mulch ap-

proach. First take old newspapers (I seem to have an endless supply), tear into strips leaving several sheets for thickness. Wet them down and lay around your bedding plants, overlapping. Spread your mulch on top of the wet newspapers. All this is biodegradable, and if you want to add some more flowers, just poke a hole in the paper and place your plant. Keeps the weeds away and holds moisture.

I'm not much of a gardener, but I do love flowers. Can't have too many. Thank goodness I'm married to a man who loves them as much as I do. But more importantly, he doesn't complain about mowing around them.

From the Bible

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

—1 John 3:16

Trip to Colorado was great

It's a long ways across Kansas, 425 miles from the Colorado border to Kansas City on Interstate 70. It's 365 miles from Oberlin to the city, a little less to Lawrence.

My kids always used to complain about the interminable drive. They mostly don't make it anymore. I do, but I have a secret.

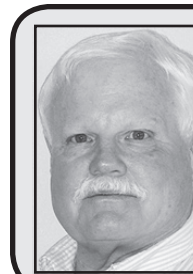
I like to drive across this state. It's beautiful any time of the year, especially the summer, when the trees hang dark green and the sunset lingers in the hazy evening well after supertime.

But I like it any time of the year; in the fall, when the tall grass turns red and brown, even in the winter. But there's no better time to drive across the state than spring, the season of promise, when the trees are beginning to leaf, the flowers are in bloom and the endless pastures of the Flint and Smoky hills turn bright spring green. Even the Royals have a bright future in the spring.

I have to admit, I'm getting older. I can tell by the way I feel when I get home from Kansas City these days. But I still love that drive.

I remember as a kid, looking forward to family vacations. We'd load up dad's 1958 Pontiac station wagon, two-tone white and brown, tying whatever wouldn't fit inside to the roof rack. Then the five of us, mom, dad and the three boys, would pile into the car and start off. My sister came later.

We'd leave straight west from Emporia on U.S. 50 (what had been 50 South until just before that time) and then take K-150, a narrow two-lane blacktop, across the Flint Hills. That would take us to U.S. 56 near



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkans.com

Marion, from which we'd follow one Santa Fe branch line or another nearby across the state.

After Marion, you'd be able to see the elevator in the next town soon after leaving the last, one after another across the state. That always seemed fascinating to me, the huge grain bins lined up in a row.

Those were the days of bench seats in cars. No seat belts. No air conditioning. We made our way across the state with the windows down, and usually found a place to spend the night somewhere out west. I can remember when the Airliner Motel opened in Scott City, dad thought it was great.

I remember the smell of hot asphalt after a summer thunderstorm, ant hills, the sounds of night in a western Kansas town. The dry, hot high prairie seemed so different, so interesting, on a July morning.

Some years, we spent more time in Dighton or Scott City than we planned. I remember waiting while a mechanic replaced a U joint in that old Pontiac one summer.

The second day, you could see two or three towns' elevators on the horizon and watch them come closer for what seemed like hours. I'm sure the three of us squirmed and com-

plained a lot but we were excited to go to Colorado. It was special. We'd see deer, and there were none to speak of in Kansas then.

The roads always seemed to be under construction on those trips. In the time before what we call asphalt today, or asphaltic concrete, oiled roads were built up of tarmac, oil and rock mixed in place. The custom was to carry traffic through this work.

Dad was fascinated that land was so cheap out here that they'd just move the road over sometimes rather than using the same grade. Some of those roads they built in the '50s are the ones we see off in the weeds today, though.

Afternoon of the second day, we'd leave Limon on the last lap into Denver. There was no Interstate, just mile after mile of narrow two-lane. U.S. 40 wound around a little east of Denver, but you came to a point out by Bennett where you could see the mountains.

The road ducked under the Union Pacific tracks and pretty soon, we were driving down Colfax Avenue toward the city. And we kids knew, there'd be plenty to see and do in the city.

Those were the days.

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Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkans.com

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Kimberly Davis managing editor
Mary Lou Olson society editor
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts proofreader, columnist
Joan Betts historian
Cynthia Haynes business manager
Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
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Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
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Writer against beer at fairground

To the Editor:

I am surprised there have not been any letters challenging the issuance of a license to serve beer at the races on the Decatur County fairground. There is a meeting scheduled on May 10 and letters were sent out to landowners who live within 200 feet.

As one who received the letter and is not in favor of this plan, I feel I must comment on the very idea of having beer on the fairground. Isn't it sad for some to think that people will only go to the races for the drinking? Then, once it is allowed for one event, will the commission-

ers be asked to allow beer during fair activities?

I have attended the local races when I can and do enjoy them. We have family from out of town who have attended as well and have been here for the fair.

When I was about 11, my folks and I came upon our neighbor crashed into a dead-end intersection about 9 p.m. because he had been drinking. He ended up in a nursing home before he was 45 and left his

wife to raise their three little girls and try to keep the farm going. This did not have to happen if he had not have been enticed by the beer drinking.

I would like to ask anyone who is concerned about this idea to plan to appear at The Gateway 5:30 p.m. Thursday, May 10, to let your voice be heard.

Marilyn Horn,
Oberlin