

## Reasonableness lost in fight for control of senate

The Kansas House of Representatives was set this week to make one more stab at doing something the Legislature should have had first on its agenda all session: draw a redistricting map that can pass both houses and become law.

Redistricting is required every 10 years, after the federal census, to balance the population in districts from the U.S. House to the state Legislature and even, sometimes, the county commission and city council.

The practice was always expected, but not always performed, until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the "one man, one vote" case prompted by a Kansas lawsuit. Forces led by *The Hutchinson News* sued to force reapportionment of the Legislature, especially the House. Before that, districts had varying populations and each of the 105 counties was guaranteed at least one of the 125 House seats, leaving only 20 to distribute to high-population areas.

This year, Oberlin might wind up in a six-county House district and the Senate district for northwest Kansas could hit 20 counties, or about one-fifth of the state's area.

While many have predicted the issue will wind up in court, that shouldn't happen. The Legislature should get its stuff together and adopt a reasonable compromise map, one that at least makes our Senate district more or less square and doesn't attempt to protect incumbents.

Unfortunately, the fight to control the Senate has gotten in the way of reasonableness.

Today, "moderate" Republicans, generally supporters of bigger government and more spending, control the Senate as they have for

years.

Conservatives, who generally want less spending, smaller government and more control on social issues such as abortion, now run the House. They and their backers, including the state Chamber of Commerce and its political action committee, want control of the Senate, too.

The state Chamber—don't blame your local Chamber for this; the state group is entirely independent—recruited about eight opponents for supposedly vulnerable moderate senators, including five House members. It's raising money for their campaigns and spoiling for a fight.

The incumbent leadership tried to head this challenge off by drawing district lines that put some challengers outside the districts they've filed in.

Is that dirty pool or smart politics? Partly, at least, the answer depends on whether it's your ox that's being gored. Nevertheless, this fight should not be allowed to derail the reapportionment process.

A fair and just map can and should be drawn; then let the voters decide who gets the seats. Conservatives in both houses need to keep from meddling with district lines to their advantage also.

Our guess is the Chamber's assault won't be as effective as the liberals fear, but if it is, then the will of the voters will prevail.

And whatever else happens, we must be sure to keep the huge 40th District covering the northwest as compact as possible. That's only decent and right.

—Steve Haynes



## Road trip rich in animals

There's a lot of snakes, lizards and dead armadillos between Kansas and Georgia.

Having just driven four days to get to see our daughters, sons-in-law and granddaughter, Steve and I got to see a lot of the South—and its wild and tame life.

We headed out from Oberlin on Tuesday, went through Kansas (long drive), Missouri (just a corner) and spent the night in Clarksville, Ark. The next day, we buzzed through Louisiana and on into Mississippi, down to the delta area, where we were to spend the night with friends Bill and Amy Jacobs.

We stopped for a short time just over the Mississippi line for a dose of history, touring part of the Vicksburg battlefield. It's so calm and peaceful today, with giant trees, hundreds of monuments—large and small—and joggers on the paths. It's hard to imagine that it was the scene of so much death and destruction nearly 150 years ago.

From Vicksburg, we continued on to Amy and Bill's, to be met at the front door by their three dogs. That's a lot of barking, since the two big ones took their watchdog duties seriously.

We had a great time and were treated to some great animal stories—like the seven-foot gator that they found swimming in the pond out back. They called for help on that one, but Bill was going to have to



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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deal with the dead snake clogging up a drainage tube down by their pool. The snake had apparently gotten stuck and died in the tube and the part-time gardener couldn't get him out. Instead of removing the snake, he had dug down and severed a pipe from the outdoor watering system. Finally, he gave up and left.

Bill was not looking forward to trying to figure out how to remove the snake, which was half in and half out of the pipe, and then repairing the water system.

While we were looking over the problem, we also watched dozens of little lizards play on the clay pots and fence posts around the backyard.

I love lizards, but the dogs seemed to think that the little guys were taunting them.

Amy told us the story of the snake and squirrel which got into a fight behind their newspaper office. Both lost, it seems, but the animal control officer who was called to remove them refused to get out of his car. He

was pathologically afraid of snakes, she said, and that cost him his job.

I just figured it was a good thing that the guys who came to remove the 'gator didn't have the same problem.

After spending the night with the Jacobses, we headed for Alabama, where we met up with John Stevenson, his two dogs, cat, birds and donkey.

John lives on five acres in Roanoke, Ala. He and his crew welcomed us with southern barbecue and a lot more barking.

We left on Friday to the waving of hands and trails.

On the way, we spotted the usual roadkill, but added armadillos to what we usually see in Kansas. It would be fun to see one of these funny-looking little tanks in its natural, living state. However, they're nocturnal, I'm told, and seldom seen unless they're crossing the road.

And apparently, they're not very good at that.

## Sleep fails before solo gig

If you sleep from 4 to 8 p.m., can it still be considered a nap?

Whatever you want to call it: a nap, sawing logs, catching a few Zs, resting my eyelids or a little snooze, I did it Sunday afternoon. I know you can never make up lost sleep, but I sure gave it a try.

This was my weekend on the radio and it was going to be a new experience: I was working alone. Usually, I have a partner, Tim. He pushes all the buttons and turns all the knobs. I just answer the phone and select the music. I tell Tim what song I need and he finds it on the computer or I give him the CD I want played. It's a smooth operation.

When you're flying solo, though, it gets a little more complicated. Phones are ringing, songs are ending, commercials need playing. It can be a real juggling act.

Back in the day, when I first started in radio, we had vinyl records. We progressed to cassette tapes and then to CDs. Now, the music is stored in a computer and you have to know how to retrieve it.

This weekend, Tim couldn't work with me, but he assured me I would be fine. He gave me a crash course on the station's computer, a pat on the back and the "thumbs up" sign.

I was flattered by his confidence in me—I just didn't quite have it in myself. Consequently, Saturday night I couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned, looking at the clock every hour, afraid I would sleep through the 5 a.m. alarm.



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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Bottom line: the radio show turned out OK. I had one little glitch when I couldn't switch the transmission back over to satellite, but a quick phone call to Tim fixed that.

The rest of my day was a blur. I went to church, a salad, sandwich-and-ice cream social at another church, chapel services, a check on the Haven, a stop at the grocery and finally, home sweet home. My recliner looked pretty good, and after rotating the eggs in the incubator (see last week's column), I crashed.

Next thing I knew, it was almost dark outside. Four hours gone—just like that.

—ob—

They're coming! They're coming! The bulbs I planted are coming up!

Sunday was so full, I didn't even take a single look at my flower beds. Early Monday morning I went out, in my bare feet, to check. That's when I saw them: tender little shoots peeking through the ground. Eight of them so far.

I can hardly wait. But just like

having a baby, at least in my day, I'll have to wait to see what I get.

—ob—

Jim thinks I am addicted to Sudoku. You know, the game where you have to arrange numbers in a grid so you have 1 through 9 in every row, up and down and across.

Now, I'm not going to admit there may be some merit to his accusation. I do like to play the game. It's on our Kindle. If I choose the easy version, I can whip out a game in five to six minutes.

It's not an addiction; let's just call it "a distraction." And say I get "distracted" a lot.

## From the Bible

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

—John 15: 12-14

## Huge tax increases looming

Every April, millions of Americans gather at their kitchen tables with receipts and pay stubs and attempt to fulfill their legal obligation to pay their taxes.

Navigating the complexity that is the U.S. tax code is both challenging and intimidating. Decades of special exemptions, deductions and loopholes paid as political favors leave Americans pulling out their hair while they try to fill out their forms. On top of that, years of reckless spending and borrowing leave many Americans scratching their heads as to the effectiveness of Washington's expensive pursuits.

However, nearly half of all Americans pay absolutely no federal income taxes. In fact, millions of Americans will view April 15 as a great day. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, in 2009 about 30 percent of those filing tax returns actually received more money from other taxpayers than they paid in income taxes. This is not a refund on what they are paid—this is net income from the government.

But come 2014, filing taxes will be even worse for taxpaying Americans. When the Bush-Obama cuts expire at the end of 2012, all taxpayers will be subject to higher rates. Those in the lowest bracket will see their rates increase by half, from 10 percent to 15 percent.

Earners whose incomes fall into every other bracket will also see their tax rates go up as well. On top of those increases, the marriage penalty will return, family-friendly deductions like the child-care tax credit will decline precipitously and the death tax will climb to 55



## On the Potomac

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percent. And, we cannot forget about a surge in taxes from Obama-Care scheduled to take effect in 2014.

Many in Washington argue that tax increases are needed to balance the budget. But, based on decades of past experience, tax increases will only result in trillions of dollars more for the government to spend—or waste—not deficit reduction.

I know Washington can do more with less. In my first year in office, we cut more than \$130,000 from our own budget—on top of voting to cut our budget by over 10 percent over the past two years. I have introduced a bill to make sure that the Bush-Obama tax rates are made permanent, and have also voted to cut spending back to levels before the stimulus.

Simultaneously holding the line against tax increases and reducing spending keeps more money in the hands of families and out of the hands of politicians and bureaucrats.

Here are some key points to consider as this massive tax increase looms around the bend:

• It is economically devastating to increase taxes during a recession. It was not that long ago that President Obama himself said: "You don't

raise taxes in a recession." Though he seems to have abandoned this belief, I agreed with him then.

• Cutting marginal tax rates can actually increase revenue. President Kennedy championed major tax cuts in the 1960s as did President Reagan in the 1980s, frequently making the case that the federal government can actually take in more money when taxes are low and certain. Kennedy and Reagan were proven right—revenues increased as tax rates were reduced.

• Most Kansans want fundamental tax reform—and I agree. We want a simpler, fairer, flatter tax code where politicians in Washington aren't using the tax policy to pick winners and losers. And we do not want a system where political access and favors mean special tax privileges for just a few.

Like many Kansans, I am not concerned that Washington's problem is that it has too little to spend. Its problem is that it simply wants to spend too much. At that same table where American families attempt to navigate the U.S. tax code, they make decisions—sometimes tough ones—about what they can and cannot afford. American families have had to do more with less; it is time that Washington does the same.

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## It's time to honor older Americans

To the Editor:

I received this in our May mailing and thought it would be good to put into the paper if you could:

Since 1963, May has been designated as Older Americans Month. This year's theme is "Never Too Old To Play."

Historically, this has been a time to acknowledge the contributions of past and current older persons

## Letter to the Editor

to our country, in particular those who defended our country. Every president since John F. Kennedy has issued a proclamation during or before the month of May asking that our entire nation pay tribute in some way to older people.

Older Americans Month is celebrated across the country through ceremonies, events, fairs and other such activities.

Helen Gee, Oberlin Manager,  
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