

Congressman stands just where he promised

The last couple of weeks, Rep. Tim Huelskamp of Kansas' big 1st District has been under attack for standing by his principles.

From out here in the far northwest corner of his district, we can only shake our heads.

When did it become a sin to have principles?

It's a given that, as with any representative, not every one of us in the district will agree with our congressman, today or even most of the time. You just can't expect that, not when you choose one person to represent roughly 711,000 people with as many points of view.

But this district has elected Mr. Huelskamp to Congress twice, the first time choosing him from a field that included a wide spectrum of Republicans, and then over a Democrat opponent.

No one bothered to run against him the last time around, and you have to assume that most of the people in the district are comfortable with their representative — or they'd have backed somebody else.

We knew what we were getting when we voted for Tim Huelskamp. He's a known commodity, a doctrinaire conservative who believes in less government, lower taxes, fewer regulations, lower spending and a balanced budget. He never pretended to be anything else.

He's also a committed social conservative, a devout Roman Catholic who hews to the teachings of his church. And an advocate for adoption, as well as a loving family man.

Yeah, he's about as far to the right as an American could be, staunchly opposed to abortion and strong on social issues. So what?

The voters elected him. He believes what he believes. Wouldn't it be worse if he sold out? If he gave in to blackmail, even by the speaker of the House?

Yet there's a line of ("What's the Matter With Kansas?") thinking that goes something like this: That people in places like Kansas, who are comfortable standing on principle, often vote against their own self-interest when they stand by their beliefs.

So people here vote for Republicans who stand against abortion instead of Democrats who send us welfare and other government goodies. It's not that simple, but still, are principles that outmoded?

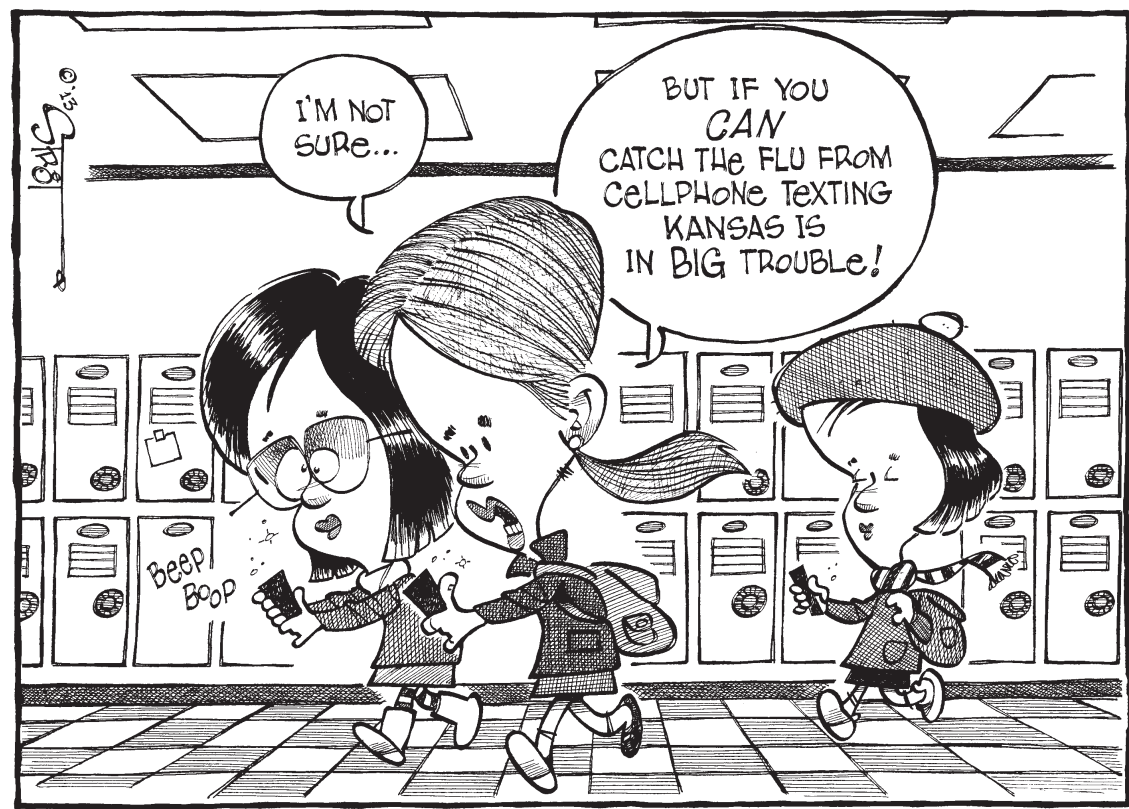
No, Mr. Huelskamp isn't a compromiser. He's not going to lead the House to make whoopee with the Democrats and solve the problems of the day. He's the guy who's going to stand to the side and remind the rest of them what their principles are supposed to be.

There's nothing dishonest or wrong about that, is there?

No one expects all of us to agree with Mr. Huelskamp's stands. It's perfectly OK to say he's wrong and call him out. Run against him if you feel that way.

We know Washington needs compromisers and negotiators and log rollers. That's how deals are made at the end of the day. But someone has to stand on principle. There are days when we'd be better off if more of our leaders did, on all sides of any issue.

As for Mr. Huelskamp, well, you know where he stands. The voters put him where he is, and they could, we suppose, change their minds. Meantime, deal with it. He is who he is. — Steve Haynes



It's alive! And watching her

Cynthia came back from a pharmacy job to find a box on her desk.

I wasn't surprised. My brother had called to say he was sending something and wanted to be sure someone would be there to sign for it. So I told him to send it to the office.

There's always someone to sign at the office.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said. "Probably the little frozen lobster tails and steaks again."

I had my doubts. Little brother never called to warn us about the frozen food he'd sent for years.

Did I say little brother? He's the middle one, but as an adult, the smallest, or at least, he used to be.

He was always the trim, athletic one. With darker hair. I was the dumpy one with white hair. Time has a way of changing us, though. We're about the same height, and last time we were together, we were accused of being twins.

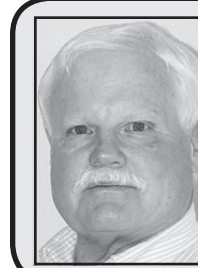
The younger one is the tall one, by the way. He grew; we didn't.

Anyway, I told Cynthia to let me know after she opened the box. She called a few minutes later.

"It's alive!" she shouted. "It looked at me. It moved."

She said when she opened the box, all she saw was something that looked dead and black. That turned out to be seaweed, and not the edible part of the package.

The eye was attached to one of two huge lobsters, 2 1/2-pound



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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monsters. Once the seaweed was pulled back, both of them sat there, looking at us. I've seen bigger, but only at an aquarium.

I thought this was good news for me, since Cynthia doesn't eat shellfish.

We'd planned on steak for dinner, but it was obvious someone would have to sacrifice. Even today, lobsters don't last forever.

I can remember my dad ordering lobsters for a party once. They came by Railway Express, shipped in a wooden barrel, packed in ice, salt and seaweed. And if they came on time, you could eat them.

Today, a simple cardboard box with a frozen jell-pack insert suffices to get the little monsters cross country overnight. They were practically smiling and waving in there, nestled in that seaweed.

"Guess we'll have to cook them tonight," I said. "Can you make yourself a grilled cheese or something?"

She agreed, and I got out the big stock pot. It seemed a shame to just cook the boys, but they weren't

going to last. You really can't keep them as pets, though that'd be kinda cool.

So into the hot water they went. Oh, and talk about good, with a little lemon and drawn butter....

But I did find out that I can't eat a whole 2 1/2-pound lobster by myself. At least, and still move. I gave up with half the tail remaining.

Cynthia said she'd make me lobster newberg for dinner the next night — she doesn't like shellfish, but she does love to cook — and that made dinner and lunch. Sunday, I made lobster salad with lots of celery, and that made two lunches. So, five meals in all.

I found out later that my sister got her lobsters out and terrorized the office with them. She doesn't eat them either, but she had fun, and her boys took care of her share.

Now, what to send little brother for Christmas next year. We've given him hams and coffee, but maybe something alive? A couple of nice free-range chickens, perhaps?

After all, he once sent us a dog by airmail. But that's another story.

Docs put limits on her hubby

Last week was "The Week of the Doctors."

Both of us are in relatively good health, with the usual aches and pains. But last Tuesday we met Jim's new cardiologist, who has taken him as a patient after his first doctor retired. It was a routine visit.

Routine until she said, "I'd like to see you cut down your caffeine."

In a good Gary Coleman imitation, Jim said, "Whatcho talkin' 'bout?"

Jim and caffeine have a strange and wonderful relationship. Jim is strange and he thinks caffeine is wonderful. He loves his morning coffee. He loves his Pepsi. He even loves his energy drinks.

The doctor said he could have half 'n half regular and decaf coffee and could have two Pepsis a day. But under no circumstances could he have those energy drinks. OK. Life will go on. A stop at the grocery store had us set up: A can of decaf to mix with the new can of regular coffee, a case of caffeine-free soda and a "pass" on the energy drink aisle.

I tried to tell him chocolate had caffeine but he Googled it and announced that one ounce of chocolate has about the same amount of caffeine as two cups of decaf coffee. Wednesday found us in another specialist's office.

About 25 years ago, Jim had surgery on his intestinal tract. And since I've known him, he's never had a check-up for that. At my insis-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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tence (Jim might call it nagging) he agreed to see a gastroenterologist.

She did the usual listening, thumping and h-m-m-m-m-ing.

Her final assessment: "I'd like to see you cut out all dairy."

"OK, Doc. Now, you've gone too far."

I know that's what Jim wanted to say, but he didn't. Instead he begged and pleaded, maybe even shed a tear. She relented and agreed to let him try a medication first.

"Try to cut back, though," she said. "Go to 1 percent milk."

Poor guy. What a week of downers. It would be easier for him to give up meat and potatoes.

-ob-

Did you hear about the little girl who was seated next to an atheist on an airplane? He said to her, "Would you like to talk? Flights go faster if you have a conversation with your fellow passenger."

The little girl said, "Sure, what would you like to talk about?"

The atheist said, "Oh, I don't know. How about why there is no

God, or no Heaven or Hell, or no life after death?"

"OK," said the little girl, "but first I want to ask you a question. Why are lima beans big and flat; pinto beans medium-sized and speckled; and navy beans small and white?"

"I have no idea," he replied.

To which the little girl replied, "Do you really feel qualified to discuss why there is no God, no Heaven, no Hell or no life after death when you don't know beans?"

From the Bible

Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, "Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men." And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

— Mark 1: 16-18

Legislative session starts up

I have made it through the first week of the 2013 legislative session. Being a committee chair, for Education Budget, has added a lot more work and responsibility to my schedule.

Last Monday, Jan. 14, all of the new legislators were sworn in. It's a nice moment, but it made me fully aware of the challenging task before me. With the political actions taking place in Washington and Kansas, there is a lot of discontent.

Tuesday evening, we listened to the governor's State of the State Address, and then Wednesday morning, Budget Director Steve Anderson (who is from Oberlin) presented the facts and figures to the Appropriations Committee. To quote Mr. Anderson, "Every one of you on this committee will find something to dislike in this year's budget figures."

One of the concerns I have is that the governor has requested that .6 of a cent of the sales tax increase passed during the recession stay



Letter from Topeka

By State Rep. Ward Cassidy
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on the books. The Legislature had promised that the tax would end. Another problem with that is several cities hope to pass a local sales tax to pay for a project of their own when it expires. The money might also be needed to pay for critical programs. We will just have to wait and see how it all plays out.

If you remember from my articles in the past, what happens early in the session is never what happens come May. I am very excited about a news conference I was in this week with House Speaker Ray Merrick. He made the comment that he and the president of the Senate, Susan

Wagle, have a goal of finishing the legislative work in 80 days. That would make for an aggressive session, and it would save the state money.

If you need to contact me, I would prefer by e-mail, ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov. If you are coming to Topeka to a meeting and would like me there, please let me know.

Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, a retired school principal and teacher, is the state representative for the 120th District. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

State doing well as Senate opens

The "Weekly Four Hard Facts" is a good place to start my commentary:

- Last year, Kansas set a record for job creation by adding 16,000 jobs to the private sector.

- The goal in reducing the state income taxes is to stay on a path that promotes our state's prosperity and continues to care for its residents.

- Nationally, state budgets average 35.3 percent for education spending per student.

- Long-term budgeting is the best way for our state to prepare for the future, and to ensure the state's vital services are receiving the funding needed to support the people of Kansas who need assistance.

The first Wednesday of the session, the Senate passed a Pay-Go provision. This would require a two-thirds vote to consider any amendment to appropriation bills which would increase its total cost. This may help to keep not-so-serious spending amendments out of budget bills at the end of the session.

This year brings new and different responsibilities. I have served the past eight years on the Federal



Letter from Topeka

By Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer
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and State Affairs Committee, and this year I will be chairman. I am blessed to have two great staff members to guide me. Carole McFarland is my office secretary and Connie Burns my committee secretary.

This past week in Natural Resources, Sheila Ellis and Jill Hansen testified about prairie dogs and black-footed ferret populations in Logan County. I was pleased with the research and facts presented to our committee. It is always better to have someone testify who is close to the problem or issue. I hope someday to see this problem resolved. This really has been an economic drain on farmers whose land is adjacent to these prairie-dog towns.

I welcome students to come to Topeka to page for me. They can

call my office at (785) 296-7399 and set up a date with my office secretary, Carole. Monday is the day I am allotted because of the time and distance needed to travel.

I would encourage everyone to come and see the beauty of the Capitol, the People's House. All legislative offices and committee rooms are again under the dome.

Gov. Sam Brownback mentioned in his State of the State address he might put the Department of Transportation and the Turnpike Authority under the same umbrella. This issue has been mentioned many times in the past. There would seem to be a savings, but I am not sure how much.

I will try to keep you abreast of the issues facing us this session.

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