

## Higher speed could lead to big problems

The Kansas Legislature hasn't done much so far this year, but sometimes that's for the best.

The Legislature, so far, can't agree on school finance or gambling or a budget. It's saving those for the final minutes, when the worst laws are passed without much question.

Right now, the Legislature is stalled on a bill to raise the 70-mile-an-hour speed limit on Kansas freeways. It's a bad idea, but there's some danger they will pass it anyway.

This plan is being pushed by shadowy forces who claim that the difference between driving 70 in Kansas and 75 in Nebraska is keeping business away from our state.

One sponsor, Sen. Robert Tyson, a Parker Republican, claims there is twice as much truck traffic on I-80 in Nebraska as there is on I-70 in Kansas. He's probably right, by the way, and we'd suggest that if he likes that, he go drive around in Nebraska on weekends.

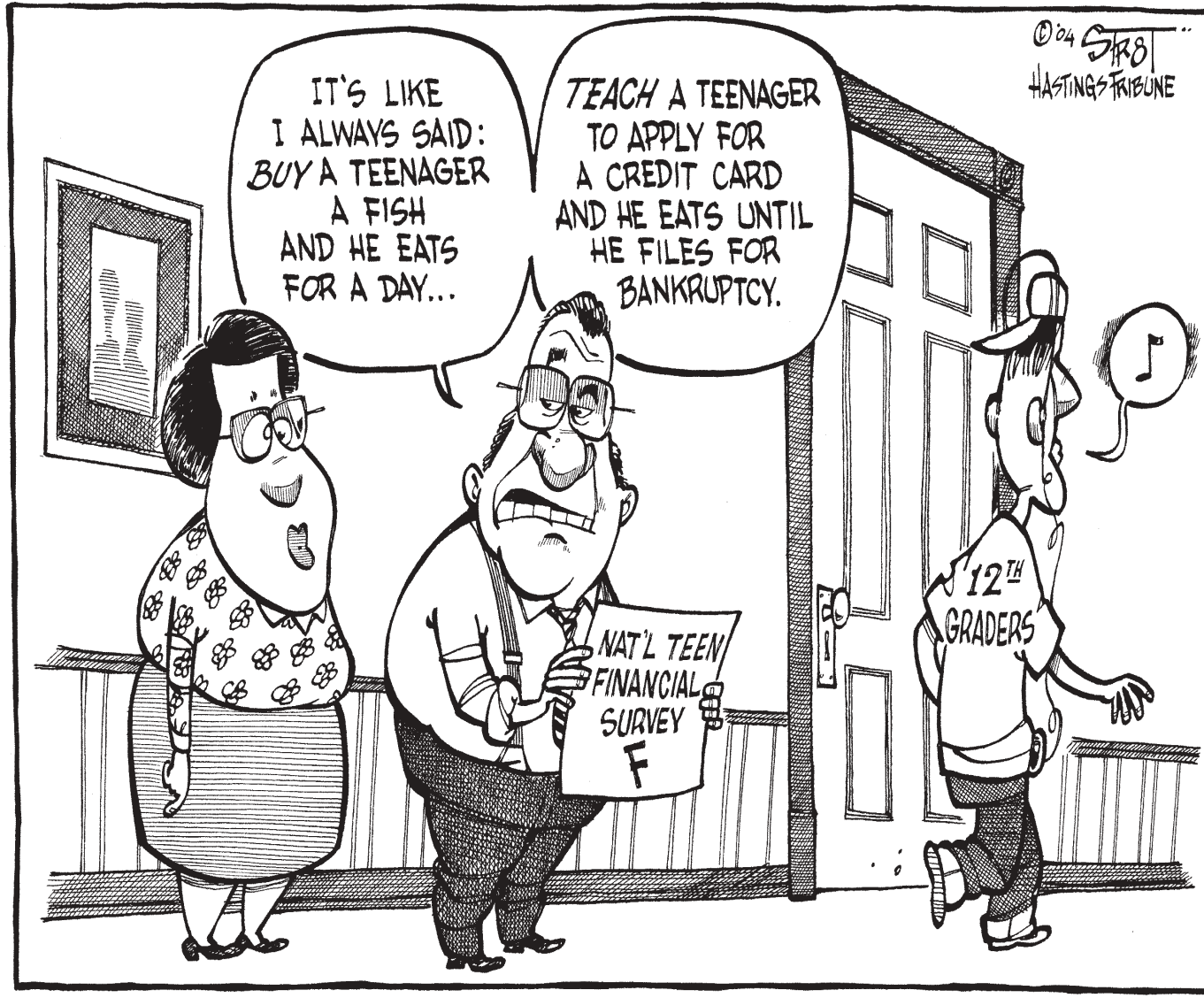
If you've been there, you know what we mean. The road is rough and pitted, traffic is awful and a person in a small car is fearful.

Do we want that for I-70, I-35, U.S. 81 and K-10?

More road damage, higher taxes, more accidents, big repair bills? Never mind that truckers and tourism officials, when someone asks, say they don't mind the slightly lower limit. Never mind that travel-center workers say almost no one calls to ask about the speed limit here when planning a trip. Never mind that many, especially those with green-and-white tags, already drive well past 70 on our freeways today.

Never mind that the Kansas Highway Patrol says all raising the speed limit will do is cause more and more severe accidents. But do mind this: The 70 m.p.h. limit was written with rural Kansas in mind. Legislators wanted to keep the differential between two-lane roads at 65 m.p.h. and the Interstates at 70 to a minimum to encourage people to spread out and put some of the traffic back on the blue highways.

There may be some pressure to drive faster and burn more gas on the freeways, but we don't see it out here. So do we want more and faster trucks tearing up I-70 and frightening our tourists anyway? Or do we want the safe and responsible drivers we have now, running 70 m.p.h. clear across the state? Like we said, sometimes that Legislature is best that does the least. With any luck, this turkey is done for the year. — Steve Haynes



## Mama bird wins power struggle

If you looked up "persistence" in the dictionary, you would find a picture of the mama robin that is now living above our front door.

Last week I began noticing grass and twigs and what looked like shreds of material from one of Jim's blue tarps on the steps in front of the door. Not giving it much thought, I attributed it to debris being blown in by the wind.

But every day it got worse, wind or not. Then I saw a bird fly from under the porch eaves. I looked up and, sure enough, twigs, grass and more shreds of blue material were dangling over the edge of the two inch-wide cornice board above the

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



door, where Mrs. Robin was trying, vainly, to construct a nest.

"We can't have this," was our first thought. Right above the door to our home is no place for a bird's nest. So, we swept away all the mess on the front porch, thinking that would persuade her to go elsewhere. Wrong. Next day, more debris. Swept that away. Next day, more debris. We were getting nowhere.

Her God-given instinct to build a nest was working just fine. Judgment on where to build it was all she lacked.

I suggested to Jim that if she had a birdhouse to live in, she would abandon her attempts. We had the pieces of a birdhouse left over from last summer when Jim made several kits for the granddaughters.

He assembled one and nailed it, rather precariously, above the door.

She still wasn't having it. She began piling her nest-making material on top of the birdhouse. If twigs and grass wouldn't stay on a flat surface, I don't know why she thought they would do any better on a steeply pitched birdhouse roof.

Now we were getting desperate, and this bird with a brain the size of a pea was outsmarting us.

Finally admitting defeat, Jim pulled down the birdhouse; nailed up a flat, square piece of plywood; and piled her raw resources on it. Then all we had to do was wait.

It didn't take long. But I guess we finally got it right, because Madame Robin has woven a very respectable nest with her twigs, grass and yes, those were shreds from one of Jim's blue tarps.

We haven't checked yet to see if she's laid any eggs. But when she does, I suppose we'll try to respect that and use the back door for a while.

Moral of the story: When Mama wants a home, she wants a home. And she wants it where she wants it. Better just give it to her.

## Legislation may help rural hospitals

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback and I recently introduced legislation to reauthorize a program to recruit physicians to serve in rural areas. The J-1 visa waiver program, set to expire on June 1 allows foreign-born, U.S.-educated physicians to practice in rural areas that have a shortage of physicians and specialty doctors.

For many areas across our country, this program is the only way that rural hospitals can get qualified physicians to serve in their communities.

By retaining this program, hospitals and clinics are allowed to hire physicians, who have studied and trained in medical schools throughout the United States, to practice in areas that might not otherwise have a doctor.

The J-1 visa program gives international medical graduates the opportunity to stay in the U.S. if they agree to practice in areas that are experiencing a shortage of doctors. For many rural Kansas hospitals and clinics, this program is the only way to get an experienced doctor.

Since 1993, 115 foreign doctors have served in Kansas communities through this program, and 67 physicians, or 58 percent, have remained in practice in the state following the completion of their three-year service obligation.

Under the program, states are able to

### Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran



apply for up to 30 doctors per year. Kansas allows visa waivers for 15 primary-care physicians and 15 specialists.

Now with the support of Sen. Brownback and Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota, we have drafted legislation to allow states to decide where doctors are needed, giving states more flexibility in filling their own health care needs. This legislation would provide for a five-year reauthorization of the program.

"Congress is taking action to improve access to health care for rural Americans by allowing good doctors, who are educated in the United States, to practice medicine in rural areas," Sen. Brownback said. "This is a common sense solution to a growing problem in Kansas and throughout the country."

"It is difficult to get physicians in a small rural area," said Deanna Freeman, Administrator of the Jewell County Hospital. "The J-1 Visa Waiver program is

very important to small rural hospitals in order to continue providing quality health care to the community. Jewell County Hospital was successful in recruiting and hiring two J-1 physicians in 2002."

For more information, contact Congressman Moran at (202) 225-2715 or visit his web page at [www.house.gov/morank01/](http://www.house.gov/morank01/).

## Congratulations are in order all around

The weekend of prom was fun! My last kid is going to graduate in May so these milestones are taking on extra meaning. This is the child I am not supposed to write about, ever, under any circumstances so I will apologize up front.

While I am apologizing I want to clear up something from my last column. I did not want to name the store or the town with the growling clerk. But someone thought I was talking about a Norton store! Pay attention folks — the new house is at Kensington, which is between 2 county seat towns. One of them is Phillipsburg; now go get a map, what would the other one be?

I didn't want to name the town because I think they have been traumatized enough on the football field the last couple of years at the hands of the Bluejays. I only hope our dominance in football isn't signaling a neglect of scholastic endeavors like geography!

Back to the subject at hand — I went to promenade, wow, didn't the kids look great. I hope I got some pictures.

I took a lot of pictures before Snowball, but later I found out the camera didn't have any film. I spent a lot of time apologizing for that!

With the time change my daughter got home a whole hour before we had to be back in Norton to get on the bus for the State FCCLA meeting in Wichita. I have been a perennial sponsor for about 6 years now. At first I was resistant to the idea, but parents: if you get asked to do something like this — do it!

It is easy to find excuses, or if you have to take vacation days to decide that you want to spend them doing something like this, but it's fun. And we have such great kids! And one of these days your baby will be graduating and there won't be another chance!

### Back Home Nancy Hagman



This year we all went in the charter bus. The type of transportation depends on how many are attending the meeting and what their schedules are!

The new charter is pretty cool. Or as we were told by some kids from across the state, "totally cool."

Are you a rich district they wanted to know (we forward questions like that on to Mr. Mann).

Steve Tanner drove the bus, which was cool.

Now just so there is no misunderstanding, I have sponsored trips with other bus drivers and found them to be cool also. (I have to apologize so much I'm starting to do it in advance to save time!)

We got to take the charter because this year we had 10 kids participating in state star events. We had even more than that qualify but not all were able to attend the state meeting. We had one member judging Star Events. Are we cool or what?

An additional seven kids were attending the meeting as delegates and we had

five parents. This past year we had three district officers, Eric Burton who was president, Patricia Hagman, and Sheila Harvey. Next year we will have one district officer, Dani Wuest.

We also had leadership on the state level with Peer Education Team members Amber Bausch, Heather Ebner, and Sheila Harvey. Our FCCLA sponsor is Regina Stark. She takes a lot of time planning this trip, making it educational and fun. This year we played games at All Star Sports, went to the zoo and ate at an upscale restaurant. Avery cool place!

After our repast, Regina shared some exciting news with us. The Norton FCCLA had been named the state winner of the Community Service project. Not only that, Sheila Harvey was named District Member of the Year for District A! But the coolest thing was Mrs. Stark was named one of two Master Advisors for the State!

We were pretty psyched about all of that (or maybe it was just a sugar high from the chocolate souffle or the creme broulee).

My weekend went on until Tuesday when we arrived back in Norton safe and sound. I picked up the paper and read that the BB gun team took state, the boy's won the track meet on Friday and the golf team also won.

Yes, Norton is a cool place to be from and we have kids that make us proud. Congratulations all around!

## WRITE:

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We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our

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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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