

Nebraska ballot can affect Kansans

There's not a whole lot Kansans can do about what voters in Nebraska decide, except pray.

And we should all be down on our knees praying that the folks up north are smart enough to vote against an amendment to their constitution that will allow more gambling in the state.

Initiative 417 on the Nebraska ballot proposes a constitutional amendment that would allow people to vote on whether they want "to provide for the authorization, operative, regulation and taxation of all forms of games of chance."

It sounds so innocuous, so simple, so safe. It's not. It's a prescription for a lot of headaches and heartaches.

Gambling is an addiction not much different from tobacco, alcohol or drugs, and allowing it to invade your state is not unlike having a family member with a drug problem.

And why should we be concerned if Nebraska has a gambling problem?

Gambling is a social ill, and who wants to live next door to a person with a severe alcohol or drug problem? Our neighbor's problems will be our problems. They are just a few miles away.

Those problems will include husbands and wives spending the entire month's earnings in the casinos; people losing their homes, jobs and spouses to gambling; and increased crime.

About 16 years ago, the good folks of Colorado said it was OK to have small-stakes casino gambling in three mountain communities to breathe the new life into some old mining towns and protect their cultural heritage. You can go into Black Hawk, Central City or Cripple Creek today and see the "cultural heritage" in the historic buildings on blocks beside the road. The towns are full of glitzy casinos and little else. The social problems are enormous and the traffic is unbelievable. People who work at the casinos can't afford to live there.

When a second round of initiatives hit the ballot in Colorado four years later, they were soundly defeated. Voters had seen enough of this "progress."

Up in South Dakota, it is the same story. Ask those who were living in a gambling town if they are better now than before craps, blackjack and slots came to town.

Again, why should we care?

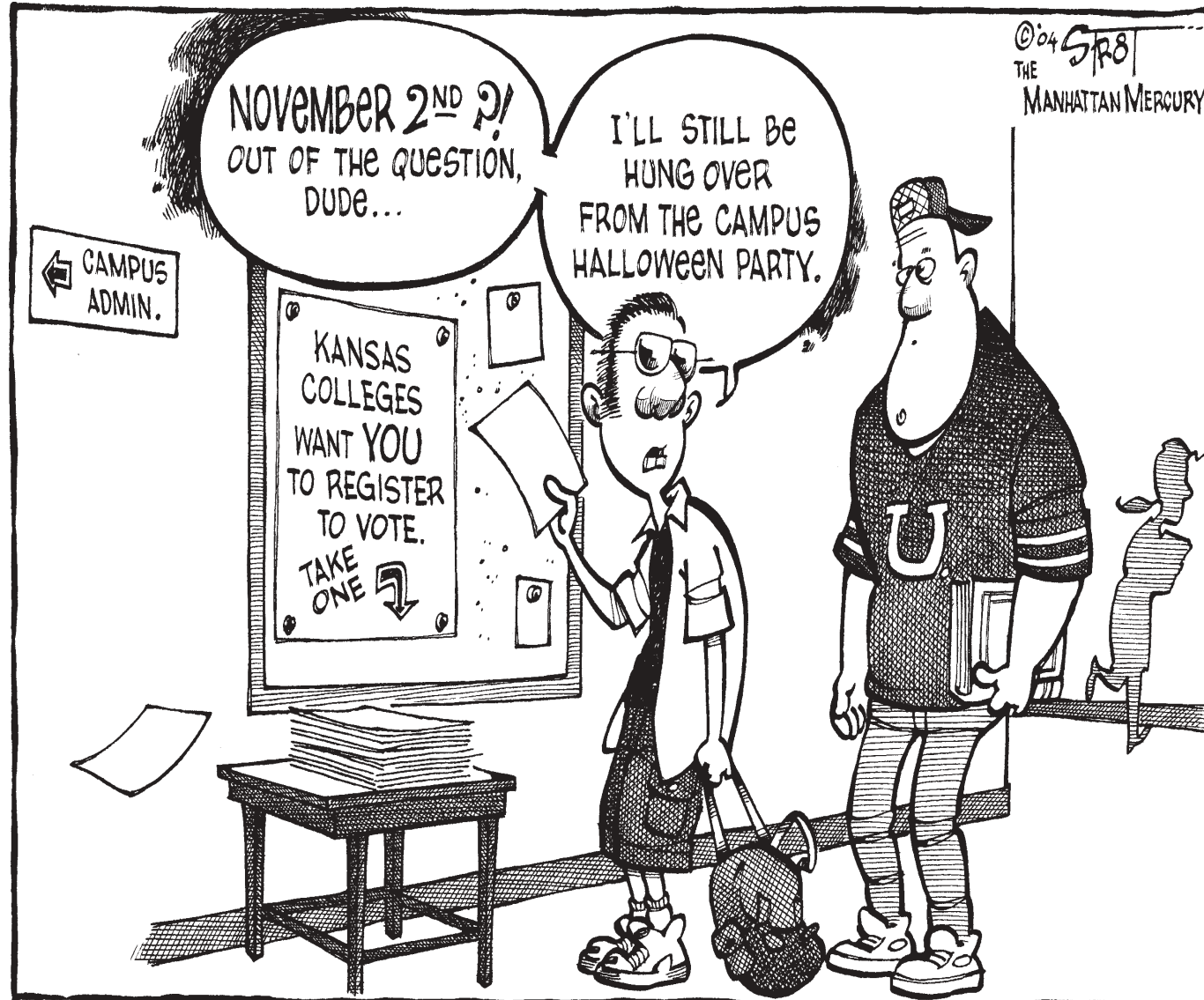
Because we live 15 miles from the border. Folks in the city drive farther than that just to get to the grocery. If Nebraska allows gambling anywhere close to the border, Kansans will flock across to spend their money and the social ills of gambling will taint us as surely as they do our neighbors.

Are we anti-gambling?

We sure are. While the whole country cracks down on tobacco, alcohol and drugs, gambling seems to be gaining a greater and greater hold on the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of our citizens, everything from state lotteries to casinos on Indian reservations.

We know that trends go back and forth, and we can't wait for this one to go back where it came from.

— Cynthia Haynes



It won't be a White House Christmas

When one of your children says, "Mom, I need to tell you some thing," you better find a chair, sit down, shut up and hang on.

My oldest daughter, Halley, began a conversation with me that way last week. "I've quit my job at the White House," she said, "and I'm going to be a consultant. Whadya think?"

"You couldn't wait 'til January?" was my first response. I really wanted to go to one more White House Christmas party.

I soon got over that when I heard the excitement in her voice. I knew there was no chance for advancement in the position she held. And she is far too young, and too educated, to settle into a J.O.B. when a dozen other careers are waiting for her "out there".

She thinks being a consultant is perfect for her.

"Just think, Mom. I can tell people what to do. Then I can leave and don't have to care if they do it or not. And ... I still get paid for it."

"Besides, my office will actually be air conditioned in the summer time and

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



heated in the winter."

The accommodations in the Eisenhower Building, her soon-to-be former office, are less than ideal. Built in the 1800s, it is a majestic, grand structure, but electricity and duct work were far-fetched concepts at that time. Architectural preservationists went into apoplexy at the thought of destroying the integrity of the building with the installation of (gasp) heating and air conditioning.

Because Halley's desk is directly in front of the only window in her office, she freezes in the summer, because that's where the window air conditioning unit is located. She freezes in the winter, too, because the warmth from the small floor

heater doesn't reach back into her corner.

On several levels, I am happy for my daughter's advancing career. But, a little part of me will miss dropping the phrase, "Oh, you know Halley. My daughter who works at THE WHITE HOUSE."

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I have a friend, who is usually demure and mild-mannered. Up to a point. She reached that point when a young person recklessly caused damage to their property.

That's not the worst part. The youth never apologized. Not a word. Not even an acknowledgment.

My friend about popped a cork.

"What kind of parent would let their kid get away with something like that?" she ranted. "My dad would have made us kids go apologize, make the repairs and probably indenture us to whoever we wronged for a month."

What kind of parent, indeed?

One needn't look far. When people refuse to accept responsibility for their actions, it is more than likely that, as children, Mom and Dad never held them accountable. One of life's hardest lessons to learn is that actions have consequences.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Lenora man feels commissioners should be appreciated for all they have done

Dear Editor:

The campaign season seems to have turned into an open season on Norton County commissioners. I'm sure these men are quite capable of standing the heat. However, unsigned fliers, non factual comments passed on as facts, and a lack of acknowledged accomplishments would wear on anyone.

These accomplishments may be what others are calling extraneous issues, but they are important to me and most clear thinking residents of Norton County.

Since we have no right to home rule, take a sip of your bottled water, and put aside what some have downplayed and called irrelevant issues — water supply

and water quality.

Take a deep breath and try to clear your mind of the meaningless concerns for your living environment. Try to forget that these matters would be important to someone looking for a new location to start a new business. We must move on and give credit to John Miller, who represents the district where my family resides, and the rest of the Norton County commissioners for just a few of their accomplishments.

During John's first year serving as a commissioner, the accountant told the commissioners that the county was racing toward a fiscal disaster. The management and budgeting procedures used by

the county were outdated and not in line with the state procedures.

Seven and a half years later, the county now has a tax rate that stimulates private-sector growth, and a budget that has produced a financial reserve. The county's fiscal responsibility and developmental tax rate has allowed many of the businesses to grow.

The county has struggled enough because of the financial impact of the seemingly endless drought. What would have happened if agriculture were the only source of income in the county?

County residents are aging and the proper funding was needed at the county level to update our health care providers. The county commissioners, along with the managers of the Norton County Hospital, Doctor's Clinic, ambulance services and emergency medical teams have found innovative ways for the health care system to grow and meet the county's health care needs.

The county landfill facility has also aged. When the facility was determined to be unsafe, the county commission took the proper fiscally responsible steps to take care of the county's needs.

The commission put in a lot of hard work and difficult negotiations to attain a landfill permit. The negotiations included a well thought out plan for construction of the location that will make use of the county's expertise and equipment.

The county has taken on a number of new road projects along with road upgrades and improvements. Roads are important to a county's vitality. The true test of the county's management skills came when the state declared that 28 bridges needed to be replaced.

The county shined by handling the problem in a fiscally responsible and

timely manner.

A well-maintained and updated airport exponentially benefits the business community and health care providers. The commission and the City of Norton have worked together to bring about a new management plan for the airport. The Norton Airport Board is now comprised of the financial contributors, field professionals and knowledgeable residents. This will give the Norton Airport the hands on care so vital in keeping the Norton Airport a magnet for future economic development.

I could go on about the commission's accomplishments, or I could go on about the boards and panels John serves on to better serve Norton County. I could tell of how John so wanted to understand the confined animal feeding operation, he took the time to obtain the certificate required to operate such a facility. I could tell of how thoroughly John studies an issue before he decides what is the best course of action.

Between you and me, contracting the West Nile Virus to study the health care services may have pushed the envelope a little too far. I believe I can better sum it up by saying John is one of only about 80 certified county commissioners in the state. This certification takes a lot of time and effort and has directly benefited the county.

The Norton County commissioners have developed an environment that will bring in new diversity businesses and promote the growth of the county's business base.

To John Miller and all the commissioners, I say thank you for your hard work.

Sincerely,
Steven L. Berry
Lenora

WRITE:

The Norton Telegram 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.

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 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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