

New idea could reduce the number of meth labs in Kansas

An idea which seems to have worked in Oklahoma is coming to Kansas, and unlike most of the war on drugs, it might just work. Oklahoma forced drug stores to move the cold remedy pseudoephedrine behind the pharmacy counter. Police officials say it's reduced the number of meth labs found in the state by more than 80 percent in a year.

That's remarkable for such a simple change. Sudafed, as the brand-name version is known, is still available over the counter, but purchasers have to sign for it. Pharmacists get a chance to size up the buyer. Meth freaks with a lack of sniffles might wind up talking to the cops.

Pseudoephedrine is a key component of meth manufacturing. The tiny red (or white) tablets provide the main feedstock for the chemical process of "cooking" meth. Take away the supply, and you make the task immeasurably more difficult.

We suspect that meth use hasn't declined by 80 percent in Oklahoma. That would be too much to ask for. But the state is nearly free of dangerous, smelly labs and the residue which litters roadsides, pollutes houses and endangers children.

That's a clear victory that's all too rare in the battle against drugs, even if it means the labs just move to the next state. Kansas would do well to follow suit. Drive the labs to Missouri or Arkansas, for all we care.

Drug enforcement is a difficult game. Most measures simply hamper the drug trade without really reducing it. Making drugs illegal guarantees nothing but jobs for drug agents and drug smugglers.

The real answer, of course, is teaching kids the dangers of drugs and hoping they have sense enough to listen. There's evidence that is working in America, too, at least, working better than border interdiction or profiling smugglers on the highway.

But if a law can put any kind of a dent in the meth trade, we're all for it. Of all the illegal drugs, meth comes closest to alcohol in its destructive power. Meth ruins lives, wrecks bodies, rends families, leaves relatives crying and victims destitute.

It's a wicked substance. We probably cannot drive it from the face of the earth — since you can make it in the kitchen — but if we push the labs out of Kansas, we'll have succeeded in cleaning up the place.

It's worth a try. — Steve Haynes

New bill could reduce trade restrictions

Congressman Jerry Moran introduced legislation that works to clarify federal regulations for agriculture trade with Cuba. The bipartisan legislation mirrors legislation introduced by Sen. Pat Roberts.

"Cuba represents a multi-million dollar market for American farm products," Congressman Moran said. "For too long, other nations have stepped in to fill the gap in the market once dominated by the United States. While we have successfully opened the door to trade with Cuba, bureaucracy and vague regulations have kept us from moving forward. Producers trying to expand agriculture exports should not face their biggest roadblock in Washington, D.C."

In 2000, the congressman led the charge to pass legislation lifting sanctions on agriculture trade with Cuba. The legislation allowed for the export of Kansas farm products to Cuba for the first time in 38 years. That legislation overwhelmingly passed in the House, 301 to 116.

Today's legislation works to clarify Congress' intent in the 2000 measure to legally sell agriculture goods to Cuba and

Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran



streamlines the trade process. It will make it easier for U.S. agriculture producers to travel to Cuba.

"Our Cuban trade policy is broken," Moran said. "Instead of bringing Fidel Castro to his knees economically, we have strengthened him politically and have penalized American farmers in the process. Farmers and ranchers face enough challenges just keeping their family farms running, and we should not be turning business away. I have urged my colleagues to support our farmers through this legislation."

For more information, contact Congressman Moran at (202) 225-2715 or visit his web page at www.house.gov/moranks01/.



Things happen for a reason, right?

Sometimes nothing goes as planned, and if it weren't for "Plan B," there would be no plan at all.

It was a late night getting ready to leave on another mission trip to Juarez. The night was made later because the clothes dryer chose that particular time to quit drying.

Oh, not entirely quit. Just enough that I would have to reset the timer every 15 minutes in order to have any heat at all.

Three o'clock in the morning is not the greatest time to be doing laundry anyway, but I needed some things for the trip, so it had to be done.

Eventually got about an hour and a half of sleep before it was time to load the car and meet the rest of the team. We, of course, took twice as much as we should have and needed a stick to stuff it all in. We kissed the cat good-bye, knowing our good neighbor, Barbara, would come feed him while we are away.

When we arrived at our departure point, one member had been waiting more than an hour for us because I had not told him

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



of a last-minute change.

Nonetheless, we stowed our gear, piled in the van and headed out.

Thirty miles down the road, we stopped at a lumber yard to see some cabinets Jim built and for our first "pit stop."

Back in the van, I opened the envelope with the cash and money orders we would be using for the trip.

Only, guess what? No money orders.

I had left them on the table back at the house. Nothing to do but go back and get them.

We learned in our "40 Days of Purpose" study that everything happens for a reason, but for the life of me I can't think what

the reason for leaving the money behind might have been.

Perhaps we missed an accident we would have had, had we not taken that hour delay in back tracking.

At this writing we are safely in El Paso and connected with another team from Colorado. We have only known them a few hours, but already we are old friends. Over the next four days, we will work together, play together and pray together.

Tomorrow, we cross the border and enter another world. It takes us out of our comfort zone for a few days and humbles us.

One young man who came with us is inquisitive about everything. I am anxious to see the changes he is about to experience. I guarantee, he will not go home the same person he was when he came.

No matter what your reasons are for coming, there is something about a mission trip that changes you. I think it makes you better. I know it's what keeps drawing us back.

Marriage amendment passes House

The fourth week of the 2005 legislative session saw the settlement of the first "big" issue. The constitutional amendment defining marriage was debated and passed by the House on Feb. 2.

The attention paid this issue by constituents, legislators and media will now shift some of the other prominent issues, including education finance, health care and the death penalty.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 1601, commonly known as the Defense of Marriage Amendment, was passed by the House this week. The amendment garnered 86 "yes" votes on final action, more than the necessary two-thirds required to pass a constitutional amendment, and will be placed on a statewide ballot in April.

A simple majority of "yes" votes on the ballot will amend the state Constitution to define marriage as "...being constituted by one man and one woman only. All other marriages are declared to be contrary to the public policy of this state and are considered void."

If, as expected, the amendment passes, the Constitution will then match the definition of marriage in the current Kansas law.

The subject of healthcare encompasses a wide and varied landscape of issues. A great deal of media and lobbyist attention has been focused on three bills in the Health and Human Services Committee chaired by Rep. Jim Morrison (R-Colby).

Testimony on HB 2137, which would require public school vending machines to incorporate healthy snack foods, milk and fruit juices, was heard on Feb. 2-3. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Jason Watkins (R-Wichita), is expected to be moved out of committee within the week.

Another bill that is beginning to garner some national media attention is HB 2256. This would allow advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNP) to prescribe medicine to patients without the

House Happenings

Rep. John Faber



consent of a medical doctor, effectively giving them full medical authority. Passage of this bill would increase competition in the medical field, theoretically driving costs down while increasing the quality of care. Testimony on HB 2256 is scheduled for Feb. 8-9.

Rep. Tom Sloan (R-Lawrence) is the primary sponsor of HB 2077, a bill establishing a state cancer drug repository. This bill would allow drug companies, hospitals or patients to turn in unused cancer medications to participating hospitals and clinics to be redistributed to needy patients.

A unique feature of the Health and Human Services Committee is that all of its meetings are broadcast live on the web. The Internet address for the committee is www.kslegislature.org/committeeminutes/0506/house/hhealth/h_hhs.shtml

The House Education Committee and House Select Committee on Education Finance are nearly done meeting and discussing the issues of suitability and weighting. A bill that addresses the Supreme Court's ruling on school finance is

expected in the next few weeks. Once a bill is drafted, the committee will listen to testimony, refine the legislation if needed and then move it to the House floor.

The House Republican leadership is optimistic that a suitable, long-term solution to the school finance formula will be found.

Most committees are still hearing testimony, but several interesting bills could be moved out this week.

Rep. Ward Loyd (R-Garden City), chairman of the Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee, has indicated that the committee will begin discussions regarding the death penalty next week. The Kansas Supreme Court recently ruled the current death penalty statute unconstitutional. This is a complex issue, and a more thorough discussion will be included in the next newsletter.

The Financial Institutions Committee, chaired by Rep. Ray Cox (R-Bonner Springs), will hear testimony on a bill that would cap interest rates for lenders. The impetus behind this bill is to disallow "payday loan" stores from charging exorbitant rates to consumers.

The Wildlife, Tourism and Parks Committee, chaired by Rep. Don Myers (R-Derby), were to work HB 2115 on Feb. 7. The bill will repeal a law passed late last session that limited the areas in which bow hunters could hunt. Passage of this bill will again allow bow hunters to hunt statewide.

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