

## Some words used more than they should be

We've noticed how some words tend to get in the collective mind and stick, whether they ought to be there nor not. Mandate comes to mind. It's a perfectly good English word, meaning an authoritative order, especially a written one. It's not, however, a synonym for order or require. It has a more specific meaning. If you listen to the bureaucrats, though, it's mandate this and mandate that. No one says require anymore. And "unfunded mandates" are everywhere. People say mandate when they're not really sure what it means. We'd like to mandate people to stop using the word. Then there is fund. There was a time when the use of funds was, at best, a genteelism used in place of the more crass money. It might be used by a banker or a particularly erudite bum in a movie. The word means a supply that can be drawn upon, or a sum of money set aside for some particular purpose. Except in technical financial circles, it wasn't thought of as a verb. Today, it's the hot synonym for money. Bureaucrats talk about "getting some funding." Officials say, "we'll fund that." It's not that it's wrong; it's just that it's not the way "real people" talk. That's one of the things about a bureaucracy. Bureaucrats set themselves apart from the rest of us by talking lingo. And those who hang around with them, like newspaper reporters, tend to pick up the argot. Every business has its lingo. Newspaper people talk about tabs and cutlines and inches like ordinary people knew what they meant. (That's tabloid, a paper size; a photo caption; and column inches, a unit of square measure, in case you wondered.) But that kind of language doesn't belong in public. Everyone — school officials, teachers, public officials, reporters, bureaucrats — has a duty to talk plain language when they're outside the shop. It may be good to set yourself apart with "in" talk, but it's not good communication. Reporters spend hours trying to straighten this stuff out, and not always too successfully. There's more — take community. Community is everywhere, means everything. "The community this, the community that." People who say it just mean "people" or "the town." But we know we're fighting a losing battle here. No one wants any of our unfunded mandates. Surely no one will fund our crusade, if we're allowed to use that term. And we don't think the community cares.

— Steve Haynes



## Whoever said Kansas is flat is wrong

It probably says a lot about me that this irks me so much but there are some things that just don't make sense to me on any level. For instance Kansas takes a lot of flack about being flat. A year ago someone studied the situation and decided Kansas actually is flatter than a pancake. They supposedly made a model proving that Kansas does not have enough hills and vales to compare to the holes where the pancake rises. Nonsense! I have given this a lot of thought and did a little research. I don't quite know what you would compare Kansas to, but flat it isn't. You see the highest point in Kansas is Mount Sunflower, elevation 4,039 feet, and the lowest point is in Montgomery County at 680 feet. The highest point is almost six times greater than the lowest. It is a difference of 3,359 feet. Many states have less difference, including North Dakota, New Jersey and Arkansas. In general the state is an incline — all the county seats on the Colorado border are above 3,250 feet and all of those on the

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Nancy Hagman



Missouri border are 1,000 feet or less. And, if I was to make a pancake and Montgomery County ended up being 16 inch thick, Mount Sunflower would be 1-inch high. Time to level the stove. Goodland would be doughy and the eastern third of the state would be burnt to a crisp. This is actually close to the truth. At 2,260 feet Norton would be perfect. The west has traditionally been considered unfinished. All points to the east — well make up your own analogy. It is obvious that eastern Kansas is lower than western Kansas because that is the way all the rivers flow. It also seems that all our best resources — our young people, jobs and tax dollars flow that way also. Getting anything to western Kansas is an uphill battle all the way. Everything travels the path of least re-

sistance, even manure — maybe that is why we get so many bad ideas out of Topeka. Another pet peeve of mine is the BMI (or body mass index). Some fool decided that you should take your height times a certain number then divide that by your weight. Or is it your weight times a certain number and divide it by your height? Either way, you then check a scale to discover your body mass. Certain "masses" are desirable. Maybe I am wrong, but I am pretty sure it doesn't matter what you divide by what or which figure (height or weight) you use where. It is just a matter of the ratio of height to weight. So why not just divide your weight by your height? Or better yet — look in a mirror, that's all I do and unfortunately it is pretty easy to tell, my "mass" is not good. If you want to believe Kansas is flatter than a pancake, go right ahead. If you need a calculator to realize you need to lose weight, figure away. I just wish I didn't have to read about it in the paper. And how I wish people would quit believing things just because they read it somewhere, lots of other people accept it as true or it appears to be scientific.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

### Wildlife Commissioner asks people to support parks

Dear Editor: I'm writing to encourage all Kansans to express their support for state parks and outdoor recreation. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks introduced a measure in the Kansas Senate this legislative session that will provide for a stable, long-term funding source for state parks, public wildlife areas, state fishing lakes and community parks. Senate Bill 87 will create a \$4 recreational access fee collected with motor vehicle registrations which allows all Kansas residents with current registration free year-round access to all state parks. By fiscal year 2006, our park system will no longer be supported by the State General Fund. Fifty years ago, when Kansas dedicated its first park, 70 percent of system funding came from the general fund. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks now manages 24 parks across the state, providing everyone with a splendid variety of outdoor opportunities, including wildlife observation, camping, hiking, fishing, biking, hunting and boating. Without adequate support, parks will open later and close earlier, cut services,

and some may close altogether. Since all Kansans benefit from a good park system through tourism and economic development, a substantial increase in user fees as the only source is unpopular and undependable. For the person who purchases an annual park vehicle pass under the present law, this bill will save \$41.50. A daily pass is currently \$2.50 more than the proposed fee for a full year. One added benefit to instituting this change will be to fund the dormant Local Outdoor Recreation Grant Program. When the parks division had sufficient tax support in years past, local governments received matching funds for their own worthy park and recreation projects. A portion of the \$4 fee will be set aside each year for this program, which at one time helped over 100 Kansas communities. A new approach to preserving state parks may very well spark new usage. I can't see a downside if this happens. At a time when our society struggles with a crisis in health care, a little exercise and recreation in the outdoors will go far in preventing disease and disability. The concept is simple; greater activity, better health. Please let your lawmakers know Kansas needs SB 87 enacted. Our state has a wonderful, diverse system of parks that should be guaranteed a future beyond our lifetimes. Through this step, we can all have a hand in protecting the natural, cultural and historical resources of Kansas. Sincerely, Doug Sebelius Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

### Man happy with reunion coverage

Dear Cynthia, I wish to thank the Norton Telegram for the tremendous coverage given to the reunion of the 1951 State Basketball Championship team. We are grateful for the individual effort put forth by Dick Boyd, Sonya Montgomery and Carolyn Plotts. Without their outstanding work the reunion would not have been a success. Your printing of extra copies of the paper for us was very thoughtful. They

have been shared with family and friends all over the country. It is nice to know that there are still great people in Norton. Will stop in to see you if I'm ever in Norton again. Go Blue Jays! Rock Chalk Jayhawk!

Ray Bower  
50 Riverdale Rd  
Newark, OH 43055

### Cemetery needs a helping hand

Dear Editor: I would like to commend and thank the Cemetery Beautification Committee for their accomplishments thus far. I know they feel they have a long way to go yet. Norton is a beautiful town and we have so much to be proud of. We have beautiful churches, schools, a beautiful library and lovely parks. Our downtown with all the floral plantings in various places is also beautiful but our cemetery leaves a lot to be desired. Our forefathers who planned and built this town and our loved ones who are resting there also deserve a place of beauty, dignity and peace.

These past few dry years have been conducive to growth of sandburs. Joe and I have gone to tend family graves and Joe has dug many. Could a pre-emergent be used in early spring to stop growth before seeds germinate? Let's get behind the beautification committee and support them in their efforts. Talk to them and see what you can do to help. Committee members are: Beverly Klein, Carolyn Higgason, Alberta Slaby, Dorothy Brown, Alta Fahrenbruch, Mark Klein and Charles Worden. Sincerely, Rosetta McFarland

**THE NORTON TELEGRAM**

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