

Amendment may make open records constitutional law

This is Sunshine Week, dedicated to open government. It's a new national celebration, devoted to the idea that the people need to know what their public servants are doing. In a democracy, that should be a simple concept. In Kansas, it drew support from the governor, legislative leaders, the attorney general and members of Congress. And it comes just a couple of weeks after the attorney general met privately with members of the state Board of Education to talk about evolution.

That illustrates the problem: Often, officials are afraid to discuss public business out in the open. They may seek political advantage, or they're embarrassed by the topic. Sometimes they claim they're protecting someone's privacy, or avoiding a lawsuit.

State open meetings and open record laws have exceptions to cover legitimate problems, but the reasons for secrecy often go beyond those. Officials sometimes don't understand the people's right to know, or they just don't care.

Kansas has good laws, but still officials try to dodge them when they think openness will hurt them. Sometimes, they keep secrets just because they can. Clerks often put roadblocks in the way of citizens seeking government records, though the law may say they are open.

Ignorance of this right may be its worst enemy. Often people go home without the information they need or want about their government.

In a continuing push for openness, the Kansas Press Association has formed a coalition to put open government into the state Constitution, protecting the right to know for all time and publicizing its importance.

This drew broad support in Topeka, everywhere from the governor's office to the Democratic and Republican leadership, both liberal and conservative. The coalition has been hampered by the evolution meetings, however, and the amendment hasn't moved much.

— Steve Haynes

Legislation includes transportation money

Congressman Jerry Moran has sponsored a comprehensive transportation bill, which authorizes money for federal highways, public transportation programs and safety initiatives for the next six years.

In Kansas, this bill would invest more than \$2 billion in transportation programs and is estimated to create thousands of new jobs.

"The transportation system in Kansas is vital to the success of our state," Mr. Moran said. "Our roads do more than just allow us to transport goods to market; they connect communities in a patchwork that comprises the very fabric of our state. Therefore, it is important that our infrastructure needs are met, and this bill will help make this goal a reality."

Kansas has the fourth largest number of public roads in the nation, more than 134,500 miles, and ranks third among all states in the number of bridges. The First Congressional District alone has more road miles than 29 states.

Included in the bill are initiatives to improve the safety of the nation's roads and Interstate System, in addition to upgrading bridges and roads across the na-

Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran



tion. It is estimated that the bill would also create millions of jobs in transportation. Moran is a member of the House Transportation Committee and was actively involved in Congress' last transportation bill that became law in 1998.

"Transportation is vital for the economic welfare of Kansas," Moran said. "I will continue to be a strong advocate for our transportation needs as Congress debate on this bill. I have urged my colleagues to take quick action on this to get these resources out of Washington, D.C. and into our communities where it is needed most."

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

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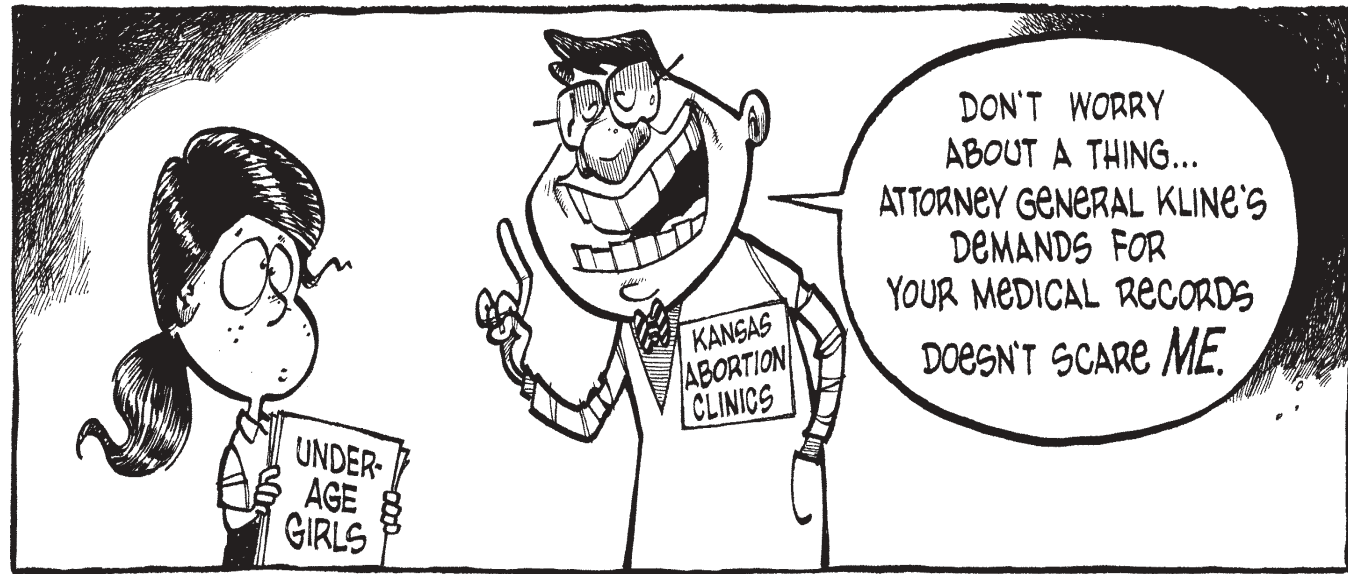
Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd

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Incorporating the Norton County Champion

Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



An optimist is in there somewhere

It seems more like spring every day. The extra sunshine has caused me to do some self-examination and I decided I am too grouchy and need to write about some happy topics.

But first — the column about Kansas being flatter than a pancake — well a decimal point was left out of the reference to the lowest point in the state. It should have said .16 (point 16) inch not 16 inch. I try to be cheerful but someone always ruins it.

And yet the sun came up and that surprised me because the weather report I saw said we were supposed to have snow today.

We are glad it isn't snowing because we are finally having baby calves and the whole point of calving in the middle of March is to have nice weather. There is nothing like a baby calf to lift your spirits.

And the most amazing thing had happened at our house, the hubby has decided to do his spring-cleaning (which he has put off since about 1986).

Desire to sell the place being his motivating factor but I'll take what I can get.

Teacher Elizabeth has spring break this week so she is helping. Speaking of happy things that would be Elizabeth. The middle child, she has her sweet little ways of getting along with everyone.

Once when she was about 3 we were in Norton with friends. There were four little

Back Home
Nancy Hagman



ones age 5 and under.

It had snowed and it was melting. When we walked out of Lujon's it was dripping off the awning and every one of the kids yelped when a cold water drop hit their heads.

Except Elizabeth who somehow managed to walk in between the drops. She looked at the other fussy kids like they were crazy. You know it really is so much easier if you don't raise a fuss about every little thing.

Recently the hubby's sister was talking about her grandchildren.

They are all very young (less than 2 years) but she mentioned a personality trait she could see in one of them. I wonder where he got that, we all laughed — because, you see, he is just like his mother.

Women sometimes worry that they will become just like their mothers but as Susie then pointed out it is just as horrifying to mothers to see their children become like them. Especially when we see things we don't really like about ourselves.

I see it so plainly in my youngest; she cares so much, wants the world to be a perfect place and expects everyone to be ethical and honest. About once a week she calls all wound up about how unfair something is or how disappointed she is with someone.

"Learn to walk between the raindrops", I want to tell her.

But I don't know how to tell her to do it because I can't do it either.

Still I would say I am an optimist. A deeply cynical optimist perhaps, but an optimist just the same.

I always believe things will get better. I know spring will come. The sun will rise every morning.

The reason I remain an optimist is because I can find humor in almost everything.

Henry Ward Beecher said, "A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs — jolted by every pebble in the road".

It is not selfish to do things that make you happy. It is wise. Go look at some baby calves or crocuses or trees trying to leaf out.

Do some spring-cleaning (or even better get someone else to do it for you!)

And have a nice day.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Purchasing daffodils from the Cancer Society has lifted everyone's spirits around our office. They're so bright and cheering, it's scary.

Relationships take work and respect

I was recently watching an Oprah video for work. It was on the role of both the mother and father in the family.

Several things stood out for me, but the saddest was the phrase used by both, "Well, if things don't change, I'm afraid our marriage won't last."

Choices are important and certainly there are times when divorce is the only option, but I always have to smile when I hear the phrase, "irreconcilable differences."

Anyone who has been married for more than a day realizes there will be irreconcilable differences. The issue is not the differences, but how we get around them. The ability to agree to disagree.

Respect is key to families.

As I watch people in their relationships with their children, spouses, friends or

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



parents probably nothing is as important as respect.

It is not about agreement. The differences are the challenges and opportunities for success. They don't need to be the blocks of destruction.

You can tell the families where respect is valued when you witness the interactions of the members.

Children learn respect; they aren't born with it. When they witness their parents

using the same conversation tools between each other as they do with their best friends they realize the value each has for the other.

Through the years I think we have come to believe that relationships are inborn and don't require work.

The saying, anything worth having is worth working for, is a valuable mantra. It doesn't need to apply just to our finances or our job, but to life and relationships.

Working on relationships helps us to understand and value each other. And that really is what love is about. Not about convincing the other they are wrong or changing the other person, but growing within to accept the differences and celebrating them, rather than using them as an excuse to separate from the relationship.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Norton man appreciates Blue Jay sports coverage

To the Editor:

I know I speak for many when I say how much I appreciate the sports writings of Dick Boyd.

Dick covers it all and gives a good account of Bluejay sports action as well as many other area schools whenever possible.

Thanks Dick.

I also need to make a clarification on the recent article about the championship

wrestlers and coaches.

The information about this team and individual wrestlers was great. The recognition was well deserved.

Some who read the article may have come away with the impression that it was written by me. While I have read, seen and written some history of Bluejay sports the wrestling information shared that evening was prepared by Greg Mann, superintendent of USD 211.

I just wanted to be sure that credit was given where it was due.

I am the public address announcer for most home Bluejay athletic events. But the public address announcer is only as good as those who work with him and provide information.

Thanks Mr. Mann and thanks again Dick.

Bruce Poage
Norton