

Questions are part of what keeps us free

The Kansas secretary of state was in town a week ago talking about the primary election and trying to calm some angry people — people who felt his office had let them down.

He talked to some of them, but he missed an important segment — those who had complained about the election.

After the August primary, George Gassmann, who lost the Republican race for the 3rd District county commission seat by just one vote, and his wife Vickie wrote the secretary of state's office with a list of questions on how the election was handled.

The Gassmanns had a lot of questions about how ballots were handled and what people were told.

An official at the secretary's office wrote that he would look into them, although most of their questions needed to be answered by the Norton County Clerk Robert Wyatt, who is in charge of elections.

The letter said that there might have been things done wrong, and if so, they would talk to Mr. Wyatt about fixing his procedures.

The secretary's office sent copies of both letters to Mr. Wyatt, who was angry and hurt and said so.

By the time the Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh was in town last week, his office had satisfied itself that there had been no wrongdoing in the election.

Someone mentioned that if Mr. Gassmann had won the election, he probably wouldn't have written with a list of complaints.

Probably not.

Those on the inside are a lot more able to get information than those on the outside.

The Gassmanns had questions — still have questions — they don't feel were fully answered. They had the right, and we a duty, to bring those questions to the attention of the person in charge of elections in the state of Kansas.

We feel that the Norton County election workers did their best during the primary. We also believe some of them probably gave out misinformation.

We say this because when he was talking to people last week, Mr. Thornburgh had to explain the complications of who could vote for which party three times before most understood the new rules, and a lot of people at the meeting were poll workers.

It's complicated. The courts and the Republican and Democratic parties did us no favors when they changed the rules.

Even people who thought they knew what they were talking about were confused.

We don't believe any unintentional misinformation changed the election, however. Everyone got to vote, some with a provisional ballot. If they were eligible according to state law, their votes were counted. If not, their votes were voided.

Nothing anyone said at the polls could make a voter eligible or ineligible. That depended on how they were registered, and voter registration closed two weeks before the election.

Still, no one thanked the Gassmanns for questioning the system. No one even thought to invite them to talk to Mr. Thornburgh, where they could have hashed out some of their concerns and problems.

But its people like George and Vickie Gassmann who keep this country free. They ask questions. They question authority. They make sure that things are done right and fairly.

Don't sweep those who disagree out the door, or we'll find the door locked someday — and we'll all be on the outside looking in.

— Cynthia Haynes

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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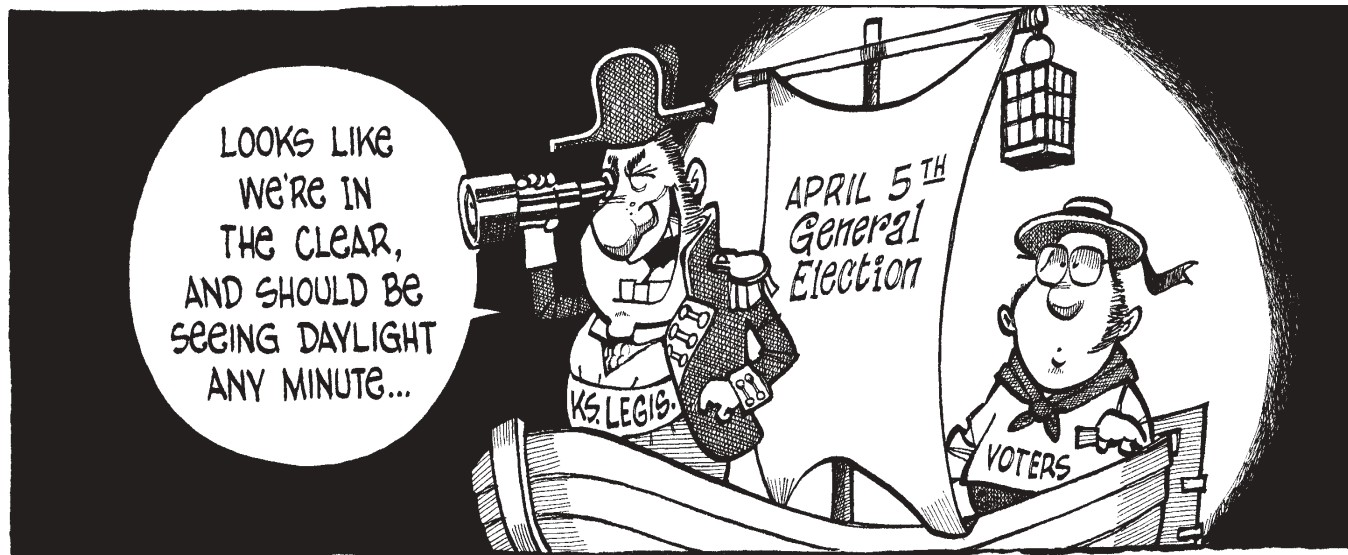
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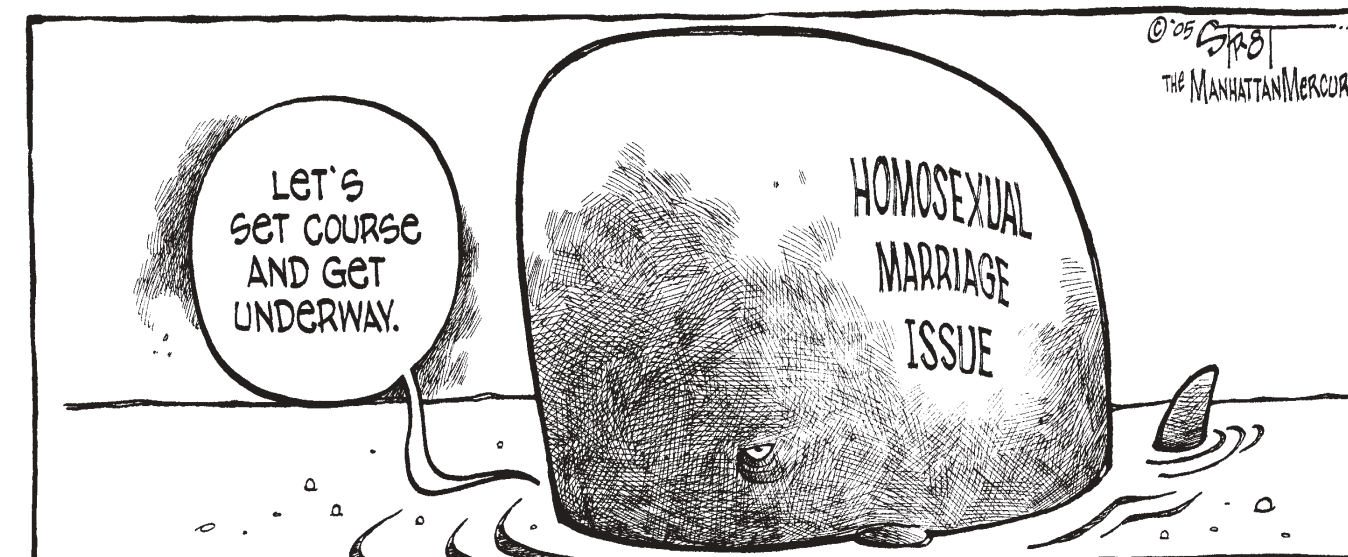
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LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN THE CLEAR, AND SHOULD BE SEEING DAYLIGHT ANY MINUTE...

APRIL 5TH General Election

VOTERS



LET'S GET COURSE AND GET UNDERWAY.

HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE ISSUE

Change can be a beautiful thing

Watching the news of the Pope's death and the subsequent reactions of people around the world was a remarkable thing.

It served to remind me of our propensity to change and come to a greater understanding with exposure and experience.

I came of age at a time when blacks were still being forced to stand on the bus, the thought of a Catholic president raised fear in the Protestant population and the idea of female cabinet members being almost commonplace seemed unlikely.

Now, I watch in wonder as our President attends the pope's funeral and has ordered our nation's flags to half-staff. We also now have the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who is not only black but female.

This is evidence of a greater tolerance, broader acceptance and heightened awareness of our diverse existence.

Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



Sometimes it seems as if change is slow and in its own way, it is, but it is also beautifully sculpted to gain the maximum effect.

Nobel prize winning physicist Max Planck said that new ideas do not gain acceptance, their opponents merely die out. And in a way that is true, but also part of the beauty of these changes is watching those who have witnessed them adjust.

My mother was 100 years old when she died, but her thinking on issues remained

tolerant and progressive to the end. In her lifetime she saw many social upheavals and she adjusted to these by remembering each person was someone's child, spouse or friend. She could put a personal face on a universal situation. She saw her role as an observer, not a judge.

At a time when our country is fraught with disagreement on issues such as gay marriage, assisted suicide and the fight on terror, it is hard to imagine these issues resolving in any compromise.

Fifty years ago the issues were different but the emotion was as great and now we ponder where society will be in 40 more years. I don't know which answers are right and which are wrong, but I trust in a God and in a people made in his image.

He will ever so gently lead and guide us to accept the outcome and live with the results.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Superintendent stands behind district's decision to reroof

To the Editor:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the letter from Harvey Knoll, Jr., representing a roofing company in Osborne which was published in your newspaper on April 1.

The letter states that the price for replacing the roofs will be "over \$750,000." Mr. Knoll must be psychic as the bids for this project were due on April 6 — a full week after he wrote his letter.

The original estimate of \$484,000 to replace the roofs in question was arrived at in January by the USD 211 roof consultant. As all roofing products are tied to the price of oil, this estimate may unfortunately turn out to be low. At the time the estimate was determined, oil was not \$57 per barrel.

Even if the bids are at or over \$500,000, does it make much sense to spend half or more (\$271,000 is Mr. Knoll's estimate) to repair roofs that are 20 years old?

In regards to whether or not the roofs need to be replaced, the USD 211's insurance carrier has a roof inspector. He was in Norton during the week of March 28 to inspect the roofs of the Norton Community Schools.

He has concurred wholeheartedly with the planned replacement of the roofs. It was his unbiased professional opinion that to spend money on the repair of these roofs instead of full replacement would be money foolishly spent. At best, it was his professional opinion that two to three years of further service could be had from some of the roofs before they will need to be fully replaced. Some of the very roofs which the roofing company from Osborne has said need only to be coated are the very roofs that both the USD 211 roof consultant and the insurance company's roof inspector recommend to be replaced immediately.

Also, contrary to Mr. Knoll's letter, the roofs being considered for replacement are leaking and are wet under the outer

membrane. To seal in that moisture will allow the growth of mold and lead to eventual, even more severe, maintenance problems in the near future.

Mr. Knoll's letter states that some of the other roofing contractors looking to bid the roofs were wondering why the roofs need to be replaced. When asked which roofing contractor made this statement, the representatives of the roofing company from Osborne could not say. Mr. Knoll's letter has been shared with the other contractors. They have responded in writing or with phone calls stating that they did not make any such statements. In fact, the only contractors heard by USD 211 personnel to make statements such as these are the representatives of the roofing company from Osborne.

The superintendent and board of education will be the first to admit that they know little about the technical aspects of roofs or roofing. They do, however, realize the extreme importance which sound roofs have in protecting our very expensive buildings and the property and equipment in them. This is why the service of a professional roof consultant was sought

in the spring of 2003 for the purpose of having a full inspection and evaluation of the district's roofs.

Joe Baker was hired to do this evaluation and was also subsequently hired to develop the project specifications. He has over 35 years of experience in the commercial roofing business. This includes the management, partial ownership and full ownership of roofing companies in Wichita which had among their clients Beech Aircraft and Coleman Industries. His training, experience, credentials and reputation in regards to roofs are above reproach.

The Norton board of education strives to be good stewards of the public's money and they know that the amount of money to be committed to this project is large. They believe that the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the Norton Community Schools' excellent facilities is of great importance and a wise investment. The board of education is looking to a solution which will be long term and less expensive, over time, than the one favored by the roofing company from Osborne.

Greg Mann, superintendent of schools

Norton women happy with coverage

To the Editor:

This is to express the thanks and appreciation from Norma Rumford and myself, for the publicity you gave the Daffodil Days Campaign in Norton County this

year. We were pleased that the donations to the American Cancer Society totaled \$4,157.

Sincerely,
Beverly Kindler

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

★ Governor Kathleen Sebelius, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-2322

★ U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514

★ U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

★ U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124