

Americans need to get involved with democracy

Americans prize democracy, but sometimes we seem to take it for granted.

In our region, there are dozens of townships, small towns, school districts where no one bothers to file for office.

Local office doesn't pay very well, if at all. Some entities don't do very much.

People complain about the lack of interest, but nothing much changes.

Most towns and schools eventually get a full compliment of board members. Most of these boards do an admirable job.

But why don't people care enough to run?

Why do so many incumbents stand for re-election unopposed? Does anybody really care?

Here's a proposition that would get people out to run for office. Let's make it state law that for any county, city, school district, township or special board where no one files for each seat in an election, that district, city or county stands to be dissolved.

There would be a question on the ballot, "Should this 'name of entity' be dissolved according to the law of the State of Kansas?" Oh, we can hear the howls already.

But it would put voters to the test.

Do they care?

Do they want the schools to stay open? The township to grade roads? The city to maintain its services?

Or would it be better just to let things go?

Our guess is few questions would ever make it to the ballot, at least in cities and school districts. There might be some tiny places that would just go away. A few school districts have dissolved already, though not for lack of interest.

People loved them. Lack of kids did them in.

The way things are, people get elected to some boards with just a few write-in ballots. That's not the way democracy is supposed to work.

Voters don't really have much of a choice. Things usually work out, sometimes surprisingly well. But we can do better.

It allows small groups to get together under the radar and plot things out. Voters don't know what to expect. A few people can "railroad" a stealth campaign and get a slate elected with a minority of the vote.

It may be legal, but it's not good government.

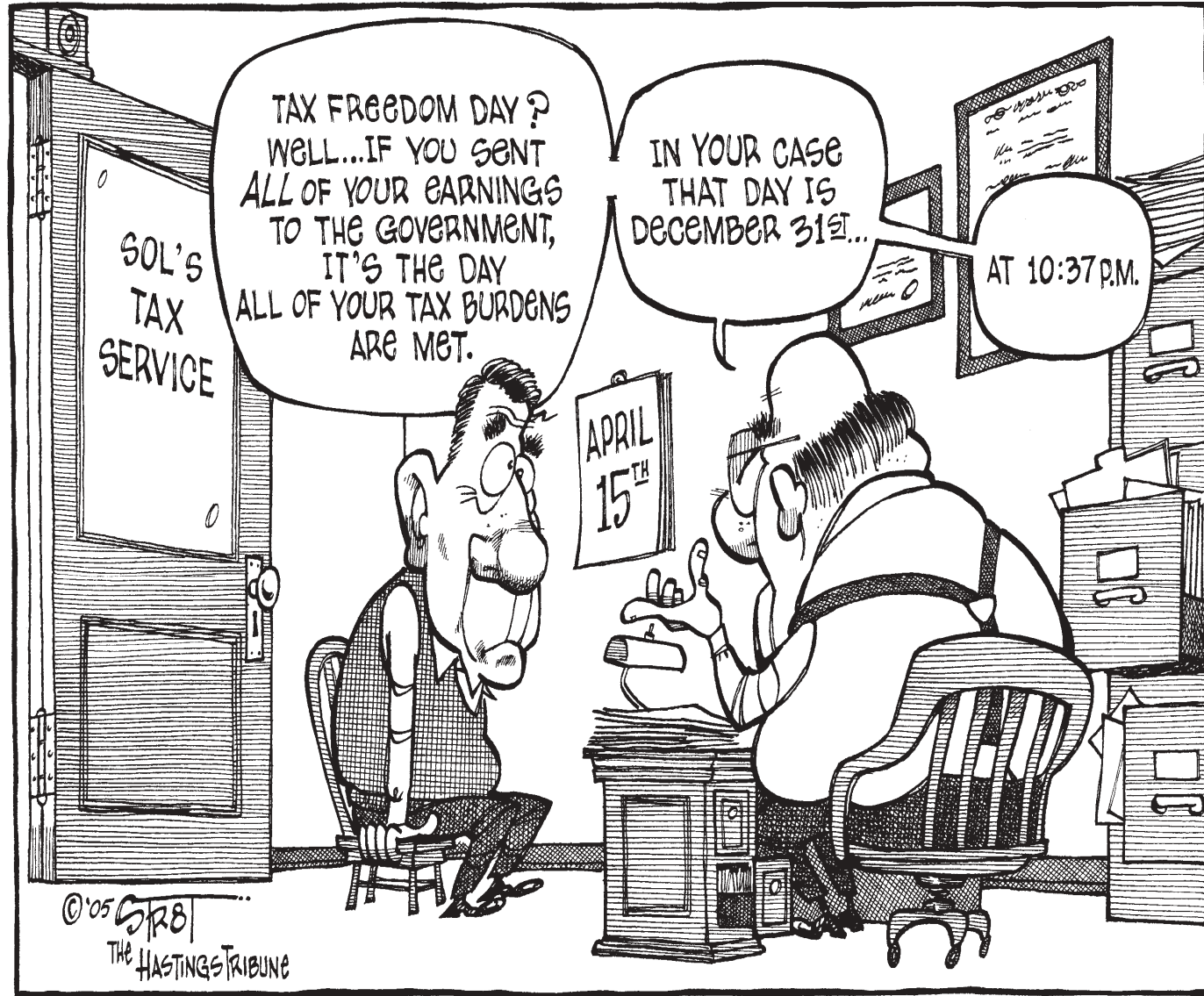
If a town or school faced dissolution, our guess is people would get their names on the ballot. Voters would know what is coming. Interest would increase, and elections would mean more to the average person.

If not, people could vote yes or no on the district or town.

And if no one cared, then we'd be rid of some excess governmental baggage.

And that might not be all bad, either.

— Steve Haynes



Rain makes everything look nice

Don't you just love a rainy day? Reports in the Lenora area vary from 3 to 4 inches. No hail, no tornadoes — just a big old deluge that went straight into the Kirwin Reservoir, we hope.

The world looks so much better after a good washing. Of course, there is downside to everything, we are going to have to get the lawn mower out.

A friend told me she learned something from "Back Home" she never realized in the 22 years she had known me: I hate yard work. She seemed so surprised.

My sisters like to do yard work. My older sister moved from a nice apartment complex with a pool, tennis courts and landscaping to a house because she wanted her own yard. My other sister is looking to move to Denver and keeps complaining that the houses do not have big enough yards.

My mom liked to garden and worked hard in her yard even during her final years when she battled cancer. My brother lives there now. His wife is a wonderful gardener.

I'm the black sheep of the family. (Wait, maybe that is a bad analogy — a sheep is a natural lawn mower.)

Sadly for my mom's yard the demands

Back Home Nancy Hagman



of children, jobs and the drought of the past few years has been very hard on her flowers.

That is why I don't like yard work — it's too hard. It's hot, it's buggy and it's dirty. I get sunburned. I get blisters. One year I put my back out so I had doctor bills to pay.

Grasshoppers eat everything. It doesn't rain or it rains too much. The stuff you really want to grow and pay a lot of money for dies. The stuff you don't care about takes over.

Why can't we just be happy with "nature"?

Just think of all the work we could save ourselves if we would just consider dandelions as flowers (Who decided they were weeds anyway?)

Why can't we just think of henbit as a ground cover. From a distance looks just

like a pretty purple carpet to me.

I suppose it is just human nature to not appreciate things that are easily attainable.

My sisters and I had a "sister's weekend" recently and while I was gone, the hubby, daughter Elizabeth and his mother worked on the yard at the new house.

Now this is just embarrassing — his mother is 20-plus years older than I am and she is doing my yard work.

I told Elizabeth I did not see the need to mow the entire yard, the northeast corner has a wonderful grass stand — it looks just like the CRP grass they pay people to plant.

"Yeah, but if you mow it at least once, all the dead stuff will be gone," she replied.

Okay, as long as it is just once I am thinking. Have you ever heard of zeroscape? A brilliant idea if there ever was one.

Not that I am trying to convert anyone here — it makes me happy to go by a pretty place with a nicely landscaped yard. I truly admire those ambitious gardeners.

I wish I could afford to hire one to do my place. And I am truly, truly thankful for the rain.

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

★ **Governor Kathleen Sebelius**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232

★ **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

★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 128-S, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399

★ **State Rep. John Faber**, 181 W. Capitol Building, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7500

Office hours:

8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

Phone: (785) 877-3361

Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail: telegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Cynthia Haynes editor and publisher
Veronica Monier staff reporter
Dick Boyd Blue Jay sports
Carolyn Plotts society editor
Sherry Hickman circulation
Vicki Henderson computer production
Susie Marble computer production
Sonya Montgomery bookkeeping

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers

Dick and Mary Beth Boyd

Publishers, 1970-2002

Incorporating the Norton County Champion

Marion R. Krehbiel, editor



NNA NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

A friend's death is felt in the heart

It was bound to happen sooner or later. I doubt any of us would have been any more prepared even if it hadn't happened so quickly.

Most of us started kindergarten together or if not then, soon after. And so our lives were intricately woven throughout the years.

School plays, tap dance lessons, first dances, first dates, all those firsts and now another.

She is the first of my unusually close childhood friends to have died.

Sunday morning I received a call from Susan Thomson telling me her sister, Doylene (Quenzer) Foreman had died.

Doylene was the youngest in our class. A Christmas Day baby and, although the youngest, she seemed to experience life sooner than the rest of us.

She always knew the newest dances and styles and then tragically our senior year we learned, from her, how to deal with the

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



loss of a mother.

And she taught us well.

In a small community, we not only feel the impact of death we see it.

We don't walk away from the church or funeral home and retreat to our own lives as easily as in a larger place. We see the family on a daily basis, at the grocery store, driving down the street and they are a part of our life.

It doesn't matter that Doylene didn't live here, her spirit does. She wrote for *The Telegram* from time to time, and just last

summer she sat at my dining room table as several of us looked through pictures and laughed about old times. We would talk about how great it would be if she and her husband could someday move back here.

Although she lived in the "city", she remained a small town girl at heart.

John Donne wrote:

"All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated... No man is an island, entire of itself... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

May you rest in peace, Doylene, and may God's grace be with your family.

Amen.

Women's health protection act pass house legislation

Senate Doings

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer



This is the fourth session in a row the Kansas House passed out a bill that would require licenses for abortion clinics and have them pass inspection by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

The measure (HB 2503) contains sanitation and surgical requirements that are abortion-specific and court-tested. The bill was moved out of the Senate Health Committee, chaired by Sen. Jim Barnett, who spearheaded 2004 passage of an identical bill.

While working the bill in the Senate committee of the whole, there were efforts to amend it to add authority for the state to inspect other office-based health care

providers. I was glad the amendment was defeated.

The National Abortion Federation and Planned Parenthood helped draft a bill that sets minimum standards for physicians and clinics.

This issue isn't about being pro-abortion or anti-abortion; it's about safety and protection for all women.

The abortion industry seems willing to say anything to stop this bill. The plain truth is that opposing this bill means they are unwilling or incapable of adhering to the minimum requirements of their own industry.

Kansas needs to protect women by licensing these clinics, because the practitioners running them have a terrible track record. Kansas abortionists need supervision at a magnitude unlike any other specialty physician.