

School district should put refund into capital outlay

The Norton School Board has received a \$102,000 refund from the district's health insurance. Of that, \$35,000 will go back to employees who paid premiums to the group health plan.

The school board needs to decide what to do with the other \$67,000.

Boy, we should all have this sort of "problem."

The board is looking at three choices:

- Put the money into the capital outlay account where it can be used district-wide, but not the general fund, where the state will just take it back.

- Give all the money to employees who paid into the insurance program.

- Spread the money to all district employees.

As taxpayers — and half that bill is due on Dec. 20 — we don't understand why the school board is even thinking about giving our money away.

As employees of a company with a health plan, we understand that it would be nice to get more back, but teachers are already getting money back they didn't expect.

As parents, we know everyone in the school district works hard and tries their best. However, anyone not contributing to the health care plan would essentially be getting a bonus.

We think that the board should put the money this year into capital outlay, since it's taxpayer money. It doesn't belong to the district's employees, fine people though they are.

The money was taken from taxpayers to be used to educate the children of Norton.

Part of maintaining the schools is hiring and retaining good employees. In order to do so, the district has a good, although not overly high, wage scale and a benefit package.

Employees know what they will get when they sign on. If they choose to take the health insurance, they know what their premiums will be. For teachers, this is part of a negotiated contract.

We feel that anyone who put money into the health insurance plan should receive their share of the refund — and this includes the school district.

Wouldn't it make sense to put the refund money that belongs to the district into the capital outlay account and save it for a rainy day?

That's how it works in the real world, guys, and that's how it should work with the school district.

— Cynthia Haynes

Turkeys turn into holiday fiascoes

It was a bad week for turkeys. I suppose you could say that Thanksgiving is always a bad week for turkeys, but in this case, I'm just talking about cooking them, not about turkey life in general.

It started when the Goodland office wanted to have a food day with turkey and all the trimmings.

Why the folks in Goodland wanted turkey two days before Thanksgiving is a mystery to me. My job was not to worry about the whys but to tend to the wherefores. Steve was in charge of the turkey. Others at the office would bring the dressing, cranberry sauce, potatoes and pies.

I picked up a pair of 18-pound Butterballs at the grocery on Sunday and took them home. One went into the downstairs frig, where according to the directions for thawing, it would be ready to cook on Thursday. The second turkey went into a cold-water bath in the sink. If you change the water every half hour, the instructions

Open Season
Cynthia Haynes



say, it will thaw in about nine hours.

That works. The turkey was thawed and in the frig by Sunday evening. It stayed in the frig, crowding out most of the other food, including the opened orange juice, which I stored on its side and prayed it wouldn't leak.

At 7:30 a.m. Tuesday morning, I put Mr. Turkey in my roaster to bake. The recipe said it would take two to two and one-half hours to cook. Steve would be up by 9 to keep an eye on it. Then I went to work in Norton. I had a paper to put out.

About 9:30 a.m. I got a frantic call from Steve. The turkey wasn't even half done.

The bird was a little too big for the roaster, and there was a gap between the lid and pan. The gap was letting the steam — and the cooking ability — out.

I suggested using foil to seal the top and bottom together. That worked, and the turkey went off, albeit a little late, to its fate.

Youngest daughter, who was here from South Carolina, and I had decided that we would hold the Thanksgiving feast at 5 p.m. Thursday. So at 2 p.m. I went to the basement refrigerator and pulled out the second turkey.

It was frozen. Most of a week in the frig had done almost nothing to soften up this bird.

Let's see, 2 p.m. plus nine hours in a water bath plus two hours or so to cook. We'd be eating Thanksgiving dinner on Friday at that rate.

Well, the turkey wasn't quiet solid as a rock so we were able to thaw him in the cold water in about four hours. It still put supper at 9 p.m. instead of 5, but what the heck.

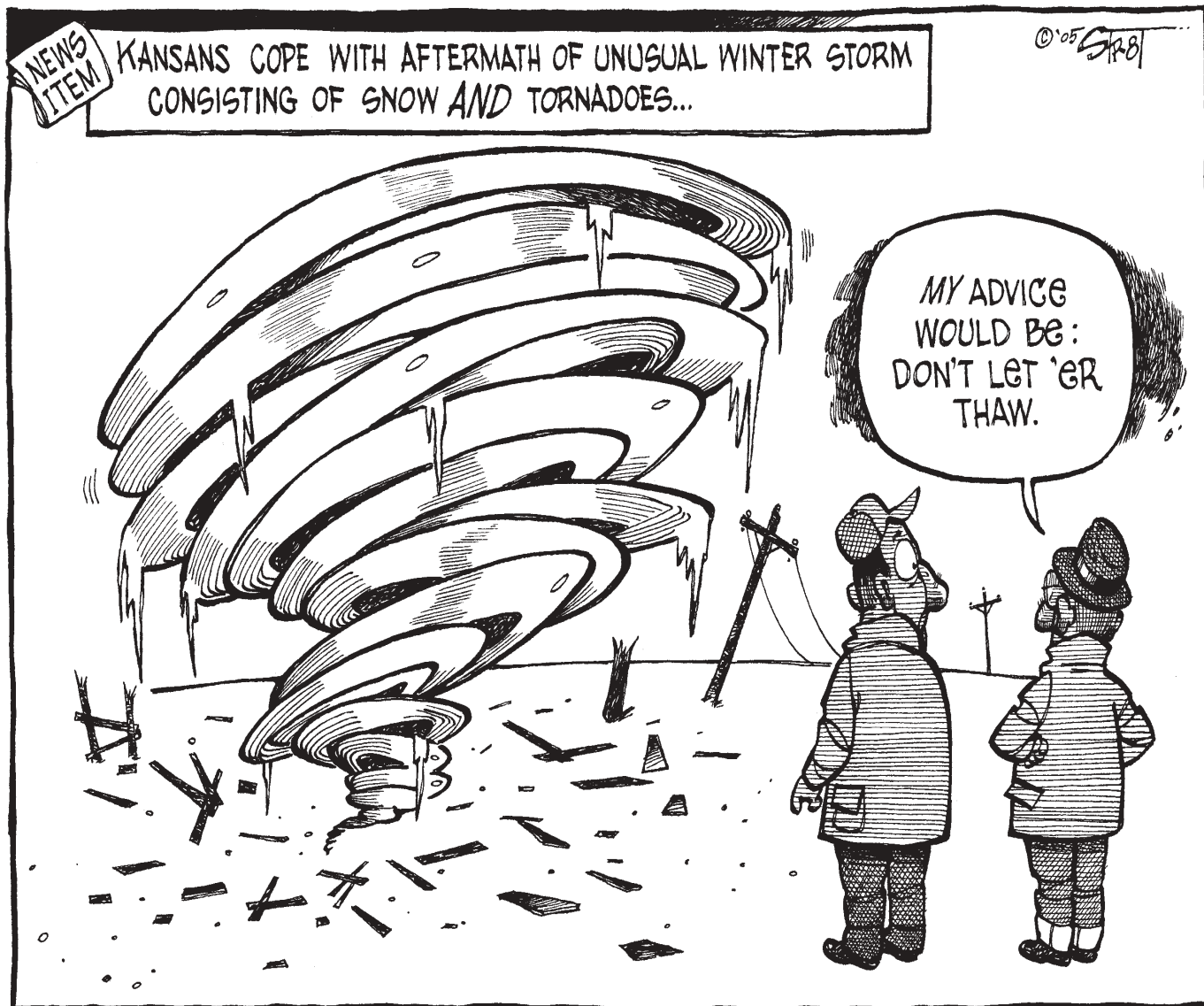
To add to my worries, youngest daughter had made the pies earlier in the day and the apple had spilled all over the bottom of the oven. This started to smoke and burn while the pies were cooking, and I knew that when it came time to put the dressing, sweet potatoes and green bean casserole in for their 40 minutes each at 350 degrees, we would have the smoke alarm going off.

So, I figured, the oven is self cleaning. I started the cycle and walked off.

At 8 p.m. the cleaning was still going. When would it stop? Was there a way to stop it early? — apparently not. Would we have turkey but no trimmings except for pie?

At 8:10 the cleaning cycle stopped and I was able to pile the three side dishes into the oven. Supper was a little late, but nobody complained. There was more than enough for all and leftovers enough to feed us until we're sick of turkey.

Well, personally, I was pretty sick of turkey before the meal even started.



Storm helps along 'honey-do' projects

I don't know what the definition of a blizzard is. The Nebraska television station we listen to said the late November storm was the first blizzard in Nebraska since 1996.

The hubby and I recall a couple of bad storms since then, but maybe they were only in Kansas. Or perhaps there is some meteorological standard we don't know about.

This was a bad storm and it was bad over a wide area.

I heard a spokesman for a power company say on Wednesday power had been restored to all but remote areas like Jennings and Dresden. Remote seems like a good word to describe most of western Kansas but now it has been clearly defined "Jennings and Dresden".

My sister, who lives in St. Francis, said some 250 souls were sheltered at the schools there for two nights. I bet that to those travelers that seemed pretty remote

Back Home
Nancy Hagman



also.

We were lucky. Our power was out for less than three hours. But, man, was it dark. I had been decorating for Christmas and there were candles all over the place but where were the matches? We finally found a flashlight. Am I ever grateful for electricity. The nights would be long without it.

The hubby has a theory about why we lost power. Since the weather was already not so nice on Sunday afternoon he stayed inside and wired the lights in my built-in china hutch. He thinks the extra juice pulled by those two little fluorescent fixtures overloaded the lines for all of western Kansas.

I think my friend Jody was closer to the truth — the fact that he actually completed a "honey-do" project put the universe into a tailspin.

Whatever the case, I'm not apologizing. My dishes look too pretty all lit up.

And for me things got even better — on Monday he finally hooked up the garbage disposal. Then he wired the light above

the sink in the utility/hobby room.

It might not seem like much but both afore mentioned lighting projects were planned when we remodeled this home the first time — 27 years ago. So I'm pretty excited. I find myself going around flipping light switches just for fun.

And he didn't stop there. The utility/hobby room was formerly the kitchen. We took one ceiling fixture down because we moved a wall and the remaining fixture did not put out enough light. So, many months ago, we got some halogen track lighting. It was languishing in boxes.

I pressed my luck, "Oh, sweetie. Do you think you could put up the track lighting?"

And he did!

Now, those halogens might cause a brown out. Boy, are they bright. I have six lights — one set to shine on the sewing machine, one on the ironing board, one on a storage unit, you get the idea. We do not even need the fixture over the sink now. Oh, well.

Meanwhile I'm hoping for another storm.

There is still a pendant fixture for over the bar in the kitchen. I thought about refusing to cook until that is done.

"Sorry dear, it is so dark in the kitchen, I can't find the stove."

And, there is the little matter of the ceiling fan for our bedroom. But then we really don't need a ceiling fan right now. So, I am going to keep on feeding him. Here's to you, Dear. You light up my life!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Elected official votes for pay raise, cuts services

To the Editor:

Last Friday was a tragic, yet also a truth-exposing day for constituents of Congressman Jerry Moran.

On Nov. 18, Rep. Moran helped himself to a pay raise with your tax money — just hours after he helped to pass a cruel measure that will drastically reduce emergency food, basic health care, student loans, money for child-support enforcement, and other vital services to disadvantaged or disabled Kansans.

He and his co-conspirators are squeezing students, the elderly, and the poor to subsidize tax cuts for the richest — and pay-raises for Congress.

Your Republican congressman gave himself an approximate \$3,100 pay raise on Friday, now averaging \$165,200 a year per Congressman. He exercised his "right" to increase his own personal salary based on increases in the costs of living.

Moran seems to think (and he evidently may want you to also believe hook, line, and sinker) that the costs of living in America only increase if you are among the "haves." If you are a "have-not," or if you have stumbled upon hard times, Moran's actions say, increases in your gasoline, heating, grocery, and health care costs won't hurt you. Do you believe that?

Moran voted to cut funding to services to the poor by \$50 billion. He will surely try to tell you that the Medicaid and Student Loan programs have been growing every year and that he is just being fiscally responsible by stopping the growth. He will without doubt fail to mention that

these programs have grown each year because of costs of living and economic downturns.

Remember, Moran doesn't seem to think that cost of living is an issue for the poor. He seems to think costs of living are only issues for the already rich. With his legendary charming smile set on full volume, Moran may try to earnestly convince you that the \$50 billion cutbacks he voted for in reduced funding to Medicaid, food stamps and student loans will not be detrimental to Kansans, or anybody you have ever met.

Moran may say these cuts won't hurt Kansans. Here are the facts. You decide.

Moran voted to cut student loan programs by \$14.3 billion. Over 83,000 Kansans currently rely on student loan programs for their education.

Moran voted to cut 220,000 people from the food stamp program. Currently, 170,000 Kansans rely on food stamps to put food on their family dinner tables.

Moran voted to eliminate \$11.4 billion in Medicaid funding. Right now, over 300,000 Kansans rely on Medicaid for the most basic and life-preserving medical services. Strangely, Moran also voted to force Medicaid recipients to bring more cash with them when they see a doctor or get a visit from a hospice worker.

By way of his actions, the message is, "If these folks don't have the extra cash — then, they just plain shouldn't be allowed to get these basic life-saving health care services."

Pam Pohly
Haynes

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