

Good suggestion, but questions loom

While the state of Kansas hems and haws over how to fund public education, one legislator is proposing some action rather than just talk.

Rep. Shari Weber, a Republican from Herington, is suggesting Kansas have only one superintendent for every county in the state. That would mean just 105 superintendents, opposed to the current estimate of 360.

Because of the highly competitive job market of public school superintendents, the local school districts and state would save a truckload of money because of the high-pay superintendents typically receive.

While the lone superintendent would oversee all schools, principals would still manage buildings. Each district would still have its board of education. Those boards would work together in hiring the superintendent.

Of course there are still some bugs to work out with her suggestion.

The further west you go in Kansas the fewer school districts there are. But Thomas County, for example, is one western county that has multiple school districts; Colby, Brewster and Golden Plains. So which superintendent do you keep to run the entire county?

Making tough decisions is a part of public education. Just ask any board member.

Kansas National Education Association lobbyist Mark Desetti said the proposal would be detrimental to metro-school districts, like in Wichita and Kansas City. One person couldn't appropriately manage that number of students and responsibilities.

But having one superintendent for Sedgwick County is no different, in principal, than the CEOs of major companies, like Coca-Cola or General Motors. They too have many people and things to take care of. And like Weber's proposal, those companies have mid-level managers, like the principals at the schools. Remember, Weber's idea is based on expenses in education.

A Standard & Poor's financial analyst said having more money in the classroom does not guarantee better students.

But some districts may never see more money in the classroom, or anywhere else, because what is dedicated to administration and staff salary and benefits. That is a significant chunk of a district's budget.

So the school buses have to last a little longer. School boards still have to find the money to put the rising cost of fuel in those buses and heat in the buildings.

Weber is on to something, but the question to ask is what school boards and legislators are willing to sacrifice to improve public education. —John Van Nostrand, Colby publisher

Thumbs Up to...

- √ **All Norton and Northern Valley FFA members.** This is your big week!
- √ **The guys** on the city trash truck who do a great job week in and week out in spite of the weather. What would we do without these unsung heroes? (e-mail)
- √ **Blue Jay** wrestling team on your solid performance at the Oberlin Regional Wrestling Tournament. Good luck at State at Hays!
- √ **All school bus drivers** for the care and concern you show for your precious cargo.
- √ **The teen-age boy** who, on Saturday afternoon, went out of his way to help an elderly man retrieve his walker from the back seat of his car and assist him to the business house downtown he wanted to frequent.
- √ **To Dolores S.** on your 77th birthday.

You can get involved in this column by simply e-mailing tomd@nwkansas.com, calling 877-6908, or dropping by the office at 215 S. Kansas Ave. Birthdays (70 years or more, anniversaries 50 years or more.) Thanks, in advance, for your participation. - tomd

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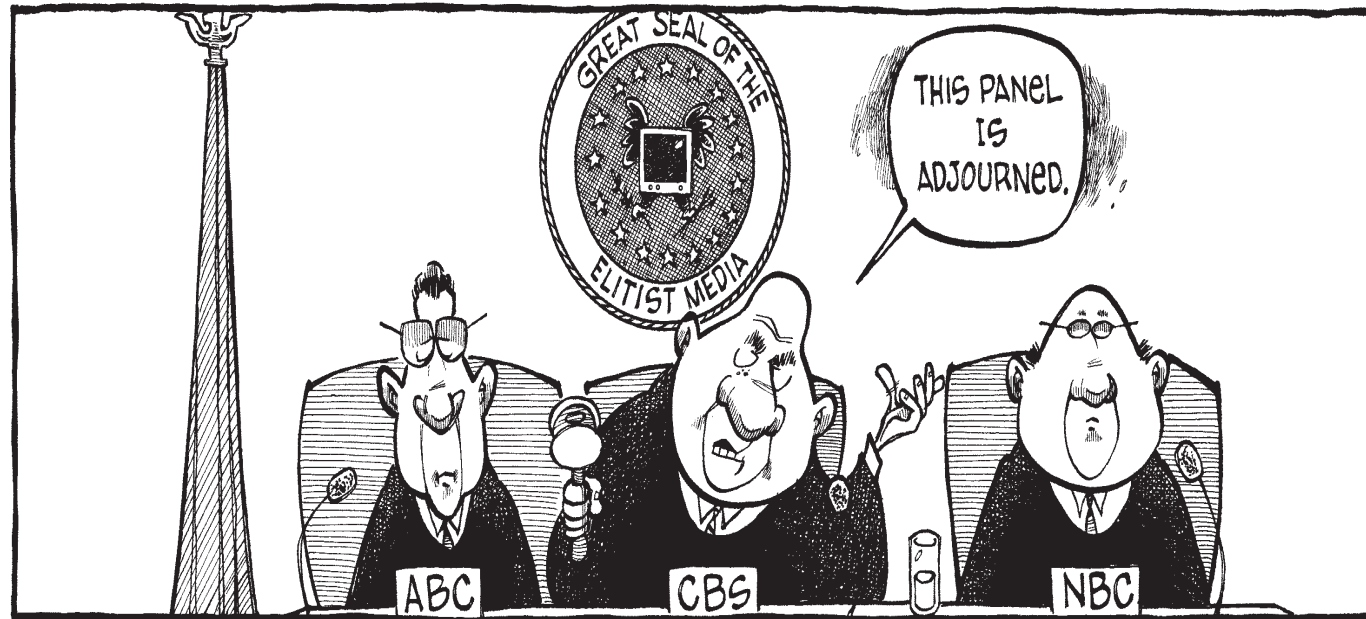
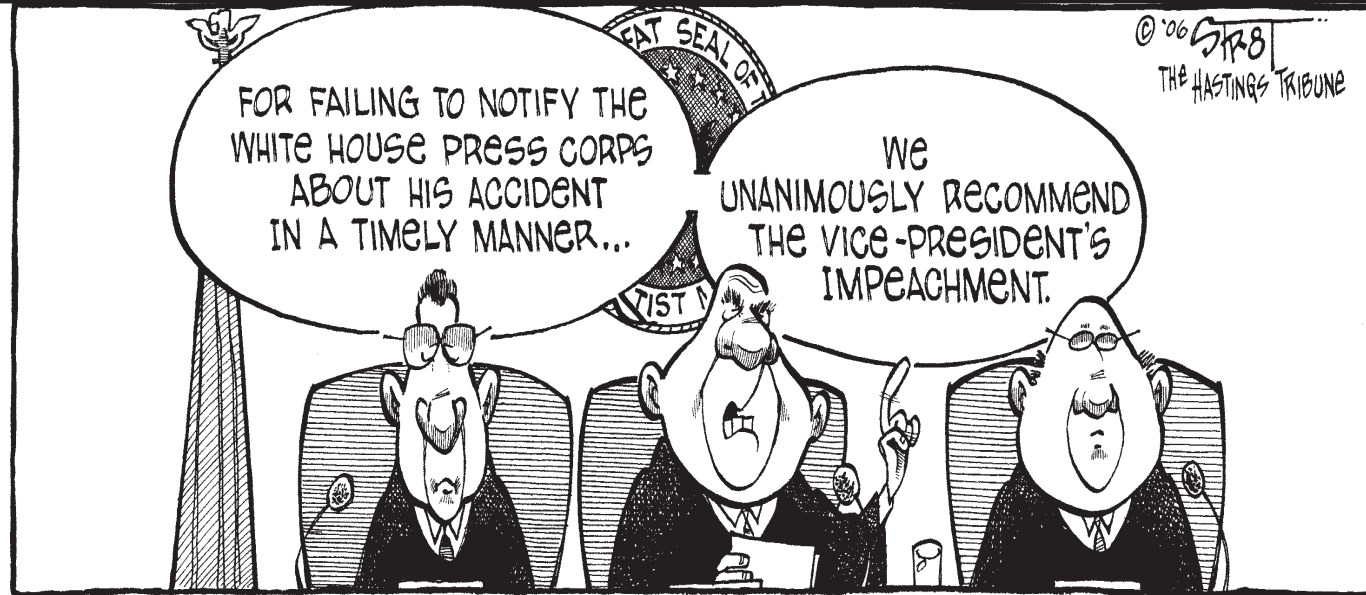
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McCook used to be a Nebraska city

Channel 12 FOX News/Kansas has been slowly *stealing* one of Nebraska's towns and placing it in Kansas. No kidding. While watching that channel Sunday, the weather lady (I think she is kind of new) talked about temperatures in northwest Kansas, pointing to and mentioning Goodland and Hays and McCook, as those northwest Kansas communities. McCook, on that channel's map, is in Kansas.

I haven't noticed where they might have sneaked an eastern Colorado town and moved it to Kansas. Nor have I noticed where they uprooted a community in Oklahoma and made it a part of Kansas.

Maybe they are taking literally their 9 p.m. news slogan, "Your News, Your Time," and adding to it, "Your Town, Now Our Town."

Someone won the \$365 million Power Ball jackpot. Pity that person. If he or she thinks he or she had problems before, wait until he or she joins the ranks of the nation's wealthy.

It just doesn't make any sense — \$365 million dollars to one person. Why don't they make 365 people happy and give each of them a million dollars. Or maybe chop it back to half-million dollars and make even more people happy.

Why do they think that massive amount of money should be earmarked for just

Good Evening Norton
Tom Dreiling



one person?

Just so you are aware, the latest AARP Bulletin says this: 7,918 Americans will turn 60 each day in 2006. (That's about 330 an hour.) So you can now have a new office game: sitting around and watching one of your own turn 60..

E-mailer says: I feel like my body has gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

A reporter was interviewing a 104-year-old man: "And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?" the reporter asked. The man simply replied, "No peer pressure."

You'll love this one: An elderly woman

decided to prepare her will and told her preacher she had two final requests. First, she wanted to be cremated, and second, she wanted her ashes scattered over Wal-Mart.

"Wal-Mart?" the preacher exclaimed. "Why Wal-Mart?" "Because then I'll be sure my daughters visit me twice a week"

One woman to another: Don't think of it as getting hot flashes. Think of it as your inner child playing with matches.

I was looking at my calendar and saw where Ash Wednesday, the start of the season of Lent, is rapidly approaching. This is supposed to be a period of self denial, sacrifice. I can remember as a child, a teen-ager and even older if still living at home, we were expected to give something up for Lent, something meaningful. Like candy, movies, etc. And spending a little extra time in church in reflection. Fasting. Oh, those days of Lent took forever to end. And being educated in a parochial school, there were also extra things we did in that setting that we normally didn't do.

As I reflect on Lent in my childhood I conclude that it didn't do any harm. Probably done us a lot of good. Maybe it made us stronger in our belief.

Have a good evening!

This game is all about commitment

A young couple we know have asked Jim to perform their wedding ceremony. Marrying people is a task he enjoys and takes very seriously. However, he always wants to visit with them first. He talks about the institution of marriage and how it has always been God's plan for a man and a woman to cleave to each other.

Usually, I caution the couples he counsels to be sure they want to go through with it because he only marries people "for keeps." I usually sit in on these counseling sessions and nod in agreement to most statements he makes. Especially, when he gets to the part about disputes. He uses the scripture verse about not letting the sun go down on your anger but sticks in the punchline, "That's why Carolyn says we have to stay up and fight all night."

It's true, our "styles" are different. After a disagreement, I would prefer he be

quiet. If I'm mad, I don't want to talk about it until I've cooled off. Jim, on the other hand, wants to take the issues out for a spin. Run 'em around the block a time or two. He wants to resolve the issue. Now.

Sometimes, on serious issues, we have to sit down, fact to face, hold hands, and with as much kindness as we can muster, hash it out. Jim says he likes to hold my hands during this kind of confrontation, so I can't hit him.

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Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



What it all boils down to is the "C" word — commitment. At one time or another, in most marriages, one or the other, would just as soon throw in the towel. But, as long as they don't both give up at the same time, they'll make it.

We watched a great movie over the weekend that exemplified commitment. It was the true story of depression-era boxer, James J. "Bulldog" Braddock. He did what he had to do to keep his family together. Even accept public assistance. And, when his family was hungry, he made his son return a salami the boy had stolen from the neighborhood butcher, because "You don't take what ain't yours." Before every fight he told his wife, "I can't win wit' outcha behind me." She always assured him she was. Even when she knew he might get killed in the ring. He always had her respect. Which, when you get right down to it, most men want. Even more than love.