

## Norton is state's wrestling capital

A simple quiz:  
 What Kansas high school wrestling team won its third consecutive state championship?  
 What Kansas high school wrestling team boasts of having a four-time state champion?  
 What Kansas high school wrestling team's school colors dominated the scene at Gross Memorial Coliseum at Hays Friday and Saturday?  
 Norton, that's who!

We hope the community, and we would not have any reason to think otherwise, fully understands what happened in Hays when the Norton Blue Jays took to the mats in the Class 3-2-1A state tournament.

Schools win single championships. Some more. But to win three consecutive — that's three in a row — state titles is somewhat in the rare category. And to have a team member win the gold his freshman year, his sophomore year, his junior year and his senior year, well...that's functioning in a world of few wrestlers!

Hats off to Coach Bill Johnson and his Blue Jay wrestling team on this remarkable achievement.

And hats off to Clay Madden, the four time state champ — a first for Norton. Clay's record this year was 39-1.

The Blue Jays, as a team, rolled up 186.5 points, far outdistancing the second place finish by Smith Center with 110 points. St. Francis was third with 108 points and Phillipsburg was fourth with 86.5 points. And it should be pointed out that three of the top four teams — Norton, Smith Center and Phillipsburg — belong to the Mid-Continent League. Tough outfit, to say the least.

The Blue Jays, simply, weren't to be denied. Hard work, dedication, loyalty, determination. That's what it takes.

Hail to the champs! — *Tom Dreiling, publisher*

## Stopping the 'Fleecing of America'

NBC Nightly News has a popular segment called "Fleecing of America" where they feature outrageous abuses of taxpayer dollars. Recently, one use of taxpayer dollars — earmarks — has been under much scrutiny. Earmarks — often called pork — are funding requests made by lawmakers for pet projects in their home states. Some earmarks are necessary and practical, like those used for economic development, health-care facilities and access to clean drinking water. Unfortunately, some are not. In the last ten years, the number of earmark projects has skyrocketed from 1,200 up to 15,000 per year. The cost to taxpayers for these projects was \$27 billion last year.

These alarming numbers can be attributed to the way earmarks are added to legislation. It has become commonplace for earmarks to be attached to large spending bills in closed-door, late-night sessions. This lack of transparency gives lobbyists and a select group of Members of Congress too much power over the process. Following these closed-door sessions, an entire spending bill is presented to Congress, and lawmakers are forced to simply vote yes or no without the ability to have sponsored legislation to put accountability back in the spending process. The American people deserve to know how their money is being spent, and elected representatives deserve the opportunity to advocate for responsible uses of taxpayer

dollars. For years, earmark projects have been included in attached reports. Since Members of Congress are only able to amend the actual text of a bill, not what is attached in reports, they are left without any ability to judge the worthiness of these projects.

The legislation I have sponsored forces earmarks to be included in the actual text of a spending bill. This provides legislators with an opportunity to evaluate and remove frivolous earmarks, which will reduce bloated spending bills and allow legislation to be passed based on merit rather than arm twisting. This also diminishes the ability of lobbyists to get earmarks that only serve special interests at the public's expense.

It is time to change the way we do business in our nation's capital. Being good stewards of taxpayer dollars requires transparency in the spending process. We must stop this fleecing of the American taxpayer.

*Rep. Moran represents the 1st District.*

### Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran



## Hope the trees know it's still winter

If this is global warming, bring it on. As much as this part of the country needs moisture, the mild winter has been a blessing. Our first heating bill of the season covered that period during and after the late November blizzard. I feared we might need to get a second mortgage to pay it. Since then, though, it's been bearable.

I've been checking our trees. Looks to me like they're thinking about budding. Oh, please, hold off a little while. Be assured, winter is not quite done with us yet.

Our granddaughter, Alexandria, played in a basketball tournament Saturday. As much fun as it was to watch her, it was more fun to watch her mother.

Jennifer was a stand-out basketball player in high school. She was good enough that when she tried out, as a walk-on, for a college team, she made the starting line-up.

Now, she is helping coach a fifth and sixth grade girls team. She approaches

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



coaching with the same intensity as she does everything else. She was so focused during the game, I don't think she even knew we were there until half-time.

Alex's team didn't win, but she said she had fun playing. I don't think her mother thought it was that much fun. She plays to win.

My husband is a prankster. He lives to "get me." I'm almost to the point of locking the bathroom door because I fear those hands coming around the shower curtain. When we get moved into the two-bathroom house, I'll have glass shower doors and that'll stop him.

One night last week, I thought it was my turn for revenge.

I was working late at my office when I heard his truck pull up out front. Yes, I can recognize the sound of his vehicle. Anyway, I said to one of my co-workers, "That's Jim. I'm 'gonna get him. Watch this."

Our office has a lobby with the door to our office in a glass divider wall. I hurried around the counter and "hid" to the side of the door, waiting to pounce on Jim when he entered.

Instead, it was his hands that sprang from around the doorjamb and "got" me. "How did you know I was there?" I asked.

"Well, it's pretty hard to hide behind a glass wall, don't you think?" he answered. "I saw your silhouette as soon as I walked in." Rats. Foiled again.

You, just wait, Jim Plotts. Somewhere, some day, some how, when you least expect it, I'm going to get you. Unless, of course, you get me first. Again.

## There is just no need for gambling

I enjoy the three weekends spent each year touring my district and meeting constituents at the town hall gatherings. Last week I visited Stockton, Norton, Hoxie, Colby and Goodland. One issue that was discussed frequently was legalized gambling. Proponents view this income as economic development and new revenue for Kansas. Their belief is that we already suffer from the problems created by gambling, so we should be able to enjoy the benefits and keep this money in our state.

I have been in the Kansas Legislature for six years, and the information I have researched convinces me to oppose gambling. If the state were to receive an average of 20 percent of casino revenue, then Kansas citizens would have to lose \$1.1 billion at the casinos annually to provide \$200 million annual revenue. These numbers are particularly significant since studies indicate approximately 30 percent of gamblers in casinos are pathological or problem gamblers. Research shows that the social costs per pathological gambler run between \$11,000 to \$13,000 annually. This includes bad debts, civil court costs, employment costs, criminal justice system treatment, and social services. In a recent nation-wide study of 3,100 counties, the bankruptcy rate in counties with at least one gambling establishment was 18 percent higher than for counties without gambling. It was 35 percent higher for counties with five or more gambling facilities.

Tom Grey, Executive Director of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, reflects on the promises of the gambling industry: "Painless taxes," offering millions of dollars in new revenues from gambling expansion. I hope you will read the following excerpts from his thought-provoking letter sent during the 2002 legislative session. Please note that Tom Grey is a former infantry captain and a decorated Vietnam veteran.

He writes:  
 "Gambling might provide a quick, temporary infusion of money, but history tells us that societies gamble themselves poor, not rich. Gambling creates no new wealth.

### Senate Doings

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer



It only redistributes wealth on an inequitable basis. The gambling industry is the only industry that does not manufacture any products, does not raise any crops, drains money from the marketplace, and does not contribute to international trade. Gambling is parasitic. Tragically, it often feeds on those who can least afford it.

"Our nation's greatness was built on citizens' strengths. In the past, political leaders encouraged citizens to develop their strengths through legislation such as the Homestead Act, the G.I. Bill, and land grant colleges.

"Now, leaders seek to maintain government by exploiting its citizens. The new mantra is 'Gamble for the common good!' What happened to patriotism and sacrifice? I have seen men die on the battlefield. I know what "the last full measure of devotion" really means. Victory demands hard work, long hours, doing without, paying taxes and a willingness to sacrifice. What a disappointment that today's lawmakers are turning their backs on patriotism and sacrifice and promising a painless victory — through more gambling!

"It is a gross deception to call gambling a painless source of revenue. There is lots of pain in gambling — addictions, unpaid bills, bankruptcies, embezzlement, broken marriages, hungry children and self-destruction. It is demeaning for modern politicians to propose winning the war against terrorism by buying more lottery tickets and playing slot machines.

"How we rebuild our nation will define our character. America needs a call to sacrifice in order to survive. Answers to our challenges are to be found in hard work and responsibility. Lawmakers need to

rise to the occasion by calling us to commit ourselves to larger purposes. States cannot gamble themselves rich!"

Tom Grey, December 2001

I remain opposed to legalized gambling. I would appreciate hearing from constituents in my district on views on this subject.

**Animal Cruelty**  
 SB 408, also known as "Scruffy's Law" or "Magnum's Law," passed 40-0. The bill makes extreme intentional animal cruelty a felony with a penalty of 30 days to one year imprisonment and a fine of \$500 to \$5000.

It contains exceptions for farming, veterinary practices, the sport of rodeo, and dealing with pests or animals posing a threat to people, their animals or their property.

All felony offenders will also be required to undergo a psychological evaluation and register as a violent offender.

**Child Safety**  
 The Senate also passed a pair of bills aimed at protecting children in vehicles. HB 2611 requires all children under the age of eight to be secured in a booster seat unless they meet a minimum height or weight requirement. It was approved 22-18. HB 2732, which passed 36-4, makes it illegal to leave any child under the age of eight in a vehicle without the supervision of a person over the age of 13.

**Estate Tax**  
 Also, the Senate passed SB 365, which makes the Kansas estate tax a stand-alone tax, rather than a tax tied to the federal estate tax. The tax will sunset on January 1, 2010, and is expected to be revenue-neutral between 2007 and 2009. The bill passed 40-0.

**Funeral Picketing**  
 SB 421 prohibits picketing or protesting within 300 feet of a funeral location, but recognizes that public spaces such as streets and sidewalks within that area must remain open for their traditional uses and that protestors cannot obstruct the use of public spaces during any protest. The bill passed, 40-0.

*Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer represents the 40th District. Call (785) 296-7399.*

## Next 'Thumbs Up to...' will be Friday

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