

## About time they're changing this law

Finally they are doing something about it! Lord knows it has taken long enough. The House of Representatives passed legislation to strip taxpayer-funded pensions from Members of Congress who commit crimes during their time in office.

Bet you didn't know those jailbirds were drawing those pensions despite convictions and prison sentences. The current federal law does, however, revoke pensions only in cases of treason and certain espionage-related offenses. But the crimes we seem to be hearing more and more about, and resulting in jail time, allowed for continued pension payouts.

It just blows our mind to know this has been going on for more years than many of us can count, and without much ado. Apparently it was an issue flying just far enough below the radar screen to be picked up as a constant reminder that this is wrong and something needs to be done.

Those who served prison time in the past and collected their taxpayer-funded pensions apparently won't be affected by this legislation. And there were some high-profile members of Congress who were shackled and tossed in the clinker.

Credit Rep. Jerry Moran of our district for sponsoring this legislation. "Elected officials should be held to a high standard," Moran said.

"When elected officials break the law and violate the trust of the people, they deserve no reward. This legislation holds officials accountable for their actions and hopefully helps restore public trust."

H.R. 476 would prevent lawmakers from collecting taxpayer-funded pensions accumulated during their time in Congress if convicted of a felony, such as bribery, defrauding the government or lying under oath.

Now we need to do something about those well hidden pork barrel things called "earmarks." We'll leave that for a later editorial.

—Tom Dreiling

## Mentors deserve pat on the back

To The Telegram Editor,

National Mentoring Month continues through January. The first formal youth mentoring program began more than 100 years ago in New York City. Then, Ernest Coulter, a clerk in family court, called together the men's group of his church and asked them to stand with him to help young boys seek their dreams. This was the beginning of the nationwide mentoring program Big Brothers Big Sisters.

In honor of National Thank Your Mentor Day, which was observed Jan. 25, Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters would like to thank all of the Big Brother and Big Sister mentors across our state.

In 2006, Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters reached a new milestone and served more than 6,000 Kansas kids. Our heartfelt thanks goes out to these thousands of Kansans who are playing basketball, working on homework, reading, coloring and spending time with our kids.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Norton County has served nearly 50 children in

## LETTER

2006.

Today, mentors in Kansas are reaching thousands of kids and having a huge impact on their future.

A recent study found that after 18 months of spending time with their Bigs, the Little Brothers and Little Sisters were:

- 46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 27 percent less likely to begin using alcohol
- 52 percent less likely to skip school
- 37 percent less likely to skip a class

If you would like more information on mentoring in our community, contact Mary Kay Woodyard or Jill Lively at (785) 874-4200 or (785) 877-5519. You can also go to [www.ksbbbs.org](http://www.ksbbbs.org)

Mary Kay Woodyard, Jill Lively  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Norton County

## Thumbs Up to . . .

- √Marie Engelhardt, on your (Feb. 3) 100th birthday. (e-mail)
- √Raymond and Alberta Newcomer, on your (Feb. 1) 60th wedding anniversary. (e-mail)
- √Dorothy Snyder, way to go...97 years young and still shoveling snow! (by telephone)
- √The city snow removal crew, for a great job. (by telephone)
- √Steve Reedy, with the Norton city crew, for getting close to the curb when clearing snow. It is greatly appreciated. (e-mail)
- √Della Connell, at the Andbe Home, for helping residents at meal times, pushing their wheel chairs...always doing something for someone else. (by telephone)

(E-mail [tomd@nwkansas.com](mailto:tomd@nwkansas.com), call 877-3361 or 877-6908, fax 877-3732, or regular mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton 67654 or drop by the office to submit a name or names. Thanks!)



## Would this be just a little too much?

Would 28 years be a bit too much for two families to run our country? Give that some thought as we embark on the 2008 presidential election. It could happen. President George Herbert Walker Bush served 4 years; he gave the White House keys to President Bill Clinton, who served 8 years; he gave the keys to the White House to George W. Bush, who is serving 8 years; and he could, if it works out, give the keys to the White House to President Hillary Rodham Clinton, who could serve for 8 years.

Are we ready to be doing something like this?

Food for thought.

In this column last week, we talked about the 23.5 inches of snow we received from Dec. 1, 2006-Jan. 16, 2007. Well, add another 9 inches to that because the 1-2 inches the weatherfolks predicted last weekend, ended up totaling 9 inches. So our new figure is 32.5 inches. My family in Aurora, Colo., topped our 32.5 with one 24-hour snowfall of 33 inches four weeks ago. I like the way we received ours much better!

Here is another one of those really goofy business stories. Paul Pressler, chief executive officer of Gap for more than four years, was given the boot because the company, under his leadership, wasn't able to close the gap with its competition.

Ironically, Pressler was given a \$14 million severance package, leaving him in much better shape than the company. \$14 million? If Gap's situation is as bad as reported, how could they give this guy that kind of severance package?

It doesn't take a rocket scientist. . .

Hey, guess who is out job hunting? Monica! You remember Monica, the young lady who had an awful lot of President William Jefferson Clinton's attention when he occupied the White House? Monica Lewinsky, now 33, graduated from the London School of Economics

## Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



about a month ago. She's hoping to land a job in London where she is expected to hang out for a while.

I've often wondered where she was and what she was doing.

Remember Barbaro, the Kentucky Derby winner who broke the lower part of his left leg in the third race of the Triple Crown, putting millions of us in tears? Well, he's still around. In fact, he recently had another round of surgery and is making steady progress. His comfort level is improving, reports say, and he is gradually being weaned off his pain medication. Watching that brilliant Triple Crown contender go down shortly after the start of the race, was one of the most frightening things to see.

You know you're just a little bit different if:

You can entertain yourself for more than 15 minutes with a fly swatter.

The Salvation Army declines your furniture.

You offer to give someone the shirt off your back and they don't want it.

You come back from the dump with more than you took.

You have a rag for a gas cap.

Your house doesn't have curtains, but your truck does.

You consider your license plate personalized because your uncle made it.

You have a complete set of salad bowls and they all say "Cool Whip" on the side.

The biggest city you've ever been to is Wal-Mart.

Your working TV sits on top of your non-working TV.

You've used your ironing board as a

buffet table.

A tornado hits your house and does \$30,000 worth of improvements.

You missed a week of school in the 4th grade because you were on jury duty.

You think fast food is hitting a deer at 75.

There was no shortage of opinions about President Bush's State of the Union address Tuesday night. Seemingly, there was a wannabe president in every nook and cranny in the Capitol. Most of them didn't have time to fully digest what the president said, so their thought process was, for most part, shallow. But it did provide them an opportunity to stick their noses into our living rooms, family rooms or wherever in the house the speech was being watched.

Sen. Webb (W.Va.), elected just last November, gave the Democratic response to the president's speech. Not bad. Notably, there wasn't a herd of honorables waiting to comment on what he had to say. Of course what can you say about a 10-minute speech? Maybe "thank you" for making it short.

Everybody watching the president's speech saw history being made. And President Bush appropriately acknowledged that fact. Sitting behind him was the new Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, the first woman ever to hold that post. Mr. Bush was the first president to ever open a State of the Union address with these words: "Madam Speaker!" It brought a rousing, standing ovation.

Sure has taken our country a long time to come of age.

As you gather in the church of your choice this weekend, please remember the less fortunate, the lonely, the ill, the grieving, the deceased, the men and women wearing the uniforms of the United States military, and the men and women of the cloth, who spend their time serving our spiritual needs. They are far too often taken for granted.

Let's change that.

## Remember to live life on this journey

I remember clearly the day my dad said to me, "death is inevitable." I was young, but death was something I hadn't contemplated at the tender age of 9. I had never really experienced the loss of anyone close. I had watched cats, dogs and birds die, but had never really equated the situation with people. The statement haunted me.

It never ceases to amaze me that our most glorious occasions occur around everyday happenings that have or will afflict every human being...birth and death. We prepare for nine months for the arrival of a baby. We wonder at the changes within the mother's system and we marvel at the newborn miracle. For death it always seems unexpected and we always feel ill-prepared.

There is a statement we are all dying and in fact, I guess we are. And, are we all preparing? A good death is hard to describe. If it is fast, is it harder on the family than having time to prepare, or is one that is

## Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



long and tedious an affliction for all?

Years ago, death came frequently and was a constant companion. One only needs to tour our local cemetery and see how many babies, young children, young mothers and young men are buried there, but then modern medicine evolved and we began to view death as the enemy, something to be avoided and hidden. No longer did the family take an active role in the death. Dying came in the hospitals and not always during visiting hours; funeral homes became the place of rest taking the

place of the family's parlor.

But with this distancing came a detachment. Children were "spared" the dreaded death and so, in turn, they became somewhat immortal in their minds. At some point, like with my dad's statement came the realization, this too would happen to me.

I was fortunate enough a couple of years ago to take the Hospice training. I am not actively involved now, but I solidly believe in the program. The training probably taught me more about how to live than how to die and what a gift that is. After the training I told the presenters I wish we introduced this thinking in preschool. Teaching children about death is more about teaching them about life.

I survived my dad's statement and now I am at the ripe "middle age" of 60. I heard a man say recently, "I have more yesterdays than tomorrows," which is all the more reason to live life on my journey to death.

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