

Gov. Sebelius moves into the big leagues

We have been wondering where Gov. Kathleen Sebelius stands in the upper reaches of the Democratic Party nationwide. We need not wonder any longer after an announcement this week by the party's leadership.

Gov. Sebelius has been chosen to deliver the Democratic response to President Bush's annual State of the Union Address on Monday, Jan. 28.

That's big league stuff.

Needless to say, responding to President Bush's address before a national television audience will give the Kansas governor her largest audience ever. It will also showcase the governor as a possible vice presidential nominee or perhaps a Cabinet appointee.

While these are nice thoughts, we are looking at Gov. Sebelius through a different set of political glasses. Like running in 2010 for the U.S. Senate seat, currently held by Sen. Sam Brownback, who is expected to stick to a term-limits pledge he made earlier to not seek re-election.

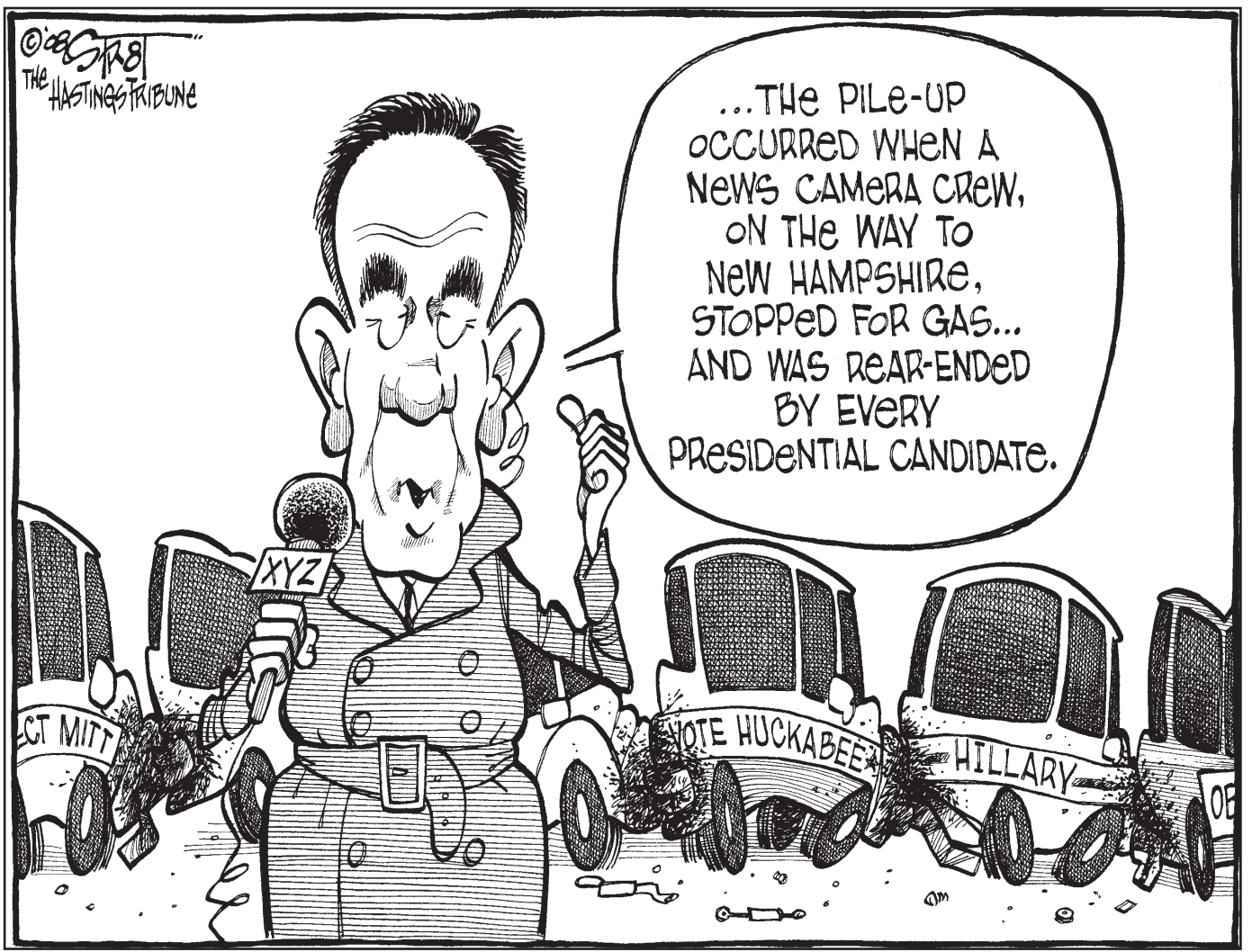
Mrs. Sebelius is governing a state noted for its Republican majorities, and in the process has managed to win two four-year terms.

Savvy politician?

Sure she is. She has demonstrated an ability to lasso GOP moderates and pull them into her camp, a necessity for any Democrat to win the governor's chair. A good foundation on which to build.

The decision to select her to deliver the State of the Union response, and her decision to accept, should be a strong signal that her campaign for the United States Senate is underway.

—Tom Dreiling



Two feet of snow...and more to go

Hide-and-seek, alligator-style

I opened the clothes dryer and there it was, staring at me with its beady little reptilian eyes, jaws agape, green snout glistening. I stepped back right onto the cat's tail. The cat squaled, and then I really jumped. She'd done it again. She'd got me by surprise, even though I'd known the two-foot plastic alligator would be hiding somewhere in my house.

Steve and Barb, the cleaning lady, have been hiding alligator for weeks now. But, it seems, I'm the one who always finds the little monster.

We call him the Crocodilian because we can't decide if he's really an alligator or a crocodile. I'm guessing alligator, but how would I know? I'm no specialist in reptiles that eat people and/or poodles.

Since this is the U.S. and alligators are an indigenous species — hey, I didn't say they were indigenous to Kansas — I'm going with the "local" beast.

He's the Crocodilian, because when I checked the city ordinances way back when we moved here to see what kind of tags, shots and so forth I needed for the dogs, cats and rabbit, I found that you can't keep poisonous snakes, hipopotami or crocodilians in town. (It was only later we learned about chickens and miniature horses.)

Darn, I was so hoping to keep hipopotami in my back yard, too.

Anyway, a couple of months ago, Barb started hiding the alligator in odd places around the house.

How do I know it's Barb and not the cats just dragging a new toy around?

Well, the first week I found it in the dish-towel drawer right after Barb had been there. Now even if the cats could somehow have gotten a two-foot plastic alligator up into the drawer and closed it, they certainly wouldn't put it in the vegetable drawer of the refrigerator, which is where I found it the second week.

Open Season Cynthia Haynes



It was quite a surprise to reach for a head of lettuce and grab a snoutful of plastic alligator teeth. Luckily for the cat, she wasn't behind me that time.

The next week, I found the alligator in the sheet drawer. Then in the bathtub. Then under the planter on wheels that houses our giant mother-in-law's tongue plant.

My response was anemic. I put him on top of the radio next to the stove in plain view or on the kitchen table, which was mostly in plain view if you looked around the piles of papers which inhabit that surface.

Steve decided that this just wouldn't do, so he got into the act and hid the little monster in the linen drawer. Barb retaliated by putting it in the dryer. Steve came back with the washing machine, then found a nine-inch plastic alligator to hide under the cushion of his desk chair in the kitchen.

The big alligator showed up in the downstairs bathtub and the little one in the pocket of my robe, which normally hangs on the back of the upstairs bathroom door.

Yesterday, I opened the microwave and there was the Crocodilian. I'm still looking for his nine-inch sidekick, which makes opening every drawer and going around every corner an adventure at our place.

Where will we find the reptiles next? You never know.
You never know.

I spent a little time Thursday looking through our files from Oct. 1, 2007 to Jan. 16, 2008 to see how much snow we received this season. I generally consider October through early April as our "snow season." The figure surprised me. The total amount is 24 1/4 inches (which included Wednesday's 3-inch snowfall). Our precipitation amounts are measured and maintained by Karolyn Kingham at her farm nine miles northwest of Norton.

The breakdown: 0 in October; 5 inches in November; 15.50 in December; and 3.75 in January. That's in excess of two feet! Not bad at all.

Someone mentioned Thursday morning how cold it was. Yep it was, but keep in mind this is January, generally the coldest month of the year. And when there is snow on the ground and clear skies overnight, you know the mercury is going to sink.

An old timer once remarked, "You gotta' get through January to appreciate February." He's sort of right in his thinking, but February can be cold, too, but in its favor is the fact it has fewer days.

Snow is moisture. And we all know we can't get enough of that.

A couple of months ago, as I was told, the Kansas and Missouri highway patrols cracked down on speeders on I-70 heading toward Kansas City. For the first offense, they gave the drivers two Chiefs football tickets. If they were stopped a second time, they made them attend the game!

Always on the look out for oxymorons, how about this one, from a Wichita friend: Losing opportunity.

Here's a scary thought: Some years

Good Evening Norton Tom Dreiling



down the road, we'll have millions of old ladies running around with tattoos and pierced navels? You may be a hot teen today, but as you continue life's journey, you'll eventually become luke warm, and then before you know it you'll be one of those, as you call them, "old ladies"

You'll probably think I fell off a hanger in my closet with this comment, but while studying the candidates for president (both parties), especially those who currently hold an elective office (senator or house member), wouldn't it make more sense if they had to resign their seat before they could seek the highest office in the land? They aren't representing the people who elected them, they are too busy on the campaign trail. But their \$168,000 annual salary continues. So, in the end if they happen not to win the presidency, they don't lose — even when they lose.

On another note about the presidential candidates, what's this stuff with the men not wearing ties? They don't look very presidential. It used to be if you announced you would be a candidate for president, you better have had a tie on when you made the announcement. Things sure have changed in just a matter of four years.

But I guess they write the rules? Of all the presidential candidates —

Giuliani, Huckabee, Hunter, McCain, Paul, Romney (GOP), and Clinton, Edwards, Kucinich and Obama (Dems), the one candidate who won't need a cabinet or advisors, is Giuliani. Ever notice how often he says "I", "I", "I", "I", "I"? Guess he should have been an 'I'ndependent!

You know, gang, we still have some newspaper carrier routes open here in Norton. If you have a kid looking to make some spending money, here's the job. Give Sherry a call (877-3361). Too, maybe you are looking for a few extra \$\$'s to add to your own coffers. This might be your chance. Sherry can give you the particulars. Your community newspaper, in this case *The Telegram*, needs some assist from the community at times. The current assist is in newspaper delivery. Please give it some thought. And thanks in advance for your consideration.

I hope you enjoy the special Conservation Section in today's *Telegram*. It highlights the winners of the various categories, information on the Norton County Conservation District, and other topic-related facts and figures. Please take time to thank the advertisers who made the special section possible. And I want to personally thank Christie, Vicki, Veronica, Carolyn and Sherry for all they did in creating the section. And I hope you like the section's front page. We did a little brain-storming and what you see is the end result.

Have a good evening. And while we're talking about conserving, conserve a little bit of energy for that trip to the church of your choice on Sunday.

Here are resolutions I should have made

Geez. Where'd the time go? New Year's has come and gone, and I still haven't had time to make any resolutions. That may not be a bad thing, because it saves me the trouble of breaking them. But it seems sort of non-traditional. I should resolve to lose some weight, but I should do that every year. And with all the meetings and conventions I have to go to over the next nine months, there'll be a lot of temptations.

It's hard to lose weight when you're traveling. It's not that the food is so good — often it's better at home — but it's so there, and there's always a lot of it. At home, portion control is easier. And there's less to drink.

I could resolve to cut out midnight snacks, and that would help with No. 1. But some nights just seem to demand one. My dietician even recommended late-evening snacks. Small ones after a really skimpy dinner.

Or at least, that's my excuse. The best way to lose weight, Cynthia says, is to cut everything in half. Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner. Even snacks. She saves the rest if she's at a restaurant. Our fridge is full of leftovers someone may have for lunch next week.

At home, there's just portion control. And believe me, it works. She lost 40 pounds and I lost 30. Only I think our half has been growing.

On the Prairie Dog Steve Haynes



At least our butts haven't been, but no weight has been lost of late. So, get out the knife. That's a resolution.

I should resolve to travel more, but this year, that's not a problem. I have to go plenty of places. There won't be much time for those places we want to go.

What I'd like to do is slow down and enjoy travel more. Poke my way down the overgrown old highway. Stop to look at the town museum or depot. Go five miles off the road to see a historic site. Take six hours to get to Denver if I feel like it.

But that's not going to happen this year. This year, it'll be straight to the airport, straight to the meeting, straight home, where my bed will be waiting. I hope.

I really need to resolve to walk more, even when there's no time. And there's often no time when you're on the road. Someplace alone, where you don't know the best trails or the safest parts of the city.

We've been walking for exercise for more than 23 years now. When we're home and the weather is halfway decent, it's no problem. When we're on the road, it's hard to make time.

When we're home, the dog looks longingly at us whenever we go out. It's hard to ignore those big brown eyes. She's been the best thing ever to happen to our exercise plan.

So maybe I should resolve to remember her when I'm on the road. That might get me out on the sidewalk.

I'd resolve to read more books, but I'm not sure where I'd find the time. Maybe on airplanes. Since I got the portable computer, though, I seem to work whenever I'm on the road. The other day, I wrote four editorials and two columns on the way to Kearney and Concordia.

Not while driving, I might add. Without Cynthia's help, it wouldn't be possible. But all this work does cut into my reading time. Such a shame.

Maybe I should resolve to make my resolutions sooner next year. It'd mean giving up my holiday procrastination time, but hey, every resolution requires a little sacrifice.

And then by the middle of January, I'd be well on my way to breaking some of those resolutions so valiantly made on the first.

That'd be progress.

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