

## Here's a hidden danger to post offices here, there

Want to make sure our local postal employees end up in the jobless line? Then do what is suggested on some envelopes that contain monthly statements. In the corner where a stamp would normally be placed, is a notation to the effect that you can save the cost of postage, in this case 44 cents, by going online to pay your bill.

What kind of nonsense is that? Let's just say for the sake of argument, a majority of the folks in Norton County follow that suggestion. Even though 44 cents might not sound like much, it certainly is when you look at the overall picture. Forty-four cents could bring down our post office, as well as others in the area, and across the country. And if that were to happen — all over a 44-cent stamp — where would we go to pick up our mail? Or conduct other postal services?

This might all sound like an exaggeration, but it should be taken seriously. Stamps are sold by the millions — maybe billions — annually and that is a big source of income for post offices. If that was to suddenly dry up... well, you get the picture.

—Tom Dreiling

## Get government out of health care? Hmm!

Watch closely as disruptions continue to drown out conversation at some town hall meetings when the health care topic surfaces. And what comment is heard most often by the protesters?

"Get government out of health care!"

Hmm. Government. That's interesting because just who is 'government'? You. And you. And you. And you. And us. We are government. We are the ones responsible for the men and women serving in our best interests in the Congress of the United States of America.

That's who government is. Us. All of us!

And if you are not satisfied with the health care plan (of which there is none at this point in time), then you will have a chance to make a 'political correction' at the polls next year. All 435 members of the House of Representatives, and a goodly number of members of the United States Senate, will be up for re-election.

Your voice is best served and heard the loudest at the polls. Not at these town hall meetings that look and sound more like audiences at Jerry Springer shows.

—Tom Dreiling

## Tuesday's Snippets

• "You guys down there at the paper sure fooled me. I thought those were photos of real people. Going over to see that exhibit at Logan."

• "I think the Bible says somewhere that 'the love of money is the root of all evil.' Shouldn't it be sacrilegious to put a god's name on currency — especially coins with their graven images? (Sacrilegious, as opposed to merely being an abrogation of the First Amendment's establishment clause. God-with-a-capital-G endorses some very specific religious tenets, and is not the generic noncommittal that True Believers claim it to be.)"

• "It is difficult to understand how anyone could drive a tractor onto the railroad tracks in front of an approaching train. (Re: Norton Wildlife and Parks tractor collision with train)."

• "Um... maybe I'm being picky, but did anyone else notice the first paragraph in the article ... on the Shrine Bowl in Friday's paper? The paragraph is all one sentence."

• "We thought the words 'swine flu' were no longer valid... and that it's H1N1 flu. Why did the school boss use 'swine flu' when discussing H1N1 at the school board meeting? Doesn't he read or listen to what's going on?"

• "I wonder why the slumlords in this community don't pay their taxes... Sure seems like there is a bunch of people here in town that whine about everything. If you are that unhappy here go somewhere else. Those of us who have lived here all of our lives are tired of listening to you complain... The train derailment story in the Salina Journal was ridiculous."

• "Michael Vick's return to professional football after all he did to innocent animals, is a disgrace! He might have served in prison for 18 months but do we re-welcome someone like that with a contract worth many millions of dollars? What kind of message that does send. He should have been penned up with some angry dogs and let them dish out the punishment."

(To join the conversation, simply email tom.d@nwkansas.com, mail to 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654, call either 877-3361 or 877-6908, fax 877-3732 or drop by the office.)

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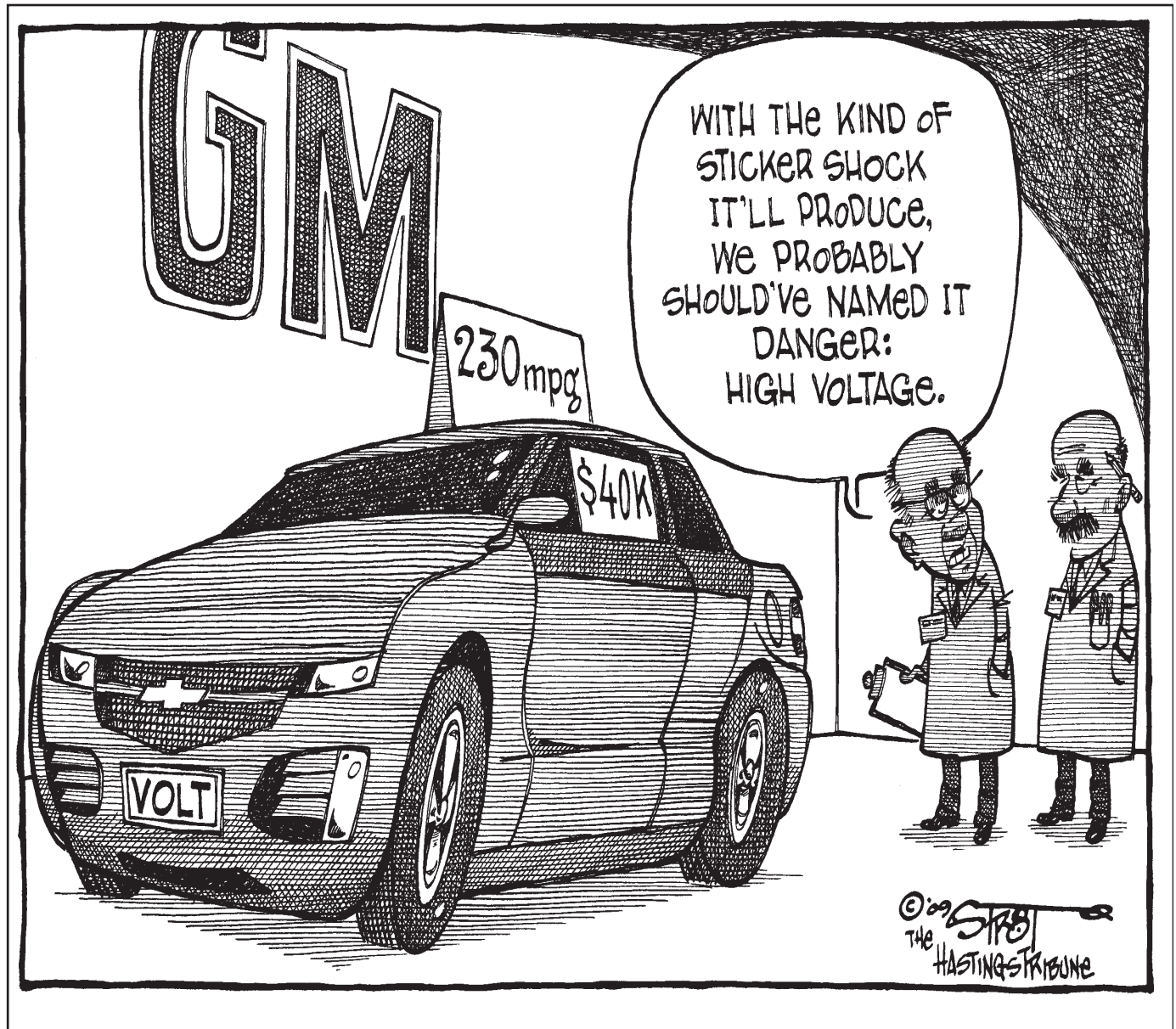
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## Don't let gangs run the meetings

In a disturbing trend, gangs of demonstrators have been disrupting "town hall" meetings being held around the country to boost President Obama's push for a national health insurance plan.

That's not the way we do things here in America, where we believe in free speech and we hold that every viewpoint has a right to be heard.

If the protestors are "patriots," as some say, then they should be the first to back our Bill of Rights. And the rights to speak, to assemble and to address the government are among the most important guaranteed to all citizens.

If the protestors have something to say, they are more than free to say it. They may call their own meeting, make speeches, send out press releases, just as the Democrats have done.

If they don't like the Obama plan — and many Americans do not — they are free to criticize it. They can march out front in protest. They can go inside and ask questions of the speakers.

What they cannot do is disrupt or try to

On the  
Prairie Dog  
Steve Haynes



stop a pro-plan rally. That's just wrong.

That kind of thing used to happen in American politics, in the days of boss rule in the cities, and in the era when labor unions and other "radicals" were seen as a threat to society. In those days, though, it was often the government and employers suppressing the "reds."

Today, the demonstrators are a shadowy group opposed to the president and his health-care plans. Some claim to be "patriots." Democrats would like to blame the disruptions on the Republican party.

It should be clear, though, that the Republicans have nothing to gain from this undisciplined behavior. Any involvement

by the party in disruption or violence would be foolish.

Right-wingers, "tea party" backers and others disturbed by the government's massive shift from the left are wasting their time and effort if they are involved. The way to counter this leftward list is to get organized and elect more conservatives to Congress. Demonstrations won't cut it.

Disrupting the Democrats' rallies, in fact, is just playing into their hands. It generates more publicity for the forums, which otherwise might pass unnoticed, and it creates sympathy for the cause.

That just leaves assorted fringe thugs to disrupt these rallies, and the police ought to know how to deal with them: move them outside, arrest them if necessary and let the meeting proceed.

American politics have no place for silencing any group, especially by mob action. Arrest them, throw them in jail and let the debate continue, we say.

Protest is fine; disrupting opponents' speech is not.

## Tip: Be wise to the ways of the rays

Insight  
John Schlageck

The next time you take time out of the sun, dust off one of those old family photo albums. You know the ones that date back to the '30s, '40s, '50s and even early '60s. If your family farmed you'll see photos of your relatives attired in wide-brimmed hats.

Look at their shirts. You'll see they wore loose-fitting, long-sleeved, light-colored garments.

Now fast forward to the late '60s and early '70s. Clothing styles have changed. You don't see too many long-sleeved shirts any longer. Broad-brimmed hats have been replaced with ball caps proclaiming seed, feed, tractors, organizations, and just about any company logo under the sun.

Today's farmer no longer wears the clothing of yesteryear — clothing that afforded protection from the sun's ultra-violet rays. Instead he/she wears a smaller, softer, snug fitting cap that will not blow off and bump into machinery. Farmers like their hats cheap or free and they want them colorful.

This ball cap is comfortable and affordable, but it does not protect the temples, the tender, delicate ear tips and the back of the neck. The low-profile cap doesn't extend far enough to guard against the sun.

Numerous studies have been tracking skin cancer and the sun's harmful impact on farmers and other segments of our society since the early '80s. Kansas

Farm Bureau Safety Director Holly Higgins reports more than 67,000 new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the United States this year.

Ultra violet rays are the leading carcinogenic on the farm today, Higgins notes. But with early diagnosis, treatment is possible. The safety director encourages farmers to insist on inspection for skin cancer as part of their regular physical each year.

"You just can't have sun without skin cancer, unless you take protective measures," Higgins warns. "Dermatologists recommend that anyone working or playing in the sunshine protect their skin completely by wearing clothing and a wide-brimmed hat."

Others, including the American Cancer Society say there is a skin-cancer epidemic in this country.

The number of cases is rising as fast or faster than any other tumor being charted today.

A major reason skin cancer may be on the rise is more leisure time and more exposure to the sun. Today, more people spend longer time in the sun and wear less clothing.

While it may be too late for some older

farmers and ranchers, education for teens and young farmers on skin cancer may be beneficial later in life.

Still, working in the sun is something that is unavoidable for some occupations. However, there are ways to reduce your exposure to the harmful UVA and UVB rays the sun emits.

"Avoid direct exposure to sunlight — especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.," Higgins says. "Wide-brimmed hats, protective clothing and sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 all work together to safeguard your skin."

Several farm supply stores and catalogs offer specialized clothing and headwear made with sun protective fabrics to help you avoid sunburn, premature aging, immune system suppression and skin cancer.

Today's farmers and ranchers would be well advised to take a chapter out of their dusty old family albums. To return to those days of floppy, wide-brimmed straw hats and long-sleeved, baggy cotton shirts.

Who knows?

Maybe they could start a new fashion craze as well as protect their skin from the damaging rays of the sun.

(John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.)

Your opinion counts. Write a letter!