

Hold on, health care ride just gearing up

So now we await the U.S. Senate debate to see how healthy its health care reform bill really is. After hours and hours of debate last Saturday, the Senate finally voted 60-39 to move the bill onto the floor for full debate sometime after the Thanksgiving holiday break.

We were a bit puzzled with last Saturday's debate. They were debating to see if the health care reform bill was worthy of debate. If a television viewer wasn't on top of last Saturday's debate, he or she would have thought the Senate was in a full-fledged debate on the bill.

While this might sound puzzling, remember we're dealing with the Senate, who, if they eventually approve their bill, will have to square off with the House of Representatives, who passed their version a week or two ago by a very slim margin (220-215). That clash of the minds could provide a real knock down, drag out.

And if the Senate does not pass its bill, then what?

Then the word 'Limbo' comes to mind. A health care reform bill is on the House table, but there is no challenge from the body of 100 to move the process forward. The only thing left for the House to do is stick their bill into their hip pocket and revive it as opportunities might allow. But don't bet on anything.

The Senate will need 51 votes for final passage of their bill, but it will take 60 to get to a final vote. One would assume that the 60 who voted to debate the measure, could provide the margin necessary to gain approval for the bill itself.

Not so. Some of the senators included in the 60 votes of last Saturday, are not necessarily for the bill overall. But they felt obligated to have the measure debated by the full Senate. They just might vote against the bill when it comes times to determine its fate.

The suspense grows. With mid-term elections in 2010, the pending actions in the great halls of Congress at this time loom very big. And could be awfully costly to terms of votes for all House members and a majority of Senate members facing re-election.

Hang on, folks! The ride is just now getting good.

— Tom Dreiling (tad1@st-tel.net)

If I wanted to

I'm gazing out the kitchen window. The birds are chirping, the breeze is wafting, the flowers are blooming. Flowers blooming! What are you saying?

If you're in Texas, the flowers are still blooming at the end of November. It's hard to believe, since Kansas flowers have already been under several inches of snow a couple times.

When it comes time every year to go to Texas for Thanksgiving, I usually have to beg Jim to leave by Tuesday. This year, however, he was pretty well caught up on his work and he suggested we leave Sunday afternoon, "If I wanted to."

If I wanted to? What kind of a question was that? Of course I wanted to.

We left Sunday after chapel services and pulled into Dallas about 3 a.m. Monday morning. I know our kids think we're nuts for doing stuff like that, but it works for us. Better to drive all night and not waste a perfectly good day of visiting and cooking by being on the road. So, I'm writing this column on my daughter's laptop at her kitchen table. My granddaughter Taylor is helping me when my fingers "hit the wrong key."

"Grandma," she will say with an in-

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



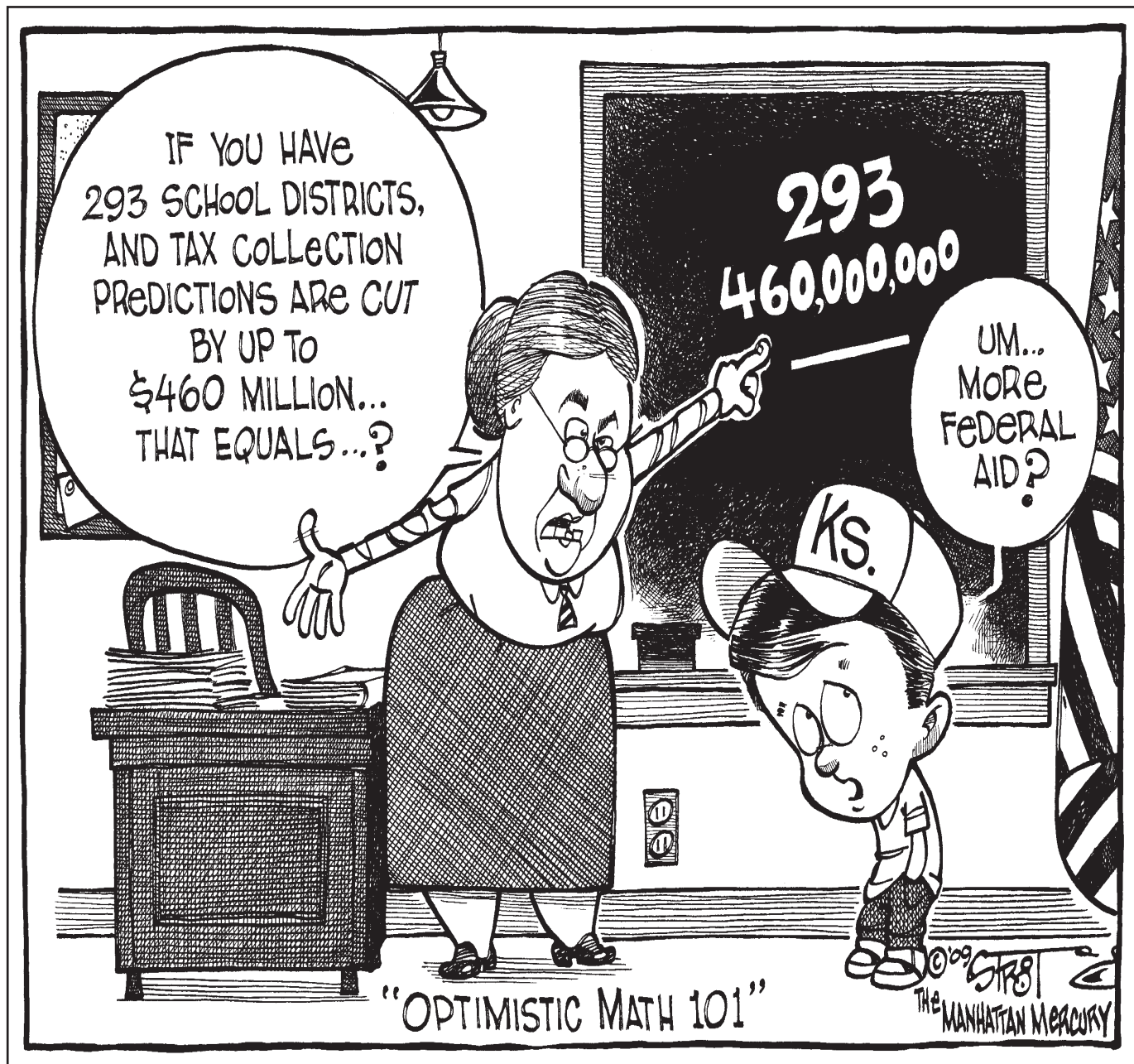
dignant tone as her little fingers fly over the keys.

— ob —

Taylor has been accepted into a student program that will take her to Canada for a 12-day learning trip this summer. However, it's not free and her family has to come up with several thousand dollars for expenses.

Taylor is collecting aluminum cans, but at pennies per pound, we're looking for other revenue streams. I suggested we make some of Grandma's famous caramel corn that she could sell to friends and neighbors. We'll make a "trial batch," have one bag for sampling and several to sell.

With any luck, we'll have this trip fully funded by the end of the week. If anyone wants some, I am taking orders.



Happy Thanksgiving and stuff

My mother-in-law makes the best. I don't know how she does it. I don't really care to learn. All my attempts end up somewhere in between sawdust and cardboard, both in taste and consistency. Having a mother-in-law that makes good stuffing and even better turkey is another reason to be thankful. Since becoming a mother-in-law myself I realize while we make very easy targets it is a role that requires a lot of finesse!

I'm thankful for turkey and pumpkin pie and homemade rolls. I'm thankful for family and warm houses and all the places we gather.

I'm thankful for the grocery store that tempts with an endless variety of goodies. My cart runneth over.

I'm thankful I have to clean my house and change the sheets on the extra beds because that means the kiddos are coming home. There's lots to be thankful for.

As I ponder it all, it strikes me as ironic that immediately after this day (well, actually since Halloween) the focus changes from what we are thankful for to what we wish for.

The advertising, the catalogs—I'm getting up to 20 a day, used to enjoy them, now I throw them away.

HEY! That rhymed. Maybe I'll try a

Back Home

Nancy Hagman



new gig: poetry!

Okay back to STUFF! Can we ever have enough?

(Did it again, sorry it was too easy!)

I like my stuff. This year I thought I'd cut back. Get rid of some things. Organize my life. I started by going shopping, of course! But only because my desk drawers are just a mess and I needed a new system to keep things in place.

I found some cute little stacking boxes, I got a bunch. One for paper clips, one for staples, one for pencils, one for "stuff" I keep because I don't know what it is but as soon as I throw it out I'll need it.

I threw some things away, dried up pencil erasers and markers. I shredded some things: credit cards I never asked for and don't plan to use. I gave the old desk organizers to Kate and some fun stuff went into my "Leah Bag". (I save things for our friends' 9 year old daughter! I know her mom appreciates me a lot!)

I moved some things, knowing in my heart of hearts it was a very bad idea because next time I need it I'll be frantically looking through the drawer saying, "It was always in this drawer!"

I can make fun of myself and my peccadilloes but overall I'm pretty satisfied with how things came out.

In the movie "Cool Runnings" the Jamaican Bob Sled team coach is asked why he cheated in an earlier Olympics causing himself and his team to be stripped of their Gold Medals. He replies, "If what you have isn't enough without a Gold Medal, it will not be enough when you have a Gold Medal."

I think a lot about having enough! We always seem to want more. The irritated oyster makes the pearl after all.

So one day a year we give thanks, or at least rest up before we begin the quest to get MORE! The rest of the time we chase the gold!

I'm thankful for all my stuff but I still have wishes. My biggest wish has two parts: first everyone gets what they want for Christmas and second we are all wise enough to know when we have enough! Happy Thanksgiving and STUFF!



To...the chamber ambassadors who enthusiastically gave their time (several times) to man the hospitality table for the visiting football fans during the play-off games. We couldn't ask for better, more supportive Norton representatives! (dropped off)

To...the Union Thanksgiving service held at the Methodist Church and especially the combined choir. (called in)

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Look ahead, not back

Insight

John Schlageck

Some proponents of organic, labor-intensive farming contend we should go back to the days when every family owned 40 acres, farmed with hay burners (horses) and applied no chemicals.

You remember the good ol' days when people were self sufficient, owned a couple milk cows, tilled a garden and butchered 40 or 50 fryers each spring.

Some of these zealots propose each nation should also strive for self sufficiency. No imports. No exports.

Should such events occur, you may want to prepare yourself for milking each morning instead of that piping hot mug of coffee. Forget about sliced bananas on your bowl of corn flakes. These goodies we import into this country, and a lot more, won't be on the kitchen table anymore. Count on it.

God forbid we adopt these policies. If we cave in to those who spread hysteria about unsafe food and giant farms, be prepared to do without the services of all the non-agricultural types. This includes carpenters, painters, nurses, doctors, teachers, writers, musicians, etc. In case you haven't heard, labor-intensive farming doesn't permit time for many other pursuits. Neither does production agriculture.

Farmers run non stop, from early morning to late at night, planting and harvest-

ing crops, tilling the soil, feeding and caring for livestock. Their work seldom ends. It's foolish to assume everyone would want to leave his or her jobs in the city to move to the farm. It ain't all "Green Acres" out there folks.

And who's to say all these people from other professions would become productive farmers?

While pheasant hunting in Ellis County opening day, a city friend remarked to me that he does not want to be a farmer. He contends he couldn't feed himself, much less the rest of the country or world.

"I'd starve to death and so would the rest of us," he told me. "If you want to till the soil, go for it. But that doesn't mean the rest of us want to, thank you."

because we'd have no chemicals to fight them with.

Today's mechanized farmer provides us with the safest, most abundant food in the world. He works closely with crop consultants when applying herbicides, insecticides and fertilizers. He has cut his uses significantly in recent years -- up to 50 percent in some cases.

Farmers work years to leave a legacy of beneficial soil practices. Most of the farmers I know would give up farming rather than ruin their land. They are proud of the crops they grow and the land they work.

Ag producers continue to work to conserve water, plug abandoned wells, watch their grassland grazing and continue to adopt sound techniques that will ensure preservation of the land. Urban/suburban residents should also look at new ways to protect the environment where they live.

There's an old saying that rings true today: "You can never go home." Yes, we can never return to the good ol' days. Besides, were they really all that good?

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.