

## Gov. Parkinson put in a tough spot

**H**ooray for Gov. Mark Parkinson, for having the courage to slash the state budget not once, but twice, since the Legislature went out of session last spring.

Not only that, but the governor took time, in an aside, to lecture greedy school superintendents and teachers who want to sue the state for money it doesn't have, and taxpayers can't afford, so they can avoid taking their share of the budget cuts.

The time to worry about that, the governor said, will be after the state's economy recovers, the recession has past, unemployment shrinks and Kansans' incomes start to grow again.

Let's hope the lawyer-driven group known as "Schools for Fair Funding" listens to his advice. The governor, in his message announcing the cuts, pointedly said there was no point in spending taxpayers' cash on a lawsuit over money the state simply doesn't have.

The governor also said that, this time around, the cuts are going to hurt. Cuts include \$50 million from the Kansas Department of Transportation, meaning projects will be dropped, roads won't be resurfaced and other critical maintenance will be put on hold. With \$36 million more cut from public schools, teachers may lose jobs and classrooms surely will get more crowded.

The Department of Corrections, which already has closed some programs, will cut back on parole supervision. Waiting lists will grow for programs for the disabled. Colleges and universities will have to put off already-delayed maintenance.

None of this is good. As the governor said, "We have cut every ounce of waste, streamlined every program and squeezed every last saving we could find. We are now cutting basic services."

And the recession is not over yet. State revenues continue to run under official estimates, which in turn, have been cut again and again. There is no sign of a turnaround in state income. Why?

Because Kansas businesses are not making much, and therefore are not paying income taxes at the expected rate. (And the projected rate is far below tax collections a couple of years ago, when businesses were flush.)

Kansans are not doing so well, either. Thousands are out of work; thousands more have lost overtime, seen hours cut, even been forced to take unpaid leave. People are not paying income taxes as they did in good times, because they don't have the income. And they are not spending, so sales tax collections are down.

When will it end? No one knows, but the state has to dig in for at least another year of cuts and bare-bones spending. There won't be much waste left to trim by the time it's over.

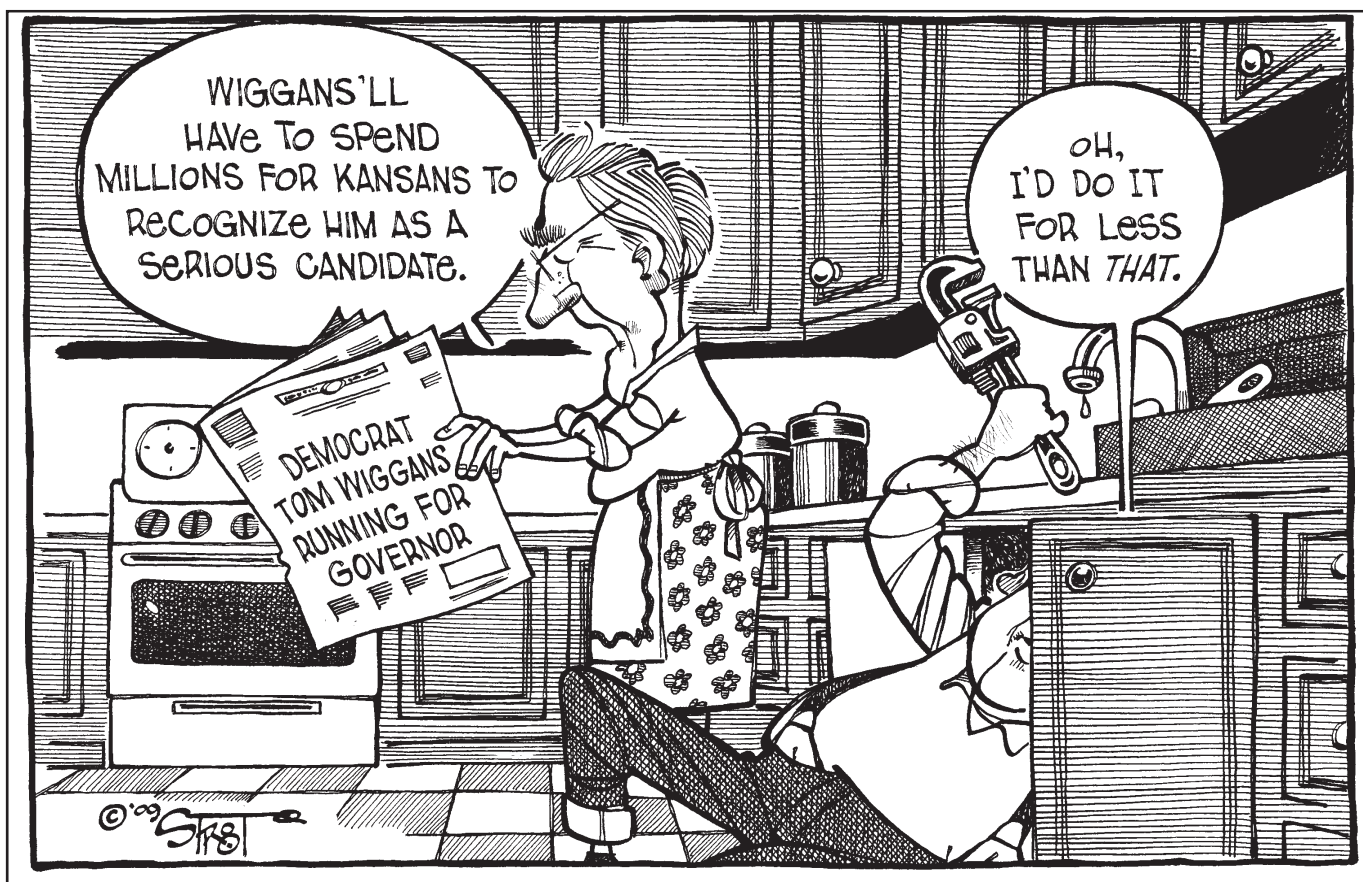
The governor called for a review of state spending and priorities when the Legislature convenes, aimed at getting the state through the crisis. Yet it's clear that taxpayers and businesses don't have a lot to give right now. They are, if anything, hurting worse than the state.

Things could be worse. Some states already are cutting payroll and forcing employees to take unpaid time off. But Kansas has it bad enough. Everyone, schools, colleges, state agencies, will have to tighten their belts and do the best they can.

Good times will return, and when they do, there will be more money, though never probably enough to satisfy all the state's need.

Gov. Parkinson, as a short-term governor thrown in a tough situation, has performed admirably. Our hat's off to him.

— Steve Haynes



## Local church offers sign for community

**A** new First United Methodist Church LED sign located on Highway 36 in Norton was made possible by a grant from United Methodist communications, the national communications agency for the denomination. The United Methodist Church began their "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" advertising and welcoming campaign in 2001. As part of the campaign, matching grants totaling \$1 million annually are provided to local churches for placing television, radio, cinema and outdoor advertisements in their communities.

The local church was awarded one of the back to school grants given this season. Every dollar provided by the national agency was matched by a dollar from the local church.

As part of the grant process, the local church applied for and was granted certification as a "welcoming congregation". "Welcoming congregations" are a select



group of United Methodist congregations nationwide that meet criteria including embracing newcomers and providing opportunities in discipleship. The recognition program is part of a larger effort launched in late 2000 by United Methodist communications to use modern technology and the common language of television to spread the good news of Christ to a world in need. First United Methodist Church of Norton is one of only 13 congregations in the Kansas West Conference that has been awarded this certification.

The church plans to use the message

board to announce regular worship services, regular church events and church special events. We invite other denominations to announce their special events on the message board. Other organizations as well are invited to announce community wide attractions and events and emergency announcements. We have a dedicated phone line for organizations that would like to leave a message with a request for an announcement. That phone number is 785-874-4445. All requests will be reviewed by the First United Methodist Church N.O.W. committee before publication on the sign.

The First United Methodist Church of Norton would like to thank those local organizations who have offered assistance during the project: the Norton City Council and the Public Works Department, Prairie Land Electric Co. and Nex-Tech.

Very Sincerely,  
First United Methodist Church  
Kay Hawks, N.O.W. Committee

## The master recipe of a good time

**I**f you had as nice a Thanksgiving as I did, you had a wonderful time. Family, friends and food were the main ingredients. Add a sprinkle of shopping, a dash of perfect weather and a "smidgeon" of board games for the master recipe of a good time.

My oldest daughter, Halley, and I did something we had not done in years. We had a night for just the two of us.

I left Jim at Adam and Kara's while Halley and I went out to dinner, a movie and a sleepover at her apartment. We went to dinner at Carraba's, the restaurant where Halley used to work. We were immediately swarmed by her old friends who still work there. The manager even came to tell her, "Hi." It was quite a reunion and I promised a "shout out" to Becca and David who waited on our table that night. The food was wonderful: only surpassed by the great service we received.

Halley has a one-bedroom apartment so we shared her bed that night. In the early morning hours I felt a "not-so-gentle" nudge. It seems I had been snoring and she was trying to get me to roll

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



over. She apologized later but, I completely understand. If you're not used to sleeping with a snorer, it's awful.

— ob —

We played a lot of games during the week - and laughed a lot. But, for the life of me, I can only pinpoint one stand-out moment.

My almost-15 year old granddaughter, Alexandria, is on the pep squad at Reagan High School in San Antonio. They wear modest, but cute, uniforms and perform during half-time. Her aunts and I pressured her into modeling her uniform for us. Then, of course, we wanted to see a cheer. Her school's mascot is The Reagan Rattler and part of the pep squad pose is to curl the pointer and middle finger on one hand like a rattler's fangs.

Alex is a little shy and we really put her on the spot. So, her Aunt Halley said, "Come on. I'll do it with you." Halley proceeded to put her hands together over her head like a belly dancer and to make up a cheer as she went. "We are the rattlers. We slither and you can't catch us. Oh, yeah! We're the rattlers." And, then with both hands she gave us all the rattler sign with an added, "S-s-s-s, S-s-s-s" for good measure.

Maybe you had to be there to appreciate it, but we all, including Alex, laughed until we cried. And, of course, for the rest of the week, everyone gave the rattler sign with their own, "S-s-s-s, S-s-s-s."

— ob —

Since our return home, we've really jumped into getting Christmas lights up. If the weather holds we'll have it done in a couple more days.

Although, I can't say Jim is ever really done. You know his policy: "I will put up lights until I run out or Christmas is here."

We'll never run out of lights, so I'm prepared to see him still putting up lights Dec. 24.

## A farmer's creed

### Insight John Schlageck

**I** think of farmers and ranchers and this old, often forgotten tribute comes to mind. It fits farmers like seed in the soil or ranchers like a new-born calf takes to its mother's udder.

I've often heard friends, neighbors and family - my dad for one - quote bits and pieces of it.

I've heard others refer to it at meetings, in church, at a sale barn, funerals and many other places where rural people live, work and congregate. It exemplifies the farm and ranch vocation. It goes something like this.

A man's greatest possession is his dignity and no calling bestows this more abundantly than farming. Hard work and honest sweat are the building blocks of a person's character.

Farming and ranching, despite its hardships and disappointments, is the most honest and honorable way a man/woman can spend days on this earth. The

pride that springs from their shared experience living, working and harvesting from the land.

Farmers and ranchers believe that through their shared vocation they are giving more to the world than they are taking from it - an honor and privilege that does not come to all men or women. Agricultural producers believe their lives will be measured ultimately by what they have done for their fellow men/women and by this standard, fear no judgment.

They believe when they grow old and sum up their days, they will stand tall and feel pride in the life they've lived. Farmers and ranchers believe in their vocation because it makes all of this possible.

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.



In case you have forgotten, the addresses for this column are:

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- (fax) 877-3732
- drop by the office, 215 S. Kansas Ave.

There is no charge to render a thumbs up; names of those providing the information are not used, only the method of transmission

• Most reasons for thumbs up include recognition to someone for an act of kindness, a group for something special they have undertaken, Grandma's or Grandpa's birthday, wedding anniversaries, happy birthdays in general. And you can probably think of some other reasons not listed here.

OpinionLine: (785) 877-6908

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