

Bill would allow notices to be published online

A Kansas Senate committee planned hearings Tuesday on a bill which would allow cities, counties, school boards and other government units to "publish" their legal notices on government-run websites rather than in the newspaper.

This is a bad idea, and not just because it would hurt newspapers. The bill was introduced by Sen. John Vratil, R-Leawood, who over the years has made himself a devoted enemy of the state's newspapers. His bill, however, would have effects far beyond his home in Johnson County.

Whatever his issues are back there, this bill would be a bad law. It would remove public notices from the one place where people see them and hide them away on government websites. And it could cost many small Kansas towns their papers, an economic blow to these communities which should not be ignored.

This definition of a public notice comes from the Public Notice Resource Center, a national nonprofit group.

- 1. "A public notice is published in a forum independent of the government, such as a local newspaper.
- 2. "A public notice is capable of being archived in a secure and publicly available format.
- 3. "A public notice is capable of being accessed by all segments of society.
- 4. "The public and the source of the notice must be able to verify that the notice was published, and its information disseminated to the public."

Placement on a government-controlled website is not really publication. People would have to find the notice, where a newspaper takes it to the reader (and in rural markets, that usually is every household in town). Not everyone has a computer or Internet service, and not everyone is sophisticated enough to find notices buried on some page of a big county website.

Independent verification is hardly possible with a government-run website, and these sites can suffer failures, be entered by hackers, be changed with little or no evidence left behind by anyone with an interest in doing so. Electronic archives are neither stable nor trustworthy.

In short, posting something on a website is little different from filing it down at the courthouse, except the books there last longer than a CD.

A citizen still has to go digging for it. Publication means putting a notice out to the public.

Then, there is the economic problem. The income from public notices can be vital to smaller weekly papers. These publications serve their communities, but the towns have fewer businesses and resources each year, and it's hard for newspapers to hang on.

On the other side, Kansas cities, counties and governments spend only a tiny fraction of their budgets on legal notices.

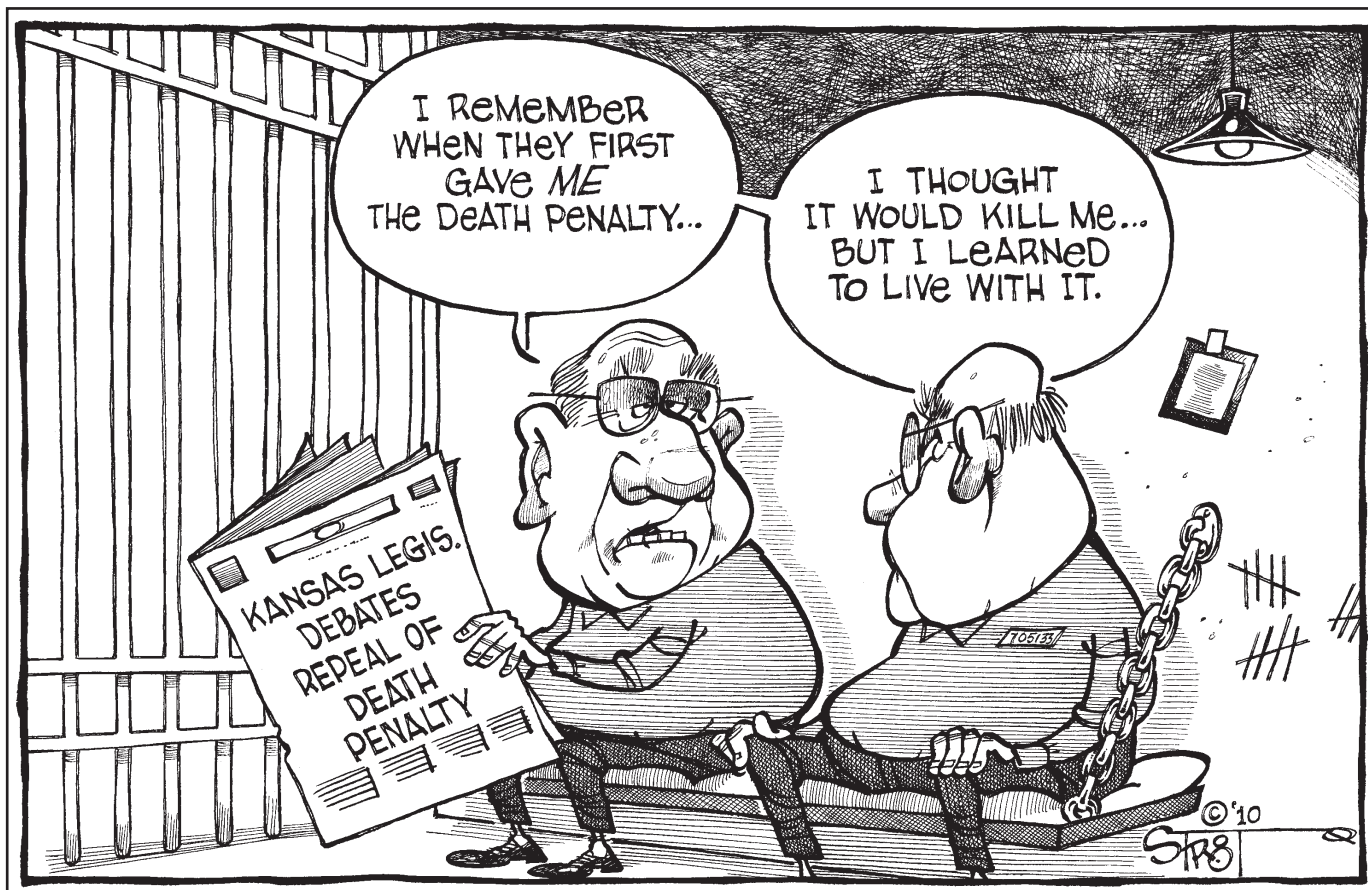
That, in our opinion, is spent in return for a valuable service and helps support each community where a newspaper is published. Ask people in towns where the newspaper has gone away; most would see that as a real economic loss.

The Kansas Press Association estimates as many as 50 Kansas newspapers might be threatened by loss of their legal-notice income.

We hope the Senate will ask itself, is the little to be saved here important enough to justify this kind of damage?

The legislators should kill this bill. It's not now and not likely ever to be a good idea. Taxpayers and citizens deserve to see public notices out in the open, where they can be verified and trusted, and not be forced to go hunting for them.

— Steve Haynes



Attempted bombing should re-focus

Earlier this month, the White House released a report describing the security and intelligence gaps that led to a near-devastating attempt by an al-Qaeda inspired terrorist to detonate a bomb on Northwest Flight 253 on Christmas Day. If not for the explosive device failing to fully detonate and the actions of passengers aboard the plane, almost 300 people would have perished. Despite warnings from the bomber's father and knowledge of the threat, our intelligence agencies failed to stop the terrorist from boarding the plane.

We learn in high school government class that a fundamental purpose of government is to provide for the defense and safety of its citizens. The Christmas Day attack should be a wake-up call to President Obama that the federal government has serious work to do in upholding this basic responsibility to the American people.

While al-Qaeda continues to plot attacks on Americans at home and abroad, President Obama's energies have been elsewhere. He has spent his first year in office pursuing an agenda of health care reform, cap and trade, more bailouts and

Capitol Views

Rep. Jerry Moran



more spending. Rather than fixing our security vulnerabilities, the Obama Administration has been focused on growing the size of government and putting government where it does not belong. With this new year upon us, I encourage President Obama to make it his resolution to get back to basics and make defeating terrorism and improving our country's security a top priority.

This latest terrorist attempt to kill Americans will not be the last. There are a number of actions our country should take to prevent the next attack: fix our faulty intelligence system to fully scrutinize and share information on individuals flagged by intelligence reports to determine who should be placed on the no-fly list or have visas revoked; do not try terrorist attackers in the U.S. court system where they receive unwarranted

rights; and cease the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to countries that do not have the capacity to handle detainees and where some have been released only to rejoin al-Qaeda.

More than eight years after 9/11, due to the diligence of our law enforcement, intelligence, and security communities, we have foiled nearly 30 terrorist plots against the U.S. However, as made clear by the Christmas Day events, as well as the November Fort Hood shootings, more terrorist attacks can be expected, and serious and deadly weaknesses exist in the federal government's ability to protect American citizens from the next one. As the President's national security advisor said, "That's two strikes." I pray that our country never witnesses strike three.

In the days since the attack, the President has pledged to take action to keep citizens safe. Yet as Congress reconvenes and the White House and Democrat leaders turn their attention to finalizing a health care reform bill, I am concerned that other priorities will take hold. Americans deserve more than business as usual from Washington's leaders.

Winter slows things down

Our area has seen its fair share of snow these winter months and it has attempted to slow us down. If you were like me, this year's snow slowed us down for work, holidays and many other events.

Since the advent of the Internet, we have gained a new technology that helped keep us connected to our work computers, remote access. Remote access is using the Internet to connect to another computer and controlling its functions from another location.

We have many different tools for connecting to another computer and the functions we can use are growing every day.

These services include: Controlling a desktop, printing to a local printer, transferring files back and forth between computers and even restarting systems. Costs can range from \$55 a year on up.

We use this service in our business to connect to many states and have fixed problems in other countries as well.

Computer Corner Shawn Mortensen



It has literally bridged the gap between rural areas and major metropolitan cities. It allows us to enjoy all the benefits of small town living, but allowing us to connect with the large, wide world of business.

If you are interested in either remote access OR internet based meetings, here are my favorites:

Remote Access: <http://www.logmein.com>

Remote Meetings: <http://www.gotomeeting.com>

Please send comments to mortensen@ruraltel.net

A new position in Valley Hope

Where There's Hope Carla Moore

had met me in person! They have had patience with me as I learned the position of Program Director. They have forgiven my knee-jerk decisions and picked me up when I stumbled. I shared with them that they have "raised a good Program Director." And I meant that in every sense possible. I have not been at a "job" for the past three years. I have been building a wonderful family and now it's time to leave the nest and stretch my wings. The tears pour easily as I think of what gifts I have been given. I hope I have been able to bless their lives as well.

I also want to thank the Norton commu-

nity. So many of you have reached out to me over the past three years' I can't even begin to thank you all. Remember, you have a fabulous community! The sense of responsibility to your neighbors and the willingness to reach out is something I think you may take for granted. Coming from a larger community, it's easy to be lost in the crowd and never get to know the people who live next door to you because life is so busy. You have taught me how to slow down, reach out in friendship and just how important all the little things are to life. I can never repay what you have so freely given. Thank you.

Beginning Jan. 18, I am officially working for Halstead/Moundridge Valley Hope, but a part of my heart will stay in Norton. If you need to talk or ask a question, I will still be available at: cmoore@valleyhope.com.

Namaste - Carla

Less legislation is better

I think most of us, regardless of whether we are democrat or republican, liberal or conservative believe less legislation is better. It does boggle one's mind at the need for legislation of situations which seemingly should be just plain common sense. Take for instance the recently enacted law to ban truck drivers from texting while driving. Shouldn't it be obvious to avoid texting while driving any vehicle, but truck drivers are supposedly professionals.

The law for truck drivers takes effect immediately which once again makes sense to me, but the spokesperson for the Owner-Operators of the Independent Drivers Association is "dismayed" because it "bypasses normal regulatory rulemaking processes."

When did personal need and desire override common sense and responsibility? We are a nation of individuals which

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



is good; we are also a nation fiercely defensive of our individual rights. In our desire to provide all the latest for our children and ourselves we have neglected the need for what might be called responsibility enforcement.

Nineteen states have banned texting and six states have banned hand held cell phone use while driving. Seventeen states have laws banning cell phone use while driving a school bus, but only one state bans texting. Over 6,000 people died in 2008 and 80 percent of crashes

are the result of inattentive driving. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration reports, "drivers take their eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds out of every six seconds while texting." The research also shows, "drivers who text are...20 times more likely to get in an accident than nondistracted drivers."

Kansas, as a state, has laws for those with learner or intermediate driver permits, but none passed or pending to limit or prohibit usage of the 'experienced' operator, so personal responsibility must be the driving force. Once again I find this to be one of those situations where in the ideal world we would not need to have cell phone/texting laws, but unfortunately we do have to live in that world and therefore for our protection we need laws to make us do the right thing, the responsible thing.

