

Centennial plans should come as a shock

Plans by the League of Kansas Municipalities to spend nearly a quarter of a million dollars to commemorate its centennial should come as a shock to Kansas taxpayers.

It's their money, after all, but they won't be invited to the party, planned for the group's annual conference this October in Overland Park.

This is just one small example of the cavalier manner in which some public officials spend your money.

On top of the \$240,000 budget, the league is asking cities to donate \$1,000 to \$5,000 to help sponsor this "gala celebration" of the anniversary. This must be some party they're planning

With many Kansans out of work and others just scraping to feed and clothe their families, throwing a quarter-million-dollar party might be seen as excess, and indeed, so far no cities have signed up as "sponsors."

A report in the Lawrence Journal-World noted that the league provides many services, including training, lobbying and legal expertise, to member cities. It also provides a forum for city officials to gather, network and exchange ideas.

All of this is done at taxpayer expense, however, and taxpayers should demand that it be done with frugality. The league says it already has spent \$66,000 on preparations for the gala, with \$174,000 in the budget for this year. Part of the money will go for television commercials extolling the league's history.

And this at a time when cities across Kansas have lost their state money and have to scrape to pay expenses — or raise taxes.

Any city that makes a donation to this event would seem to be risking the wrath of its taxpayers. And taxpayers ought to question officials about the dues they pay to this organization.

It's not the cities shouldn't have an association. The league performs many useful functions, helping to train city officials and guide them through legal issues.

It's lobbying function can be another matter. Sometimes, the league takes taxpayers' money and uses it for causes that many people might not agree with. These have included undermining the state's public notice and open government laws.

Cities have not sued the state over money as some school districts have, and that's a plus. However, we feel public officials need to be careful to take the interests of everyday citizens, and not just public officials, into account when they go to the Statehouse and spend tax money.

Sometimes those two are not identical. Officials often want to see more secrecy and more freedom to spend money than many citizens would like. That creates a duty for those spending taxpayers' money to influence public affairs to be sure they're working for the taxpayers, not just those who spend tax money.

A tax-financed gala in the middle of the Great Recession, with thousands out of work?

It's not a tasteful use of our money, frankly, not when taxpayers are outside looking in.

Send it back to the cities for tax reduction, we say, knowing full well it's just a drop in the bucket. Every tax dollar, taken from someone supposedly for the public good, should count. Every one.

— Steve Haynes

Hope blossomed

Dear Editor,
Hope bloomed in Norton County this year as we painted our communities yellow with daffodils. The support that Norton County residents, businesses and other groups showed to support the American Cancer Society Daffodil Days was incredible. My heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone who participated in this campaign to help the American Cancer Society create a world with less cancer and more birthdays, where cancer never steals another



year from anyone's life.

Thank you,
Jane Kersenbrock and helpers

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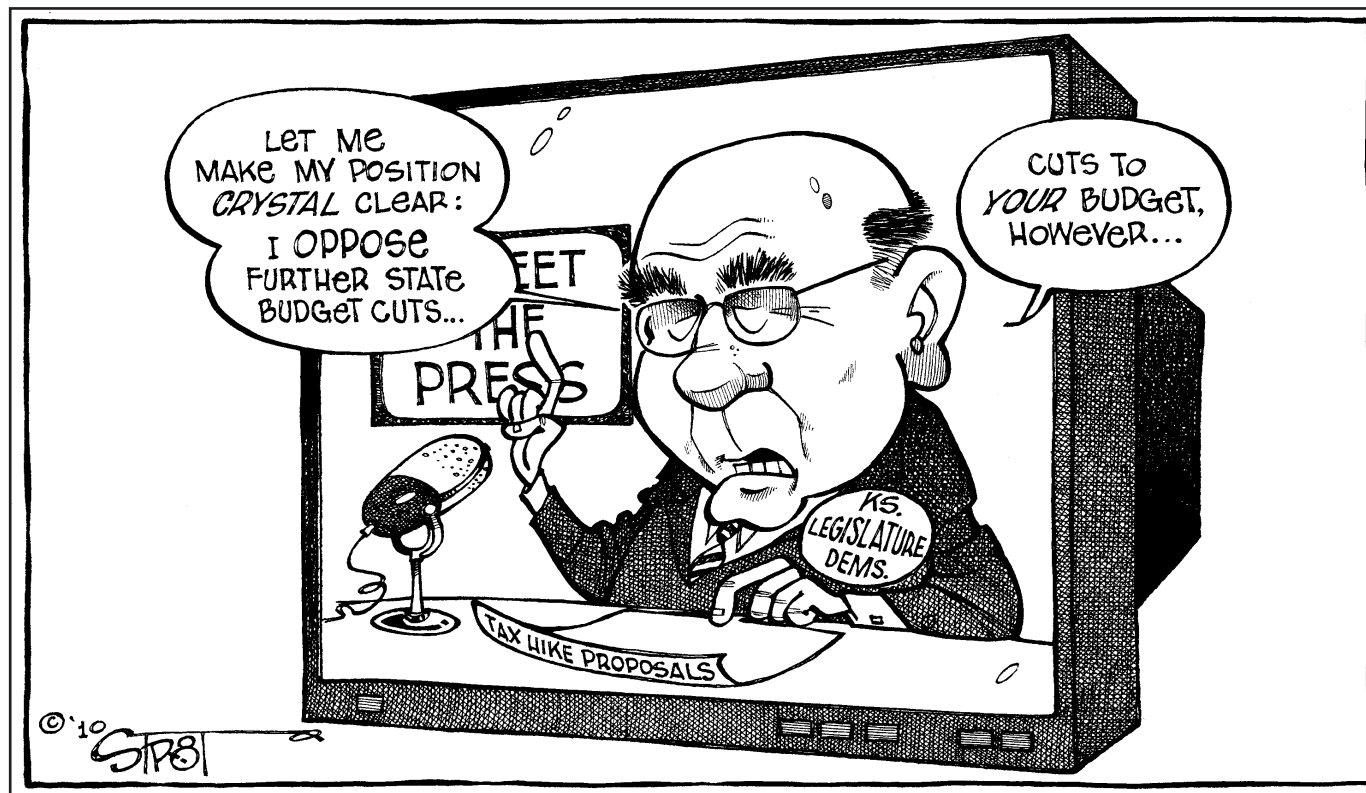
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Kansas Press Association



Census is a special delivery

Dear Editor,
A special delivery is on its way to every Kansas household. As mandated by our Constitution, the Census Bureau counts every resident in the U.S. every 10 years. This year, the census forms will be mailed to every residence on March 1. The form has ten questions about your age, date of birth and whether you rent or own a home. It will not ask for your Social Security number. The information collected by the Census Bureau is used strictly for statistical purposes. By law, personal information cannot be shared with anyone including other



government agencies.

The Census Bureau is an indispensable resource for my work on behalf of the people of Kansas. The Bureau provides a picture of the population through the decennial census and is important as it

determines our state's congressional representation. Other surveys conducted by the Bureau provide details on trends in consumer spending, household income, and health care. These metrics are central for forging policies that ensure the continued growth and prosperity of our state. Should you have questions, please contact one of my offices in Overland Park, Dodge City, Topeka or Wichita. You can also contact the regional Census Bureau call center in Kansas City at 816-994-2000. For general information, visit: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>.
U.S. Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS)

Travel plans are a blur

The last few days have been a blur of trying to make travel arrangements. My daughter, Halley's surgery, is scheduled for Tuesday and everything has been focused on getting me to Dallas while at the same time getting Jim ready to make a Mexico mission trip without me.

Travel arrangements were what I called "fluid." In other words, they changed from moment to moment just like the tide.

Our daughter, Jennifer, spent hours on the phone with me while she searched the internet for flights, train schedules, fares and connections. She was so patient with me because plans kept changing. We considered taking the bus and even the train.

At first we thought I would drive and Jim would fly, then we came up with the idea that I would fly and Jim would drive.

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



When I asked my brother Bob, who lives an hour from a sizable airport, if he would drive me to catch a flight, he said, Oh, why don't I just drive you to Dallas."

Since I couldn't think of a good reason why not and because it would solve all our problems it was agreed. The icing on the cake came when a friend who lived close to my brother volunteered to drive me to his house.

I tried to write this Sunday night on Bob's computer but it didn't want to cooperate. When I hit "send" the entire

e-mail disappeared, which brought to mind the "not-so-old" saying "to err is human, to really foul things up takes the computer."

So I'm writing this out in longhand as we're driving down the interstate. When we hit a bump it's like the lady trying to put on lipstick in the bathroom of a plane when it hits an air pocket. oops!

Some thought perhaps I shouldn't have written about Halley's surgery. When I asked her how she felt about it she said, "Oh, it's OK. I'm used to it."

People have been so kind. I can't count all the folks who have passed on words of encouragement both for me and Halley.

We have every confidence the surgery and recovery will be fine. The next out-back installment will be coming from Texas with all the updates and pictures of the incision. Just kidding. I think that is where Halley would draw the line.

No one knows where they are going

It seems no one knows where they are going anymore. There have always been a few directionally challenged people; like my sister-in-law. I mean this in the nicest possible way; she doesn't know up from down. With the advent of GPS she is becoming the rule rather than the exception. People don't even try anymore.

Of course GPS is better than my friend, who keeps her bearings pretty well but really overdoes directions. These are the directions she gave me to her house: "at the first stop light there is a McDonalds and a bank to the south. That is the direction you want to turn. To the North there is a Dillions. But you want to go south. It is 5th street. Now as you go down Fifth Street you'll see a church and a school and then a strip mall. You turn right at the strip mall, south of it that is. Five blocks, I think. Well, the street is H Street so just look for that. There isn't a stop light but there should be, but you'll be fine because you are making a right turn. So then you come about a mile. H is a major street but there aren't any lights. Watch your speed cause sometimes they have a cop parked right behind that little hill about halfway. After the hill you'll see the Museum, with the tower. Turn left after the Museum. There is a stoplight. It's the first stoplight you come to. So you are coming south again and we are the green two-story with brick on the bottom and three garages and a maple tree. It's ABC Drive. You know 1600."

I wrote that all down. (The names of the

Back Home

Nancy Hagman



streets and businesses have been changed to protect the innocent.) The problem is: how do you read those directions and drive! She's a friend who likes to be in control. And I love her!

But all she needed to say was, "turn south on 5th. Travel 5 blocks to H Street. Turn right or west. Continue west until the first light, about a mile. Turn south on ABC Drive. It's the third house on the left, 1600."

For awhile Map Quest was a reasonable crutch for the directionally impaired. It's a useful tool when combined with common sense.

My daughters, who travel more than I, love GPS. However as people become more dependent on it, they seem to be shutting down their brains. Forget the Garman and they are lost even if they have been somewhere 20 times because they don't pay any attention.

A friend tells of riding with a gentleman who was his own GPS. As he drove he would narrate their progress. "Driving north on Main. Stopping at the stop sign. Turning west on the Highway. Heading towards....." No one knew if it was a quirk or he needed to remind himself

where he was going. He was around 80 at the time. Fifteen years later, he's still driving, but no one rides with him anymore!

The hubby claims he doesn't need GPS. It has something to do with his belief that I'm always willing to tell him how to drive and where to go.

Recently, I admit I did sort of chide him. He was giving a truck driver directions. With the 911 signs it seems to me he should have just told the guy to turn south on East 1600 Road. Instead he spent quite a bit of time describing a landmark to the him. After he got that across to the driver, he said "just come on south to the place you hauled from two years ago!"

When I expressed doubt he would ever make it with those directions, the hubby replied (rather defensively) "Well, he remembered the place!"

Here's the thing men don't seem to understand about marriage: women are not being critical. We are trying to improve them. Because we love them so much and believe they have the potential for perfection!

When I travel, I am an old-fashioned, map in my lap, kind of a gal. It might be handy to have a GPS for other areas of my life, however. Every now and then we all need a voice to tell us we've lost our way. To correct our mistakes before we get too far down the road.

Sometimes we just miss the landmarks: the big cottonwood tree, right after the curve, by the old Smith place...