

## Be very careful of the quicksand

How do we go about readjusting America? Land of the free, home of the brave, and might we add, home of the broke.

We are in a fiscal mess of nightmare proportions. We seem shy to point the finger where some of the blame rests — the halls of Congress.

They make and pass the laws. "We the people" only get to express our approval or disapproval at the ballot box. They go about their business with what appears to be only limited regard for "we the people." After all, we are their bosses. Right? Ah, that's a stretch.

Don't they set their own salary? Sure they do. It's currently \$174,000 per year. And like it or not, there's nothing "we the people" can do about it.

Set the length and number of vacations? "We the people" can't do that?

Work on-site three days a week? Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday. Friday is travel time back home and Monday is travel time back to D.C. Is that the schedule "we the people" operate under?

If Congress is really serious about cutting expenses, why don't they limit their weekly *back home* travels to just one a month? That would save a bundle, and keep them on the job longer. They could save another bundle if they would reject — **r-e-j-e-c-t** — collectively, their next pay raise. Bet they won't. Bet you don't even know when it is they take up their pay raise issue.

If you are frustrated by the way our Congress acts, and this year has been the pits so far, there's something "we the people" can do about it. After all we are partly to blame.

How?  
Kick the habit!

No, not the smoking habit.  
The voting habit.

Simply put, break yourself of the habit of looking at the initial next to a candidate's name on the election ballot — (D) or (R) — before marking it. That's not important.

What is important is what **you** believe, not what your party's candidate says he/she believes. Educate yourself about the candidates, put their feet to the fire, don't just take them at their word. After all they speak "politician," which is a deceptive form of communication.

We need to get out of the box and not be led by the nose. In other words, be Republican if you wish. Be Democrat if you wish. Nothing wrong with that.

But for God's sake, stay away from the quicksand!

-TD

## Community banking celebrated in Norton

Dear Editor:  
The Community Bankers Association of Kansas has designated the last week in April to celebrate communities and the people who live and work across Kansas. Community Bank week will be April 19-24 and First State Bank is proud to honor our customers during this celebration.

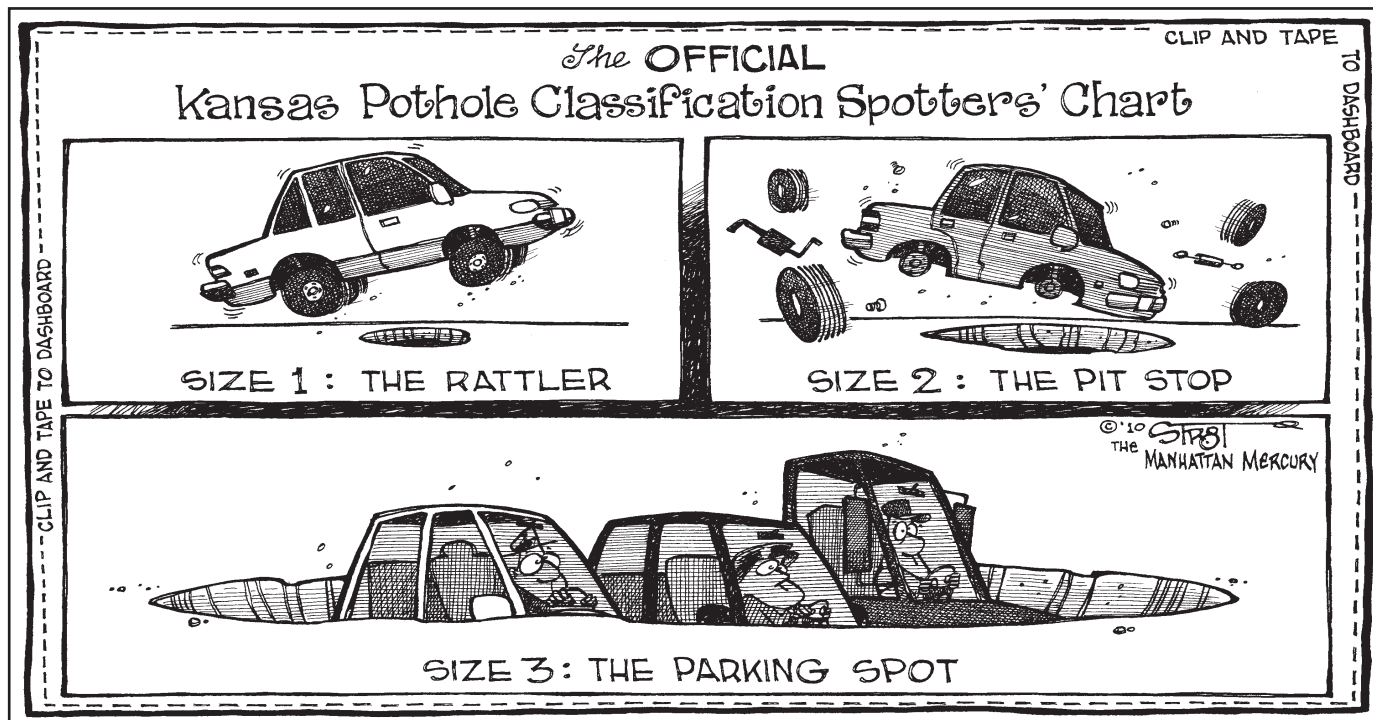
This year's celebration centers around the theme "Community Banking . . . Discover the Experience." First State Bank has been owned and operated locally since 1902 with branches in Norton, Plainville, Hill City and Hoxie. Rather than shifting our funds away from local communities as the biggest banks do, First State Bank channels most of our funds into loans within our neighborhood where our depositors live and work. Local deposits are put to work locally to develop small businesses, purchase and repair homes and finance college educations. First State Bank officers and employees reside in the same neighborhoods as our customers, shop in the same stores, attend the same churches and send their



children to the same schools. We take active roles in making our community a better place.

We invite your readers to stop by First State Bank anytime, but especially during Community Bank week. Each visitor will receive a "Discover the Experience" recipe card hand selected by our staff members. On Friday, April 23, we will have samples available of some of the recipes we'll be handing out throughout the week. Come and help us celebrate the unique partnership we have with this community.

John Engelbert, President  
First State Bank



## Taxes could increase next year

On Tax Day, as Kansans write their check to Uncle Sam, most would agree they are paying their fair share and then some.

Now consider this: the so-called Bush tax relief of 2001 that was passed with bipartisan support, is set to expire at the end of this year. This means Kansans will pay even more next year unless Congress acts to keep the current tax rates in place. More than 900,000 Kansans have benefited from this tax relief.

Today, 53 percent of Americans pay all federal income taxes. Unfortunately, I think the majority in Congress and the President will attempt to expand this divide by moving even more of the tax burden onto the shoulders of Kansas families by raising taxes on the top two income tax brackets, while keeping the lower tax rates at their current levels. They argue that those taxpayers in the higher brackets can afford to pay more.

It is important to remember small businesses are the leading jobs creators in the country, creating about 70 percent of the net new jobs in the economy. The president has acknowledged that fact.

Yet, according to the National Fed-

### Costly reform Sen. Pat Roberts

eration of Independent Business, half of small business owners with 20 or more employees, fall into the top two tax brackets. They employ more than 20 million workers - workers whose employers will have to pay higher taxes if these top two income tax rates are increased.

How will small businesses pay the cost of these higher taxes? By raising prices, laying off employees, halting hiring and not giving raises to current employees.

But it's not just higher income tax rates that may be headed your way.

With the passage of so-called Health Care reform, Americans will see new taxes on health care. This bill has imposed new taxes on lifesaving medical devices that will be passed along to health care consumers. It burdens small businesses with job killing tax hikes and makes it more difficult for people to deduct medical expenses from their income taxes.

Not only that, the president wants to cut tax incentives for domestic oil and

gas production to the tune of \$39 billion. Kansas is a leader in independent oil and gas production and a reduction in these tax incentives would be borne by this industry and directly negatively impact the Kansas economy.

Finally, all of this comes at a time when spending in Washington is rampant while millions of Americans remain unemployed.

We ought to act now to stop from further penalizing hardworking Kansans.

The tax relief passed in 2001 ought to remain in effect to help boost job growth and then in turn, our economy. We need to stop the spending in Washington and commit to balancing the budget by first reducing unnecessary spending, before looking to small businesses and families to pay more in taxes. Finally, we need to take a hard look at reforming the tax code to make it simpler and fairer for everyone.

If you would like to know more about issues before the Senate, please visit my Web site at <http://roberts.senate.gov>. For regular updates, be sure to sign up on my home page for a monthly e-newsletter, The Roberts Report.

## Time to put up or shut up

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



little more "righteous fear" on the home-front might translate to better behavior in the classroom.

I'll probably get letters on this, but parents need to step up to the plate and be parents. Your kids have plenty of friends. They need a parent who will set boundaries then not be afraid to enforce them.

It doesn't have to be a war or a battle of wills. Just some reasonable rules that have consequences if broken. Kids might not admit it, but boundaries make them feel safe. Oh, they will push the limits, for sure.

But, deep-down, they are glad their parent(s) care enough to have some rules.

I would trust someone else to spank my child, but I certainly had no problem doing it myself.

Perhaps, if more parents took discipline into their own hands there wouldn't be a need for the school system to implement these drastic measures. Mom; Dad; I'm sorry, but your little darling is not such an angel when they're out of your sight. A

## Say it loud, say it proud

### Insight John Schlageck

A successful farmer said it best when he talked to me recently about his obligation to give the public an understanding of his profession.

This western Kansas producer has always known how important it is to help consumers understand agriculture. He believes if the people who buy his products have a better appreciation for the food produced on his farm, the future of his business will remain bright while he continues to provide high quality, low cost food we Americans all enjoy.

How do farmers help consumers understand their profession?

It begins with the commitment to tell your side of the story whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. Whether farmers talk to grade-schoolers, members of service clubs or state legislators, they should practice the art of relationship building between rural and urban, between agricultural producers and consumers of agricultural products.

Today, most consumers are at least two, three or four generations removed from the farm. But just about everyone has a lawn, garden, flowers, plants or shrubbery. These same consumers enjoy,

and most cherish, their ties to a father, grandfather or great grandfather who tilled the soil.

It's easy to find a common denominator with your urban cousins. You can begin by noting that the fertilizer they buy for their garden or lawn is no different from what you use — as a farmer — to put on your wheat, corn or milo.

The rose dust, herbicide or insecticide used to control scab, dandelions or mosquitoes is similar to the plant protection chemicals you use to prevent damage and disease on your crops.

Sometimes the common ground revolves around nutrition. A good analogy could be the parallel between a person's need for healthy food and a cow's need for a well-balanced diet.

It's easy to move from nutrition to some of the more difficult challenges facing agriculture today. Topics like access, availability and conservation of water, groundwater contamination, food safety, animal care and even health care affordability.

Take the groundwater contamination issue for example; begin by telling them your shared concerns for chemical run off into lakes and streams. As a farmer, you cannot afford to overuse these expensive products. You can also explain to them that with minimum and no till farming practices the residue helps keep the herbicides and insecticides in the field where it controls weeds and pests.

Let them know that you, more than anyone else, are concerned about the land where you and your family live and work. Public understanding of how today's farmer runs his/her operation is only half the challenge. Perhaps equally important is the need to be sensitive to the concerns of the community.

Remember that people, most of them living in towns or cities, are the ones who call for regulations and new laws. It is the public who will suffer if these laws have a negative effect on this nation's food producers and our food system.

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.

OpinionLine: (785) 877-6908

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654. Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press Association

