

Voters to decide who will run the Legislature

Just who will run the Kansas Legislature could be decided by voters this fall. It's an important issue, as always, particularly because this session, for the first time in recent memory, the forces pushing for bigger government and more spending seemed clearly to be in charge.

It wasn't the Legislature that changed; the message coming back from the home front was that people agreed no further cuts were tolerable in social programs, public schools, roads or higher education.

And the Legislature listened. Even our own Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer said as much. He voted for a 1-cent tax increase to help save schools and other programs from more cuts because he heard the message from back home. And he is about as conservative, anti-spending, anti-tax as anyone in the chamber.

And just what was the message?

Across the area, but particularly in St. Francis and Cheyenne County, school superintendents and board members, teachers, hospital administrators and nurses, anyone whose check depends directly – as with educators – or indirectly – as with hospital employees – on state and federal money was calling for an end to the cuts.

It's natural that if you spent your life trying to provide a good education for children, or helping the sick, you hate to see schools cut and cut and cut again. No one wants to see their life's work whittled away, and schools have been cut a bunch. Rural hospitals depend, even more than those in the cities, on state and federal dollars. So do nursing homes and clinics.

And people were scared. Scared that their jobs might be next. That their schools or hospitals might be crippled by lower income. That their lives would be altered, maybe forever. Teachers' groups, school and hospital administrators, those who benefit from public spending, and many supporters, helped organize the push. As many as 300 people turned out for a meeting with legislators in Bird City, an unheard of number.

And that got people's attention, especially the legislators and other public officials. They felt the ground begin to move. It was as if Kansas suddenly had awakened and realized that author Thomas Frank in his book "What's the Matter With Kansas," had been right, that people out here should be voting their economic interests rather than their conservative beliefs.

If that's true, it could mean a "sea change" in Kansas politics, which has for years been dominated by the anti-spending, anti-tax crowd. Before, the state always had enough money to pay for essentials like schools. When, after huge spending increases, the bottom fell out of state tax revenues because of the deep recession, ideas began to change.

It's not just that schools and hospitals and other programs were hurt by state budget cuts. It's that the reason for the "shortfall," as they call it in Topeka, was that Kansans in general were hurting: out of a job, making less than two years ago, worried about making ends meet.

But despite the tough times, a lot of people realized that jobs depended on those state programs, their jobs and others, and they made a cry loud enough to be heard. It's anyone's guess who will be in charge next year. Voters might throw the rascals out and elect a whole new bunch. Or they might not. The anti-tax crowd might get a boost when the new tax tables go into effect this summer, or the tax-and-spend crowd might wind up running the show.

One thing for sure, things will be different. And as always in recent year, it'll be an interesting season.

— Steve Haynes

The good old days

My (older) brother, Duaine Foley, wrote this and I asked if I might use it. He graciously agreed.

"This is to all those people who wish things were like the 'GOOD OLD' days. Check out the life expectancy, all the things we didn't have, etc. I would much rather be alive today and live long into the future. I would like to see what new computers, etc. come out.

"Of course, I wish I could wait around and see what we will have 100 years from now. I have been told by my parents that my grandfather was holding me when the first Rocket train went by our house. He made the comment that he wished he was starting his life and could be around to see what advancements would be in 100 years. As most of you know, my mother lived for 100 years. Many times we would sit and talk about all the inventions and so forth that occurred during her life time. I have a few years to go, but I have seen many changes. When in school the comics included men going to the moon. Then I went to a meeting at one of my first jobs and they said we are going to put a man

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard



on the moon. I thought, for a second, what am I getting myself into.

"A recent study shows that the majority of students starting college will work in jobs that do not exist today. I spent my life in the computer field of the space industry. When I entered college there was not a subject, let alone a major, called computer science. And there definitely was not a course on travel to the moon or a subject. Only a few could imagine what missiles could accomplish.

"So if you are entering college don't worry too much about the major you decide on, but getting the most out of everything in life."

Thank you, Duaine, for a good attitude toward life, no matter our age.

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Getting back into an independent spirit

Dear Editor:
Yeah, the oil fiasco in the gulf sickens me as well. We live in a very corrupt society of evil greed of men who would be kings. If the Republicans are in power, big business owns you. If the Democrats are in power, government owns you. Let's blame them with Ollie's words to Stan, "now this is a fine mess you've gotten us into."

Or is it entirely their fault? Where did they get their money and power? Who sustains them? You betcha. We do. Let me remind you of the oft best kept secret of human history... the masses empower governments and business.

All free governments and all businesses exist and are successful because you and I pay for them. We believe we need them or we want them. How we choose to live our lives and spend our dollars determines what is the product and service.

Actually, I lied. It's not a secret. Guess who knows it best? Big business and government. What is the goal of advertisement? To get you to buy something you really don't need. The businessman's goal is to get you to spend your dollars on their product. The government's goals are to indoctrinate you into thinking you need them, they know better than you and they can take care of you. Personally, I



think the government is more dangerous as their tentacles reach into every facet of life... from college campuses, health, food resources, farming, etc.

So, let's stop being so needy and gullible. This Fourth of July weekend it would do us well to get back to a truly independent spirit. Small communities working together, especially in commerce, can sustain their members better than the country at large. By the way, Norton has been blessed with determined individuals that seek the health and prosperity of this town. I'm always inspired and grateful for their efforts.

What if? What if the oil doesn't get here? (Or anywhere for that matter). What would happen and what would we do? Groceries couldn't be shipped here. Uh oh. Then what? What if we couldn't drive our vehicles, tractors or fire up our furnaces and stoves?

What about starting up community gardens? What if some farmers platted off a few acres here and there and planted fruit trees to sell locally? I'm thankful for the farmer's market. Could we ever get to the point where we can buy most of our produce locally?

What about transportation? I've been tickled to see an increase in small cars, mopeds and manual bike usage in the community. Does my family really need two vehicles? Why can't I just schedule necessary trips around my family's schedule? (Hope hubby is reading this).

You should see my bookshelves. I have books on herbal/alternative and traditional medicine; gardening, green living, Christian stewardship, simple living, how to build small and live small, etc. I thank God for the Internet and books and the people who make all this information available to the little guy.

I could go on and on. I just get ticked when I feel I've been taken, or others have been taken. I do believe we've been taken. We can live on much less. We can conserve. We can stop lining the pockets of men who would be kings. We can go green... even Conservative Republicans!

Robin Somers
Norton.

Flea season upon us

Vet tips
Dr. Sara White



pick up newly hatched hungry adult fleas from an infested environment. Any area inhabited by other cats and dogs or wildlife, such as foxes, raccoons and opossums, may be infested with fleas. This can include houses, sheds, parks, gardens and wooded areas.

Even if you treat your pets with Frontline Plus year-around, the best idea is to check for fleas on your pet and in your home on a regular basis. When checking your pet for fleas, look for black specks (flea dirt) on your pet or its bedding. There are a few easy ways to perform a thorough flea check. Run a metal flea comb through your pet's coat making sure that you touch the skin below.

If the comb gathers black specks you may have found flea dirt. To check the black specks, place them on a white paper towel and drip a small amount of warm water on the specks. If they are dirt, they will stay black-brown. If they are flea dirt, they will dissolve into a red spot. Another method requires a white paper towel beneath your pet. Rub your hands firmly through your pet's fur.

If black specks fall to the towel, it may be flea dirt. Check as described above. An easy way to check your carpet at home is to take a warm damp white towel and lay it on your carpet. Wait 30-60 seconds and peel the towel back. If there are black jumping bugs on the towel, most likely you have fleas living in your carpets.

Points to remember: If left undisturbed, pupae can exist for many months in the environment, which is why regular year-round flea treatment is so important in ridding an environment and home of an infestation. Treat all your cats and dogs year-round. Some pets are good at masking the signs of a flea infestation, but if one animal is infested, all pets in the household will be. Please call us at 877.2411 with any questions. To be continued... more in my next article.