

A group fights to stop the education funding cuts

Earlier in the summer, Northwest Technical College faced a challenge with a proposal to cut about \$300,000 in state money to be transferred to technical colleges in Manhattan and Wichita.

That effort was squashed by the Board of Regents, and the Technical Education Authority reversed the attempted cut before it went to the Board of Regents.

The effort to stop the cuts brought a group of people together in Goodland to see what could be done and who to call to stop the cuts.

Efforts to stop the cuts and hold the state funding at the same level for next year were successful, but one thing clear to the group of people working on the issue was northwest Kansas does not have much clout in Topeka.

Over the years people in cities in the northwest region have felt ignored by Topeka, and in some cases glad the state capital ignores the western half of the state.

However, over the years the feeling of being ignored has become a self fulfilling prophecy and suddenly when the technical college needs help in Topeka there are few contacts to be influential on the many state boards or commissions.

This situation was highlighted in July when Gov. Mark Parkinson announced creation of a special committee to help bring broadband Internet to rural Kansas. Of the 24 people named to the advisory board none were from western Kansas.

When the e-mail announcing the advisory board came across our desk we wrote back asking why no one from western Kansas was included in an effort to bring broadband to rural Kansas.

Unlike what usually happens, we got a quick call from a representative from the state Department of Commerce asking if I understood what was the purpose of the advisory board.

We reassured him we understood exactly what was happening, but again pointed out that not a single person from the western half of the state had been included in the advisory group that had been appointed.

His answer was that the people appointed were the best in their fields to help with the broadband efforts.

We suggested there might be good people in that field in western Kansas as well, but let him know we were not making a big issue out of the appointments.

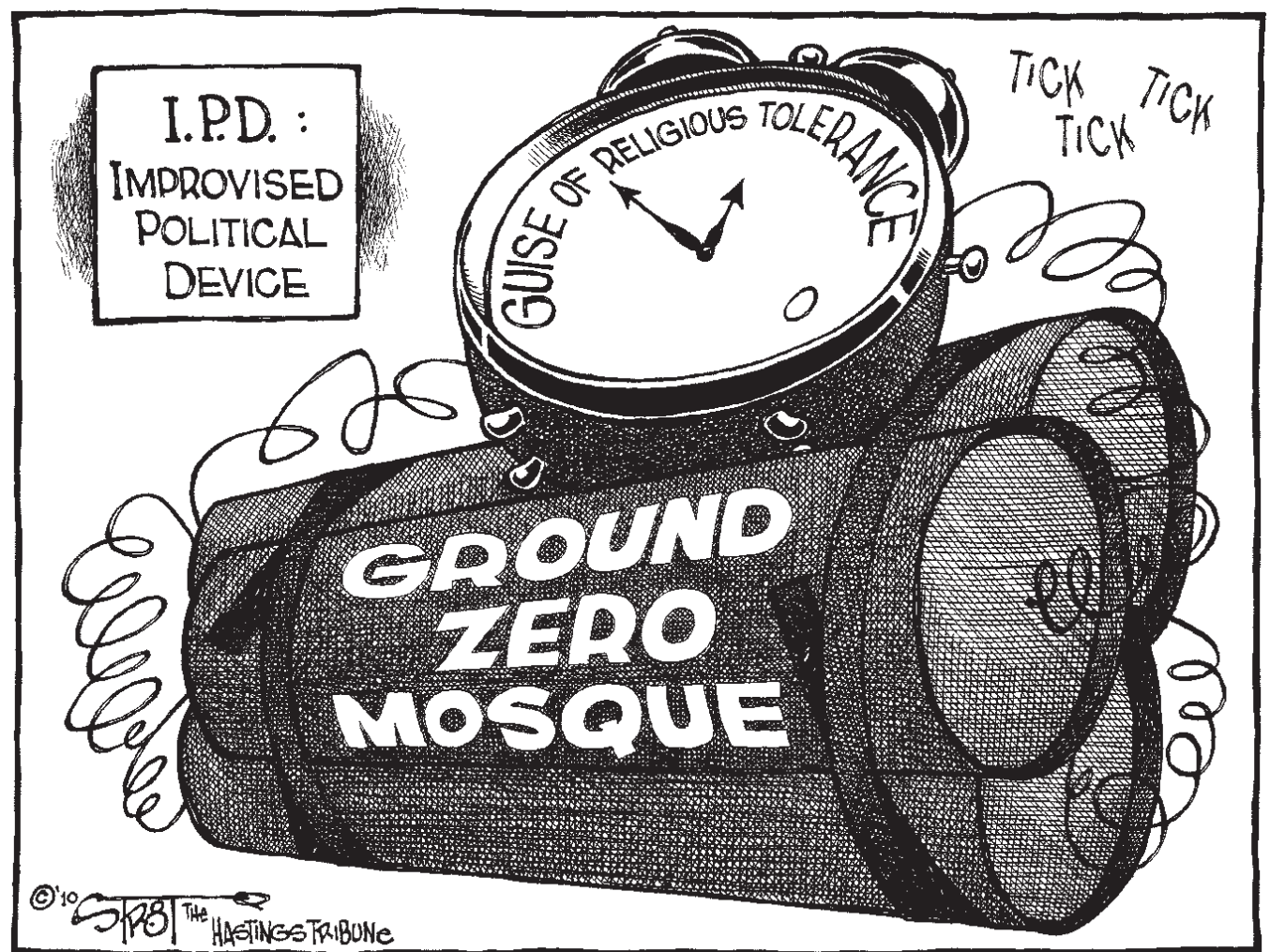
We were trying to make a point, and it was not that we were upset with the advisory appointments, but it was another indication that western portions of the state and specifically northwest Kansas had not done enough to let people in Topeka know we have the experts and are willing to be part of the effort.

When Dr. Ed Mills was looking for help for the Northwest Technical College, we were able to muster enough help to win the first round, but there is no doubt that will be more difficult in the future.

Next time you want to tell someone that Topeka "doesn't care about northwest Kansas," hold your tongue. We need to work on changing that tune to make sure our message of the importance of our region is heard in Topeka.

We cannot ignore what goes on in Topeka, and must find people willing to commit to carrying our message about the importance of our area and institutions such as Northwest Tech into the halls of state government to fight to preserve the great life we have here.

Tom Betz



Helping out a good old boy and horse

Always expect the unexpected. When we agreed to host a man and his horse who were traveling from Kentucky to California, we never dreamed it would begin a chain of events no one could have predicted.

The man is Don DelMonte, Lexington, Ky., who has something to say and an opinion on any subject. That's okay. You know right where he stands. Wishy-washy is not in Don's vocabulary.

The horse is Rico, a beautiful sorrel, three-year old Tennessee Walker stallion. Shortly after the two arrived at our home Saturday night it was obvious Rico wasn't feeling good. By Sunday night his condition had deteriorated and the vet was called. Dr. White did everything he could and said surgery would have to be considered if Rico wasn't better by morning. He wasn't.

Jim borrowed a horse trailer from a neighbor and he and Don are on their way to Kansas State University and an operation for Rico. Jim has never had very good luck with horses. While still a young man, two contrary critters, on separate occasions, gave him injuries that

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



plague him today. That's why it surprised me, just a little, at his compassion for this ailing horse.

When I told him how proud I was of him for all the care he had demonstrated for Rico he could only say, "It's the right thing to do."

The preacher's sermon Sunday morning was on hospitality. I'm glad we paid attention. It was preparing us for what was to come.

Stop me if you've already heard this one. A professional bagpipe player was asked, by a funeral director, to play at the graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery deep in the backwoods.

Not being familiar with the area and, not asking for directions, the bagpipe player got lost. He arrived an hour late and saw that the hearse and funeral director were gone. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch.

The bagpiper felt bad and apologized to the men for being late. He went to the side of the grave and looked down. The vault lid was already in place. Not knowing what else to do, he started to play.

The workers put down their lunches and gathered around. The bagpiper played his heart and soul out for this man with no friends or family. He played like he had never played before. As he played "Amazing Grace" the workers began to weep; then he began to weep. They all wept together.

When finished, he packed his bagpipes and headed for his car. Though his head hung low, his heart was full.

As he opened the door to his car, he heard one of the workers say, "I ain't never seen nothin' like that before and I've been puttin' in septic tanks for twenty years."

Don't bet the farm, or your animals, you may lose

By John Schlageck, Kansas Farm Bureau

Are extremists in the environmental movement really concerned about the welfare of our animals, the quality of our water and conserving our planet or are they trying to change the world to fit their own image?

Listening to their agendas and following their actions, there is little doubt such extremists are hell-bent on eliminating animals in production agriculture. Referendums like those in California, Ohio, Missouri and other states by well-funded animal rightists are taking direct aim at the rights of farmers and ranchers who raise, care for and sell farm animals.

You can bet the farm on it - environmental extremists from various groups have played a role whenever new water quality standards are proposed.

Last fall EPA announced it was beginning a comprehensive new evaluation of the pesticide atrazine to determine its effect on humans. At the end of this process, EPA will decide whether to revise its current risk assessment of the pesticide and whether new restrictions are necessary better to protect public health.

Atrazine is the most important herbicide in soil-saving growing practices such as no-till and conservation tillage. Farmers use atrazine to control weeds on about two-thirds of this country's corn and sorghum acreage.

EPA is also looking at controlling dust

Insight

John Schlageck

on the farm and herbicide and insecticide spraying drift. Dust is part of farming, it always will be and careful spraying of crops is essential to continue producing yields necessary to feed this country and the world's people.

With wise and prudent stewardship, Mother Earth can sustain man and create a desirable living environment with wholesome, abundant food for all.

Anyone with a conscience is interested in making sure our soil, water and air remain in the best condition possible. We all must eat, drink and breathe. It only makes sense to conserve our resources and preserve the environment in which we live.

Not only do some of these zealots want to tell us how to use the land, they want to take it too. They would like to see the federal government buy land then allow individuals to use such property.

Our government has always managed land in a trust relationship for all the people of our country. Not all of the federally managed land is in the best condition. Plenty of questions remain unanswered concerning wildfires burning hundreds of thousands of acres in the hot dry West.

For several years now, a movement has been afoot to take government controlled

land back into private ownership. This same trend seems to be happening in other places around the globe including the former Soviet Union.

There is no way government can take better care of the land than individual owners. Individuals with a vested interest in property will always care for it better than people who have no ownership.

Landowners object to people who wave the environmental flag, then call upon the federal government to secure tracts of land for them without payment. To ask for land without payment is no better than thievery.

These groups should have to pay in the marketplace like everyone else. Once they are required to buy their land, they will have to find ways to offset the costs that come with ownership.

Without a doubt, most people in this country are tired of government taking care of them. We, as Americans, should take back our government from the politicians and bureaucrats. But in order to do so, this means we must participate in the process - if we aren't already doing so.

The struggle to maintain our freedoms and safeguard our property continues. We must persevere.

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.

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- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; fax (202) 224-3514
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

- ★ **U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn HOB, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; fax (202) 225-5124
- ★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399
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Thank you to Moffet Drug for the way they promptly deliver medications to customers. Called in.

Thumbs up to Terry Romey for coming to the rescue of Rico the horse in his time of needing a shoe replaced. Your speed of service was greatly appreciated. Emailed in.