

The importance of voting in this election

Secretary of State Chris Biggs says less than half of the registered voters in Kansas are likely to turn out on election day or fill in an advance ballot. As of Friday about 200,000 advance ballots have been cast out of 1.7 million Kansas voters.

There's always a lot more apathy in a mid-term election. Presidential elections are national events that reach even to rural areas like ours. They get people excited. It's harder to get out the vote for a mid-term because it doesn't seem to affect your life the way voting for the leader of the free world does.

But it does affect your life. The secretary of state handles corporate and small business filings, which you or your boss have to make. You might like a candidate that will streamline the filing process, or one that might seek to lower filing costs, both of which would benefit your business.

The state treasurer has been focusing a lot of unclaimed property, but maybe you'd like a treasurer who would focus on the Ag Loan program.

For a lot of these things, they'll be asking for your legislator's vote, another important choice for you.

But still there are a lot of people who just don't care enough to vote. There always are, no matter what kind of election.

We think part of the reason is an unintended consequence of the anti-incumbent strategy that a lot of candidates are using. What happens if you don't like the incumbent and you don't like the challenger any better?

One of the reasons we expect to see low voter turnout in areas like northwest Kansas is that a lot of middle-of-the-road folks are getting fed up with both parties. They don't like the Democrats' tax and spend policies, or the extreme right-wing Republican challengers, so they don't even bother to vote.

The solution, fortunately or unfortunately, is up to each voter. Ignore the party affiliation and look at each candidate individually. What do they support? What do they oppose? What kind of person are they? What are their qualifications?

You probably won't find one who shares your every belief. You might be surprised, however, there might be a Democrat who lines up with what you think an attorney general should be or a Republican who you think has good ideas for Kansas Board of Education.

So shake off your apathy! Whether you want change, the status quo or none of the above, your vote does matter. This is not an election for some nebulous job in a far-flung capitol. This is much more important. The people we elect today affect your schools, your roads and your taxes.

—Kevin Bottrell

Definitions that ring familiar

As I shared with you several weeks ago, I like words. For about three weeks, the two words "sacred" and "profane" have been running through my mind. I thought surely there was a column there when the idea kept coming back. Those are two words we all have heard, probably have all used and surely know what they mean. At that level, there was no column to be written. So I turned to the Internet to see if I could learn more about these words.

I had anticipated there would be a meaning for sacred that was not directly related to the religious use we usually ascribe to the word. I was sort of right; there are two meanings. I found that come closer to being secular than religious. One definition reads: "Properly immune from violence, interference, etc., as a person or office." The other meaning reads: Reverently dedicated to some person, purpose or object." This one gave an example of "a morning hour sacred to study."

I decided the first meaning has some possibility for discussion. I have heard a number of persons say lately that our culture is deteriorating; they give as examples the number of single parent families, the disrespectful ways we treat one another, the numerous problems we hear about occurring in schools. A commentator on television tells us we have lost civility in dealing with one another, as he turns to another analyst and yells at him for disagreeing.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could

Life is Good
Rita Speer



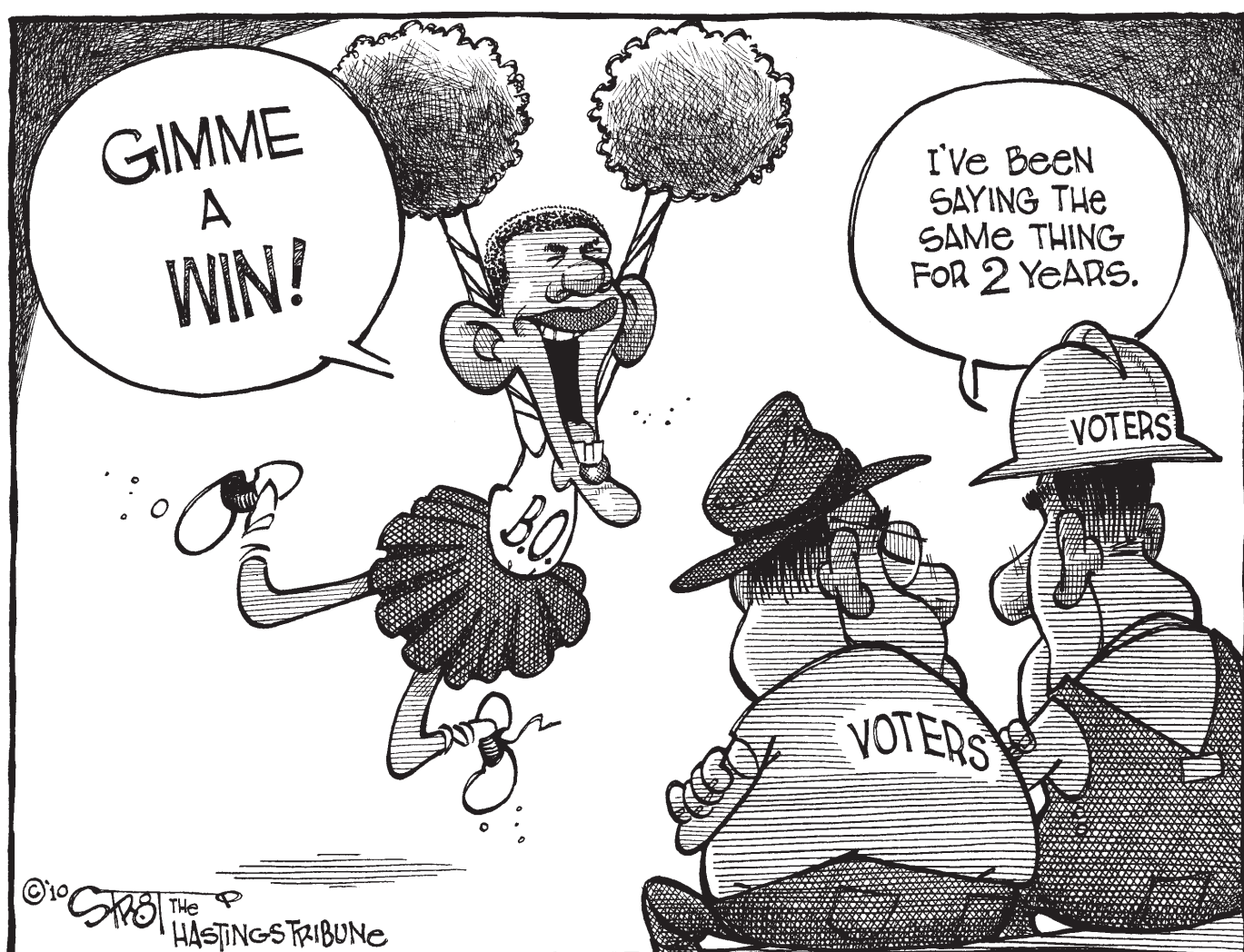
change how we feel (which would then change how we behave) to believe that other persons are properly immune from violence or interference. That means we would treat all the people we meet

daily with respect and regard—whether that person is family or stranger, high official or common laborer, a person in clerical dress or someone in blue jeans. That means we would treat everyone the way we would like to be treated. (Hmmm, that sounds a bit familiar, doesn't it?)

You may react to this thought by saying, "So what? I can't change anyone else's attitude. I can't do anything that would have an effect across the country." Are you so sure?

Let me share a story with you. A teacher gave all her high school students two blue ribbons, one because of what each of them meant to her, the second to pass on to another person who meant something to them. One student passed his to a corporate executive who had helped him and asked him to pass it on. The executive gave it to one of his employees who did a good job and received very little praise. This employee then passed it on to his teen-aged son because things had been pretty rocky between them of late. Later the son told his father the ribbon had changed his life because he had planned to commit suicide the evening his father gave him that ribbon, because he believed no one cared about him.

I want to suggest you treat the people you meet as sacred beings.



These are the days of our lives

So, there I was minding my own business. I was putting a load of laundry in the washing machine when I saw it. It had beady little eyes, eight hairy legs and must have been 10 inches across. A spider was perched on top of the load, waiting I'm sure, to leap onto me. Water was rushing in and I had already added the soap. (I like to add my detergent before I put in the clothes so the soap gets mixed evenly into the water.)

That's another story. Back to the spider. I spied him. He spied me. I screamed. Jim came running. When I pointed to the murderous arachnid, Jim said, "You mean this little guy?" while, at the same time, reaching into the washer and grabbing for the beast. Missed. He tried again. And again. And again. Each time the creepy, crawly thing avoided Jim's clutches.

Finally, Jim closed the lid on the machine and said, "Let the laundry take care of him." Great! I knew I was going to have little spider body parts all over my clean clothes. When the washer shut off I cautiously opened the lid. At least no wet, mad and dizzy spider attacked me. The old Whirlpool must have a powerful spin cycle because I found no remains. And, believe me when I say I inspected each item carefully before tossing it into

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



the dryer. Not a trace remained.

—ob—

I think Jim and I may be having a technology meltdown. This week we upgraded our cell phones to ones with every bell and whistle available. We, now, have the ability to text, take pictures, download pictures and send e-mails. I think we can even talk to people. I'm not sure, though. I haven't got to that part in the manual yet.

Just like with Facebook, our grandchildren kept urging us to "get with it". So, here we are. Two senior citizens trying to; operate phones that can turn sideways and have the screen turn, too; figure out how we activated the speaker phone without meaning to; and, how to use our thumb to roll our contact list by at a speed we can actually read.

We are determined, though. We WILL

keep up.

—ob—

Have you ever seen so much corn before? No matter what town you drive through - big or small, there is a mountain of grain piled somewhere. Often times, more than one pile. The crazy thing is: harvest isn't over. Some estimates say only about half. Where are they going to put the rest? Talk about being blessed with an abundance. I wondered aloud if most of it would be going to ethanol plants.

It's hard to imagine starving people in the world when we see so much in this country.

—ob—

Our little four-year old granddaughter, Ani, is so precocious. Her mother, Jennifer, is an authoritative woman. When she speaks, she expects to be obeyed.

That's why during our recent visit at Jennifer's home we had to learn how to control our laughter. One night Ani kept asking for a piece of candy. Finally, Jennifer said, "I said no."

Ani, shrugged her shoulders, lifted her little arms and said, "But, I say yes."

Grandkids are great "payback", aren't they?

Farmers concerns prove valid and make difference

Sometimes common sense and fairness prevail.

Such was the case in Sherman County when the Kansas Department of Transportation decided to maintain the existing barbed-wire fence along both sides of the I-70 Highway corridor.

The Kansas Department of Transportation had been flirting with the idea of widening the right-of-way easements and replacing the existing fence with a cable fence. This proposal was primarily a cost saving measure designed to cut maintenance costs of the existing fence.

Landowners, farmers and stockmen along the corridor heard about the proposal, met as a group and in mid-October visited with the Kansas Department of Transportation to express their resolve to keep and maintain the original five-strand, barbed-wire fence. They understood cattle, hogs, sheep or nearly any type of livestock are bound to escape on occasion.

The cattlemen also knew and understood that with a single cable, cattle and other livestock were bound to find their way onto the fast-moving interstate highway, says Mike Irvin, Kansas Farm Bureau Legal Foundation director. Not only were they concerned about the safety of those people traveling in cars

and trucks, they were also worried about their valuable stock should they be hit or run over on the highway.

"The Sherman County landowners and stockmen also realized that if this proposal moved forward, they would be liable for keeping the livestock off the highway rather than the Kansas Department of Transportation," Irvin notes.

The livestock producers were convinced a cable would not keep their stock off the heavily traveled interstate. If this idea succeeded, they would be forced to maintain the old fence or build new ones. Building and maintaining a five-strand barbed wire fence is costly and this would have been a major departure from long standing precedent first established when I-70 was originally completed nearly 50 years ago.

"Looking at this fencing issue we felt confident our court system and the state legislature intended for the Kansas Department of Transportation to maintain this fence line with a five-strand, barbed-wire fence from the very beginning," Irvin says. "Our livestock producers wanted to

keep something that had worked in place. They believed in the existing system."

Further precedent for continuation of the existing system was defined in the case of Reynolds v. Kansas Department of Transportation that concluded landowners and livestock producers would rely on state fences rather than installing private fences alongside the state fences. And because the state built the fencing, they were responsible for maintaining it.

Fortunately, after the groundswell in Sherman County, Kansas Department of Transportation decided the concerns of landowners, farmers and stockmen were valid. They agreed to leave the original five-barbed wire fences in place.

This fencing question represents a classic case where working together and fairness won out. State government, individual landowners and livestock producers found common ground based on understanding, common sense and the best method of ensuring safety for everyone.

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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Thumbs up to Clair Rumford for helping me start my vehicle and to the two unknowns for helping me push it off the highway. Called in