

Balancing of political campaign promises

The commentators seem to be quite worried about how Gov.-elect Sam Brownback will be able to balance his campaign promise to focus on jobs and the economy with demands from the religious right for tougher abortion laws, from gun advocates for new laws and from other conservative groups.

John Hanna, the Associated Press' long-time statehouse correspondent, said the big GOP victories could be setting the dominant party up for infighting the likes of which it has seldom seen.

And, to be fair, the party has such big majorities in the House (92-33) and Senate (31-9) — that's nearly three-fourths in both — that some disputes do seem likely. When one party gets that big, it's just natural for it to split into wings. The Kansas GOP has had two distinct, not always harmonious groups, for years.

One reason for this may be that many who might otherwise be Democrats learned early on that they need to be Republicans to get elected in this state. The party is where the action — and the power — are.

Some years, competition between these two groups is more than the limited fight the state's impoverished Democrats can put up. And in politics, maybe it just has to be that way. Too much unity might actually be dangerous, with a happy majority running roughshod over a weak and powerless minority.

Dr. Ed Flentje, a political scientist at Wichita State University, writing in a regular column, says the new governor may find he has little power to reform the state's education establishment, though he wishes him luck.

There's some truth to that, too. In Kansas, while public schools take fully half the state budget, the governor and Legislature have little say. The elected state Board of Education hires the commissioner, who runs the Department of Education.

And while the Legislature is supposed to set the budget, balancing schools with other needs, in practice, state courts and the power of the education lobby have stripped even that influence away. Education does as education wishes.

Yet we have faith in the new governor. In 14 years in the U.S. Senate and in years as a state legislator and cabinet member, he's proven he can handle himself. He's a popular and likable candidate, and he has proven himself an effective leader.

Running the state, if that's the right term, should prove to be within his powers. He knows how to work with the Legislature, and his campaign platform apparently resounded with voters. He left the Democrats in the dust.

Sure, as a conservative Republican, Mr. Brownback will have to deal with those who focus on abortion, gun rights, drugs and other issues. He can afford to toss each of these dogs a bone, and he will.

That shouldn't detract from his mission to boost the economy and shrink the government, and in that, he'll be helped by a general upward trend in business and state revenue. Where for the last three years, the "experts" who project state income consistently ran behind the dropoff in taxes, in a recovery, typically, income will run ahead of projections.

There will be problems. The state has to deal with the loss of millions in federal "stimulus" money and in the projected end two years out of the "temporary" 20 percent increase in the state sales tax.

There will be no "extra" money to spend, but as a conservative, the governor-elect should be comfortable with tight budgets. If he seeks to prove his mettle, he'll make the system work with the money the state has.

And we think he'll do just that, surprising the commentators, but not everyone.

— Steve Haynes

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Micro-Management or effective leadership

Jack and I were discussing recent happenings in the community last week and following our discussion he said, "This is how a small town dies." Towns don't dissolve overnight; it comes over years sometimes at the hands of those we believe are dedicated to keeping our community alive.

Traditions are important to individuals and to communities. I felt great sadness mingled with anger when I read the Norton County Commissioners had decided to forego the lights on the Norton County Court House during Christmas season. Perhaps the greater disappointment surrounded the reason for their action. The decision was made to eliminate the lights because of potential damage to the sidewalks from the heavy equipment and the scratching of the marble by wind whipped lights. The lights have outlined our beautiful county building for how many years and only now we are assessing the damage? Better yet, the decision was made just before the holiday season

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



with no time for discussion. Sometimes it pays to ask for help in solving problems rather than issuing a decree. There are many resourceful individuals in this community who might have had a solution. Unfortunately the way it was handled felt more dictatorial than democratic. Rosalie Schulze's letter to the editor on Tuesday said it best, "My real concern is what are the commissioners going to take away from Norton County next?"

Too many times in a small community, and often in the country as well, individuals elected into a position begin to believe they are larger than the community which they are supposedly dedicated

to serve. Unfortunately sometimes these individuals begin to make decisions which border more on micro-management than effective leadership. This wasn't the first decision made by these Commissioners which should cause us to question their judgment. Other decisions have had far greater consequences for individuals and ultimately for all of us in this county. The voters are responsible for the actions of the commissioners because these commissioners work for us. It is important to remember the dealings of our elected officials and hold them accountable. It is more than just lights on the Courthouse at stake.

American journalist, Charles Peters, once said, "Bureaucrats write memoranda both because they appear to be busy when they are writing and because the memos, once written, immediately become proof that they were busy." mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Is helping a stranger on your bucket list?

Sometime ago I wrote a column about "Bucket Lists". At the time I had not seen the movie "The Bucket List". But my take on Bucket Lists was worrying over checking things off the to do list robs us of the joy of everyday living.

I finally caught "The Bucket List". And it is a wonderful, sweet movie! Morgan Freeman began his bucket list before he quit college to marry, work at a blue collar job and raise a family. Jack Nicholson made millions and never denied himself anything. When faced with their mortality, Freeman appears to desert his family by taking off with Nicholson to complete his bucket list.

Evidently Freeman realizes his true fulfillment lies back with his family. His ultimate goal was to "witness something that inspires AWE". In the end anyone watching the movie witnessed that. What is more awesome than a man who is a faithful husband and father ALL the years of his life!

I may have been a little vulnerable as I watched the movie one of my first days home from surgery. But the hospital scenes (played for laughs as much as possible) caused me pain. The hospital where I had my surgery was a surgical hospital only and I imagine the outcome for most of the patients is favorable. Maternity wards of hospitals are for the most part joyous places also.

So much has been done to make hospitals welcoming to patients and families. And still they are places filled with pain. It is the nature of the beast; no matter how fancy the food, how sweet the staff or how happy the outcome.

My insurance did not want to pay for a private room, but it was a private room

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



only place and in my opinion that's how all hospitals should be. Misery does not really love company--it loves privacy!

In "The Bucket List", the only reason Freeman and Nicholson meet is because the hospital, ironically managed by Nicholson, has only semi-private rooms! It made great theater by proving the point; some things are necessary for the bottom line but those things are completely at odds with comfort and dignity!

One thing on Freeman's bucket list was to help a complete stranger. I've been thinking a lot about hospitals and helping.

Our friends Steve and Joni Berry from Lenora became grandparents of Chase Gray a little over a year ago. Anyone who knows them has shared in the heartbreak as this beautiful child was diagnosed with a cancerous tumor. It was previously inconceivable to me but this child was born with cancer!

An example of a wonderful group that is out there to help support families in this situation is Caring Bridge. Through Caring Bridge, Chase's mom, Amanda, keeps everyone apprised of Chase's care and treatment.

As a writer, I'm certain that just being able to express her feelings to others has been a tremendous help to Amanda. She does a beautiful job. The good news is

Chase is doing well. His tumor has been removed. He is a year old. In fact, everything about Chase is GOOD NEWS! As Amanda once wrote Chase is a gift. The burden of the cancer is separate from the joy that is Chase.

Those of us who share Chase's story have cried many tears with this family as their journey has progressed. There are tears of joy when things go well, sympathy when they do not, and loss when we hear about the friends whose children have been taken home to God.

Amanda and her family and friends have compiled a cookbook to help with expenses related to Chase's treatment. They are for sale at the grocery store in Lenora and I'm certain there is an outlet in Norton (though I've forgotten where!)

It's coming up on Christmas. No matter how your bucket list reads, this is the time of year to help others! Buy a cookbook! Don't need a cookbook? I bet just some cash would be more than welcome.

In the last Caring Bridge update, Amanda had several ideas that would help any families with a sick child. She said,

"Third, probably the best gift is donating blood. Blood cannot be artificially produced, so hematology and oncology patients rely on your gift of life. Chase has received 13 blood transfusions and 2 platelet transfusions in the last year, and he is just one patient!"

I believe most of us hope when we are gone we have done something that will be remembered as heroic. A pint of blood costs the giver nothing. I realize not everyone can donate blood but if you can, I hope you will not hesitate.

Put it on your bucket list and check it off: Be a Hero! Donate blood!

Please send your Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up to:
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