

Several issues being discussed in legislature

News from your legislator
Ward Cassidy



We are supposed to be finished with the legislature this year on Wednesday, May 11. The House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee continue to work on the omnibus budget. As more information becomes available to them from the fiscal notes of bills that were approved by the Governor, the committees will take action incorporating necessary language into the budget measure.

So far additions to the final bills have been small and non-controversial. However, as the House Appropriations Committee discussed the omnibus bill there was a very controversial bill proposed by a Shawnee legislator. It would have essentially gutted three months of work by the committee. It would have reduced the budget by another \$138 million. The vote in committee only received four votes but it had the e-mails for all of the representatives buzzing. Education, which has already been hit hard, would have had another \$168 per pupil cut.

The goal of the House is to have the largest ending balance possible so they can have a strong negotiation for the Senate proposal. There are many speculations as to what that final number will be ranging from \$10m to \$80m. In a perfect world, the legislature would like to have a larger ending balance but not at the expense of cutting any more funds to schools and the other necessary programs to run the state.

As things sit right now the Senate made an offer that includes eight package deals and several individual items. The House now has to take the time to review their proposal and either agree or come up with a counter proposal. The conference committees will keep meeting until we have a final budget to vote on.

An example of policy that is now going on between the House and the Senate is the Community Defense Act. It will be interesting to see what the final conference agreement becomes or if it ever comes back from the Senate. Just before finishing this article I found out that the Senate rejected the bill and it is now essentially dead for this year. This is what makes the work so frustrating. We spent many hours on this and it ends up going nowhere.

KPERS continues to be a major discussion topic and it will be until this session is over. If I had to guess I bet there will be a commission created to study it further. I had a friend ask the questions – was KPERS ever not funded properly and was there ever money borrowed that was not paid back? The answer I have received is that in the 1990's there was a period of five years where it was not funded at the four percent that was required by law. In 1995 KPERS was overfunded when the multiplier was raised and the 85 window was created. All borrowed money was paid back.

The Senate approved a measure that requires state inspection and licensing of facilities where abortions are performed. The measure also puts in place new requirements for physicians who perform abortions. The bill is on its way to the governor to be considered.

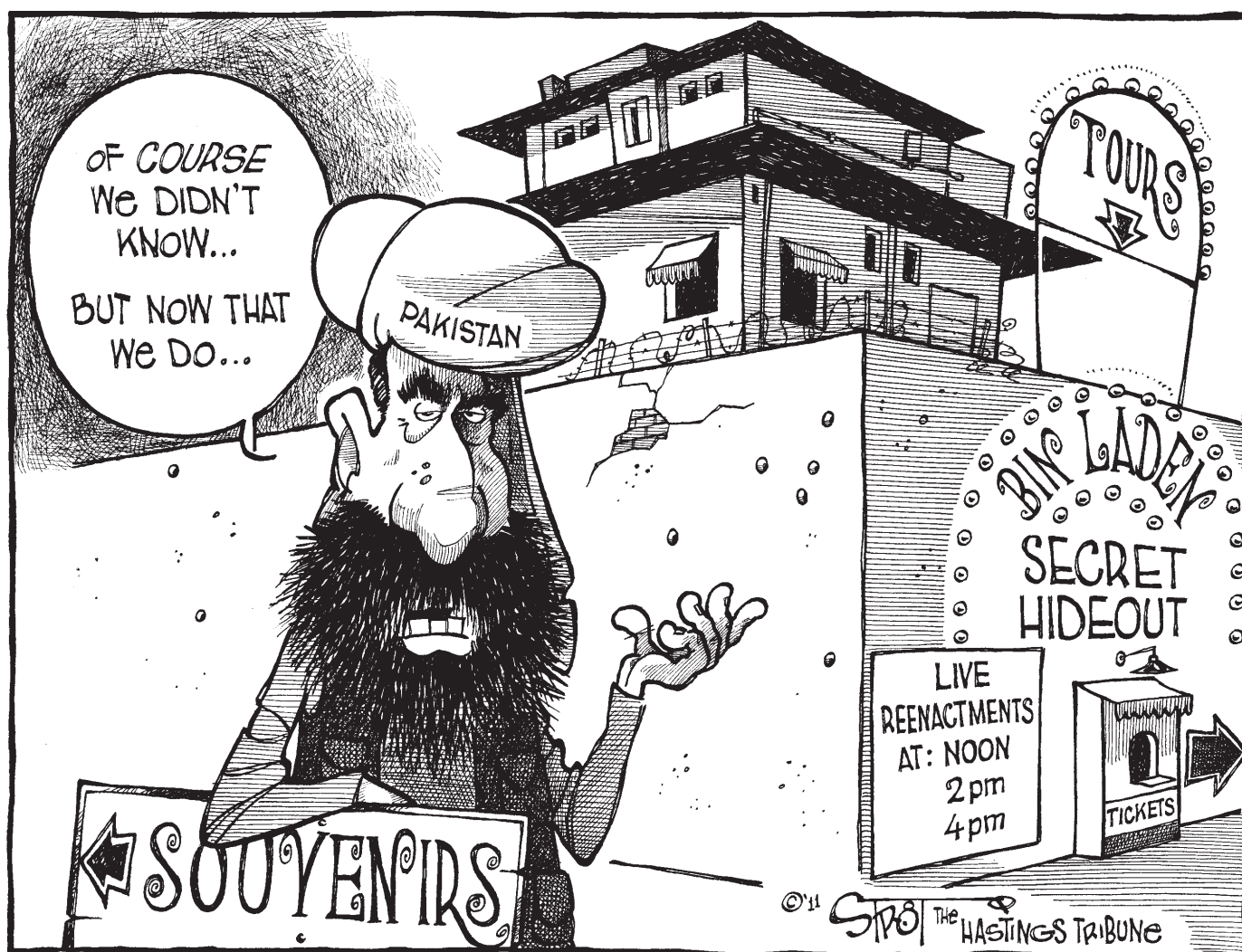
We had a lengthy debate on the casino being built in Sumner County. The casino is expected to generate 3,000 jobs. The question was whether our attorney general, Derek Schmidt, should bring legal action challenging the legality of a contract with Peninsula Gaming, who is building the casino. It was voted down 59-62. I did vote for the bill because I felt the rights of the individuals in the area were not being considered. It was a hard vote as I know how badly we need new jobs created.

The House this week sent a bill to the Senate that would allow schools to use specialized funds for general education purposes. They are hoping that it will help them get through next year with all the cuts currently given to them.

The Senate passed Wednesday afternoon and sent to the Governor the measure that allows the Kansas Supreme Court to continue levying about \$11m in docket fees, which was approved last year on a one year basis. The money from the docket fees collected by district courts across the state is key to financing the budget of the Kansas Judiciary for the fiscal year which starts July 1.

The Speaker of the House appointed me to the legislative group for the National Legislative Effectiveness Committee. This will give me an opportunity to learn more about the legislative process.

We adjourned Friday, May 6 for Mother's Day and returned Monday to finalize the budget. As I send this off we have been notified that the House and Senate leaders have agreed that there must be at least a positive \$50m ending balance in the budget this year.



Love from family and medical emergencies

Excuse me for a moment. Thanks. I needed to re-read last week's column to remind myself of what I had written. This past week has been a blur.

Medical emergencies and the care and feeding of an injured person can almost be overwhelming. Between administering medications, driving to doctor's appointments, picking up prescriptions, preparing meals and tiptoeing around while the patient sleeps, a person can lose track of time.

Jim had surgery on his hand last Tuesday and will see the specialist again this week. The good news is he has feeling in his thumb and index finger and we expect him to regain full use of both. The specialist/surgeon showed me the x-ray of Jim's thumb. "See how this bone is rounded on the end?" he said, pointing to the unaffected joint. Moving to the other joint, he added, "Now, see how this one isn't"

It was obvious, even to my untrained eye, there was a noticeable "notch" taken out of the joint. Again, we marvel at how fortunate he is not to have lost his thumb. We keep telling ourselves, "It could have been so much worse."

More good news came out of the surgery. It was thought the doctor would

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



do skin grafts on Jim's index finger. On close examination, under anesthesia, the surgeon decided it was healing well enough on its own and chose not to bother it.

I'm not sure if I'll go in to see the doctor when Jim has his follow-up visit. The doctor's last words to us as we left the surgical suite were, "Take it easy and keep this (the wrapping) clean."

I don't know how Jim will explain the grass stains, grease and grime embedded in the bandaging. Maybe he can convince the doctor how he just HAD to run the weedeater; how a friend needed a car battery charged; and how, with all this time on his hand(s), he decided it was a good time to clean out a storage shed (or two). Short of over-dosing him, I don't know how to "hold him down".

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Sunday was Mother's Day and I heard

from all my kids. James and Charlotte gave me a card, plus hugs and kisses, at church; Jennifer and Becky called; Kara called and said a card was in the mail; and Halley called late in the evening after we returned from dinner at a friend's home. She said, "Sorry about not sending a card. But, I want it noted that I did call. I will get credit for this, won't I?"

Yes, Honey. You'll get credit. Matters not what time they call (or text) I love to hear from my kids.

-ob-
Speaking of texting. Three days after Jim hurt his hand we ended up back in the local emergency room because his hand was swelling and felt warm to the touch. The attending physician unwrapped his hand to check things out. Taking advantage of the moment, I snapped a picture of his thumb with the camera in my phone to send our son-in-law. Adam is a para-medic and I knew he would appreciate a photo.

As I was adding a message to the picture, one of the nurses said, "Wow, that's pretty cool. I don't see many people your age that know how to text."
Forget Jim's hand. THAT hurt.

Educating children that summer time is full of dangers

Insight
John Schlageck

Before long kids will toss their schoolbooks and pencils in the far corners of their rooms, don their Magellan garb and embark on a summer course of outdoor exploration.

For many rural children, railroads, dumps, junkyards, abandoned properties and ponds make exciting places to explore. It is up to parents to decide where suitable adventure sites may be found.

Each year, hundreds of railroad trespassers are killed and injured, according to the National Safety Council. Children who crawl under or pass around lowered gates, walk the tracks, cross trestles, take shortcuts across railroad property, hop trains, climb in, on or around railroad cars run a tremendous risk.

This spring take the time to warn your children of these dangers, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety director. Instruct them to obey warning devices and insist they never cross a railroad track until they have looked both ways and are sure it is safe.

"Never assume children will act like responsible, mature adults," Higgins says. "Advise them often because they forget."

Kids will be kids. For most, life is an adventure. Anything and anywhere is fair game for exploration.

When I was a boy growing up in northwestern Kansas, there was always something magnetic about a junkyard. We had an abandoned dump within easy walking distance. We dug and sifted

through the trash at the site for hours, collecting little treasures to add to our growing collections. Sometimes these "keepers" as we called them consisted of rusted iron spikes, neat-shaped bottles, broken wrenches and tools, discarded containers and other cast-offs.

While we weren't aware of it or didn't care, the risk of injury was always present. Wasps, snakes, rats, spiders and other creatures scrambled and slithered to move out of the way of our excavation projects. Broken glass and boards with rusty nails threatened to cut or puncture our small feet. I will never forget the pain and tears of stepping on a nail.

Dumps also feature trucks, bulldozers and other heavy equipment. It's difficult for operators to see children scooting among the debris. Such equipment can easily crush kids. Warn your children to stay away.

Dark deserted buildings – including barns and abandoned farmhouses – often have the reputation of being haunted. Such structures were always considered another adventure when I was a youngster.

Big kids often dare little kids to go in. I remember accepting the challenge and brushing my way through cobwebs and

crawling around rodent holes and fleeing mice. Although I survived, I wouldn't advise any child of mine to do the same.

As a youth, my dad always warned me again and again about swimming ponds. I guess the repetition paid off because I never swam in such pools of water until I was in high school and an "okay" swimmer.

Remember to tell your children about such ponds. They are deep. You can be into water up to your knees the first couple of steps and the next – over your head.

There are no lifeguards. Fencing off ponds may help. Warning signs also may serve as a deterrent, but kids always find a way into the water.

Warn children about such potential hazards. Then warn them again. Saving one child's life is worth the effort. Many times it takes more than once for them to grasp your warnings.

Lead by example and remember that as a parent you have been entrusted with safeguarding your children's wellbeing. Summertime is a special time for kids. Having a child is indeed a treasure. Take care of, cherish and nurture this wonderful gift.

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.



Dear Editor,
In response to Mary Kay Woodyard's May 6, 2011 article! I too, did not celebrate Bin Laden's death! I do, celebrate our soldiers' victory over our enemies! Enemies who think only of brutally murdering my children and their children's children! Now try to put too high a price on that one!
As God gives our soldiers "Victory", may he have mercy on our enemies heathen souls!

Bradley Sander

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Thumbs up to Tom Dreiling for his editorial suggesting Donald Trump is fired. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the Norton County Arts Council for bringing in such great musical and comedic entertainment this weekend. Called in.

Thumbs up to the parents of the graduating classes of Logan and Northern Valley. You did a good job of raising some wonderful young adults. They will do well. Good Luck Grads! Emailed In.