

Gearing up for when the Legislature reconvenes

I traveled to Lawrence Thursday, October 20, for a two-day meeting with the House Republicans to discuss the upcoming session. The session begins Monday, January 9. It is nice to feel much more comfortable with my duties as a representative.

News from your legislator
Ward Cassidy



I have spent quite a bit of time since May traveling the district and visiting with people about their concerns. It is a bad time to be a politician as the general mood is that politicians are doing a bad job, especially the ones in Washington. It was quite a debacle this summer watching Congress and the President. Now we are treated to the open warfare of selecting a Republican nominee for President.

A politician I know who has the best interests of Western Kansas in mind is Senator Moran. We are about to lose three post offices in the 120th district. He has proposed the "Protecting Rural Post Offices Act," which would prohibit the U.S. Postal Service from closing a post office if there is not an alternative access point for postal service within ten miles. Whether you agree or not, if it was your post office about to close, it would be nice to know someone is fighting for you.

A good friend of mine has asked for help against the EPA's new regulation forcing farmers to have containment for any fuel tanks holding 1,300 or more gallons. I have talked to representatives in Arkansas and Missouri who are going to attempt legislation to fight this regulation. I brought it up this weekend and was told it is quite an uphill battle to fight the EPA or we would have a power plant in Holcomb. I still will do everything I can to help a constituent.

I also plan to work with several legislators to change the laws so that parents will have to report missing children immediately.

The House of Representative members were given a brief heads-up as to what to look for from the Brownback administration, this upcoming session, while we were in Lawrence.

First, the super committee in Washington is saying that it could cut Medicaid from a half billion to a billion dollars per state. As it is, Medicaid and KPERS are main budget items that draw down the entire budget. Medicaid will change drastically this coming year.

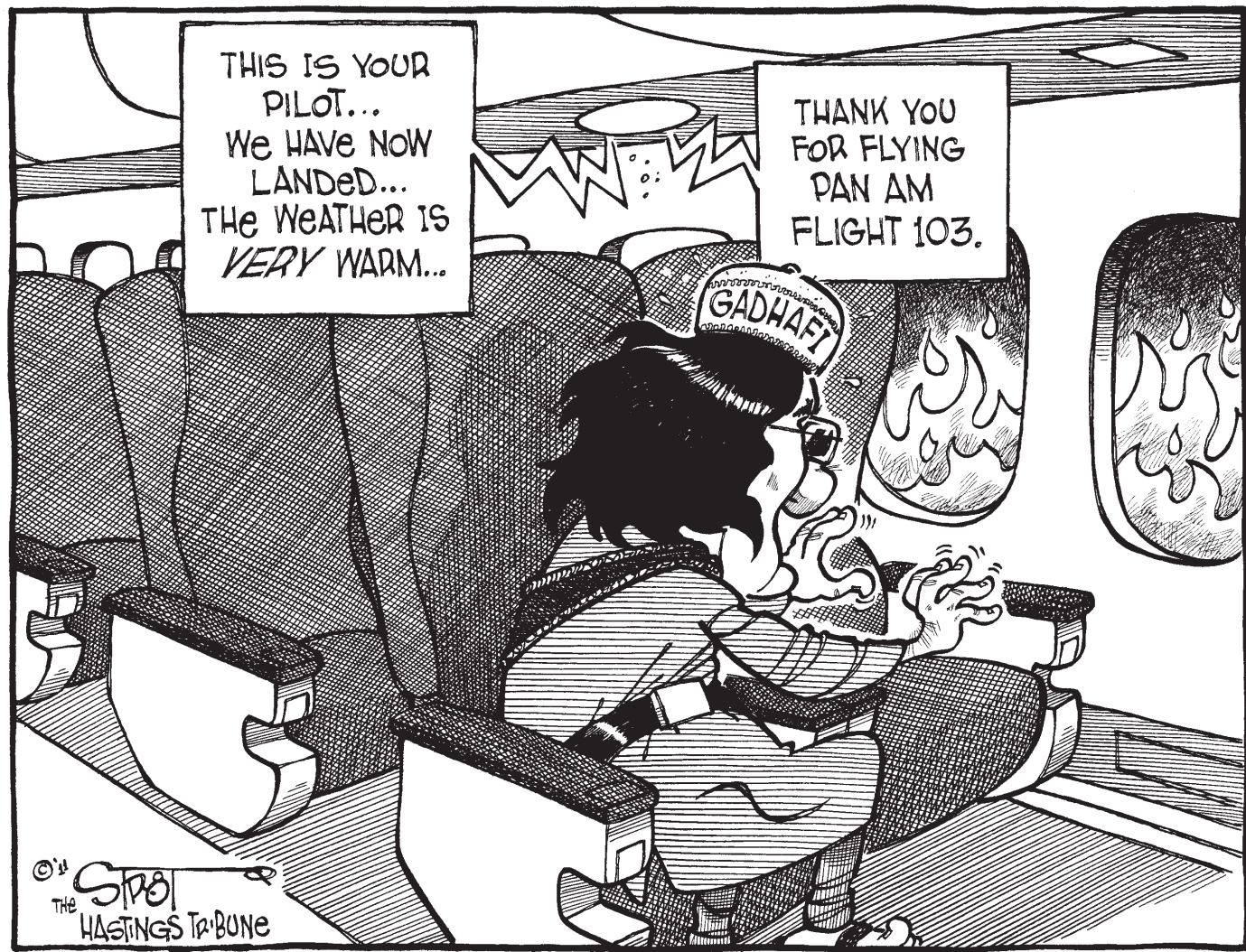
I was told KPERS will not change for current members for twenty-five years but that new members will potentially have a new plan. After working all summer, the KPERS committee still does not have a solution. (KPERS pays out 6 percent of the fund and returns 2 percent.) That is not a statistic members like to hear.

The two major administrative actions that will have everyone talking are the governor's proposal for a flat tax rate and a new school finance formula. I'll write about the proposed changes as more information becomes available.

The State Board of Education has applied to drop out of the No Child Left Behind Act. We will have to follow four principal standards once we are out to receive federal funds. I am surprised that has not made big headlines, but I am sure it will in the weeks ahead.

We listened to top economists from all over the country telling us what should be done to grow our state so we can fund the necessary state responsibilities. All I can say is that what has been done in the past by Kansas government has not been effective; the can has been kicked down the road too often. Now that money is short, we are all going to see changes we might not agree with.

I will keep the 120th district informed to the best of my abilities. I will continue to have a weekly column during the session. ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov



Automobiles versus wild animals, animals win

My van is a wildlife magnet. No, that doesn't mean it attracts "party animals". It means every deer, pheasant, rabbit and raccoon in the county will, eventually, end up in my path.

Last November we hit a deer, that someone else had already hit, and it totaled-out our red van. We traded for a white van and a few months later, in broad daylight, a doe deer ran out of the grader ditch into the driver's side. I never saw her coming until her head was mashed into my window. She went rolling, but regained her feet and darted into a field.

About two weeks later another doe jumped out of the ditch and ran into the rear side of the van. Again, the deer wasn't hurt and only the slightest dent was left as evidence.

Most recently a big, fat raccoon tried to dart across the road in front of me.

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



It felt like we had hit a buffalo and took out my front bumper. Sadly, the coon did not walk away from our third encounter of the close kind.

It's to the point where I'm tempted to keep the body repairman on retainer. We are definitely on a first-name basis.

A town in a neighboring county has an annual fall event where if you have something you don't want you can put it on the curb and city crews will pick it up and haul to the landfill. Some people call it a city-wide clean-up - I

call it "thrift shopping".

My technique is to cruise the streets slowly, scanning front yards and driveways for the tell-tale signs of anything usable. Yesterday I gleaned two decent kitchen chairs in one yard, a small kitchen table in another and a lidless trashcan in yet another. At this rate it won't take me long to furnish the last apartment we have to rent.

A senseless tragedy has occurred in the community. One bad decision led to another and two families are forever changed. Everyone is related to or knows one or both families. During prayer and praise time at the little country church where Jim preaches we prayed for everyone involved. One woman in the congregation said, "I don't know which mother to pray for." The heartache of both must be tremendous.

Fly your fanny flag high while going down the road

Insight
John Schlageck

Kansas farmers have access to a safety tool that should always be used. The slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem can save lives and machinery.

A slow-moving vehicle emblem (fanny flag) is designed for one reason to notify the public that the vehicle motorists are approaching is not traveling more than 25 miles-per-hour, says Holly Higgins, Kansas Farm Bureau safety director. That in turn allows them to slow down and proceed with caution because the vehicle ahead is moving slowly.

"Once an approaching motorist sees the flashing lights and SMV sign, the driver can react in a defensive way that will keep both operators safe," Higgins says. "We find that when you mix these two vehicles together without the proper warning devices in place a number of things can happen."

One such example is a motorist who pops up over a hill traveling 65 miles-per-hour and finds a tractor moving at 20 miles-per-hour. The driver of the auto or truck may be forced to run into the ditch, the back of the tractor or into the other lane of oncoming traffic.

"Hazard lights and SMVs are there to prevent these types of accidents," Higgins says.

Anyone operating a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) be advised, the fluorescent orange emblem must

be properly mounted on the back of your vehicle. Every farm tractor manufactured or assembled after Jan. 1, 1975, shall be equipped with hazard warning lights that are visible from a distance of not less than 1,000 feet to the front and rear in normal sunlight, which are to be displayed whenever such a vehicle is operated upon a highway.

One alarming trend that has occurred in Kansas is the misuse of these signs. The emblems have been found nailed to fence posts, in front of driveways, as markers for washed out areas in the road and in one instance on cattle pens in a feedlot.

Use of slow moving emblems in such a manner gives the motoring public a mistaken impression of what is on the road in front of them. They drive up slowly on a slow moving vehicle sign and assume a tractor or some other farm implement is going down the road in front of them. The next time they see the bright orange emblem, they may think it is something else and crash into the back of a slow moving vehicle.

SMV emblems help eliminate such accidents all together. For those

producers, or anyone else operating slow moving vehicles, you can purchase them at your local machinery dealer or farm-supply stores.

Use common sense when it comes to displaying your slow-moving vehicle emblems, Higgins advises. She used the example of a farmer using a stinger on the back of a tractor to haul big round bales.

"What happens if you lift such a bale up for transportation?" the safety spokesperson asks. "You can't see the SMV emblem on the back of the tractor, right?"

So what's the answer?

Take a slow-moving vehicle emblem that has a steel rod or wooden stake attached and stick it into the back of the hay bale. And before you head down the road, turn on the flashing amber lights.

If a farmer or rancher has the SMV emblem, his lights flashing and someone hits him from the rear, he's done all he can, Higgins says.

"Proper installation and maintenance of SMVs isn't intended to make anyone's life more complicated," Higgins says. "They're intended to save lives and reduce accidents. If you don't keep your slow-moving vehicle emblems clean and in place, you're putting yourself in a position that can be avoided."



Thumbs up to the Norton Community High School football players for having breakfast with the Andbe Home residents. Called in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

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