**News from** 

your

legislator

**Ward Cassidy** 

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# **Government needs to** stop digging a hole and start budgeting

There will be no shortage of information to share with the 120th District this year. In this article, I am going to share information on the most asked questions I have received.

Governor's budget -the last time Kansas met the constitutional ending balance requirement was in 2008. The constitution

requires a 7.5 percent ending balance. The FY2013 budget provides an ending balance of \$465 million, exceeding the 7.5 percent statutory requirement.

I have received some complaints that we should spend the excess for programs that have been really hurt. I believe that if we would have maintained a cushion in the bank, when the crisis hit, we would have been in a position to better manage and would have not had to make the cuts we did. Kansas families must budget to have a cushion in the bank; the Kansas legislature should be no different.

Last week, I wrote about the difference in the All Fund Budget and the General Fund Budget. In this year's budget, the All Funds Budget decreases by \$596.6 million, or 4.0 percent. The State General Fund Budget decreases by .6 percent, or \$39.1 million. I would say that we are headed in the right direction.

The Governor has also recommended that the Kansas Arts Commission and the Kansas Film Commission be combined into a new Creative Industries Commission in the budget of the Department of Commerce. They will be funded with \$200,000 and will be charged with showing how the money is used and how they can improve state financial resources.

The first rule of being stuck in a hole is to stop digging and that is exactly the plan for KPERS. While the hole of \$8.3 billion seems insurmountable, there is a manageable solution. The first step is to fund the state's year to year obligations and this budget does that. The next step is to reform the current system to prevent future employees from being trapped in an inflexible system. However, current KPERS members, those retired and already vested, will not see a change in the program. Those individuals will continue to receive the payments as promised. It is undecided as to what to do with members not yet vested. The recommendations for new employees are still being considered but I believe that we will ultimately pass a defined contribution plan for new members. This would help insure the fund stays solvent and retirees who have been promised a pension will receive it.

The Governor recommends no general state employee salary increase for FY 2013. That is better than last year when a legislator recommended a 7.5 percent cut across the board. For the sixth year the Governor recommended funding for the longevity bonus payment at the \$50 level per year capped out at \$1,250. Employees hired after June 15, 2008 are not eligible for the longevity bonus.

I love all of my committees, but Appropriations has proven to be very exciting. I will learn how every penny of the General Fund Budget is spent.

One of my favorite hobbies is hunting and fishing. Today in Appropriations, we heard from the new director and a friend of mine, Robin Jennison. The Department of Wildlife and Tourism has been given a directive to become self sufficient. One of their proposals, to achieve this goal, is to have Kansans sixty -five and over purchase a license. I have received quite a few e-mails about this.

Here is my point of view. A very high percentage of outdoorsman are sixty five and over, thanks to us Baby Boomers. I want my grandchildren to have the same outdoor experiences as I have had and am willing to buy a license as long as I can still hunt. It is a small price to pay.



Dear Editor,

On behalf of the Norton CARES Advisory Board, our volunteers, and those we help, thank you to all who attended the Potato Bar fundraiser on January 19. We raised over \$2200! Norton CARES provides volunteer drivers for residents of Norton County who have no other means of transportation. Destinations in town include the grocery store, the beauty parlor, the bank, and the hospital/clinic. We also provide rides to out-of-town doctor appointments within a 200 mile radius. Your generosity enables those we serve to enjoy continued independence with dignity in the environment of their choice. Again, thank you!

Rick Rostek, President Norton CARES Advisory Board

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## Finding lost things and friends of the past

The lost is found. I should have remembered my mother's advice: 'Carolyn, if you would just put everything away, you'd find it."

Well, who knew my old pair of glasses were hiding in the pocket of an apron I hadn't worn for several months. That admission alone (that I hadn't worn an apron) would have gotten me in trouble

One day late last summer I could not find my glasses. Usually I hung them around my neck on a chain, even though all my girls think it's kind of "old-ladyish" to wear it. My daughter, Jennifer, had given me a stylish neck chain with cute little silver hearts that dangle at the temples. She probably figured if I was going to wear one of the things, she could at least guarantee it would be attractive.

Anyway, the summer heat and chaffing had caused me to remove the chain. Everyday it was not a matter of "if" I would misplace my glasses, but "when". Jim will tell you that I spent more time looking for my glasses than I did wearing them. That's the problem, I don't need them to read or work on

**Out Back Carolyn Plotts** 



the computer, but I do need them to see across the room, drive or watch television. Consequently, they were constantly being taken off.

I turned the house upside down looking for them. I tried re-tracing my steps; backtracking my day to no avail. Finally, I resigned myself to the fact they were gone. Nothing to do but order new glasses. I hate to admit this, but I get my glasses through a major discount store where the frames only cost \$9. Since my prescription is very common I called to order a new pair. The assistant was very reluctant to order new frames for me sight unseen. I assured her that as long as they were black they would be fine. A few days later they were ready to be picked up and I could see again.

Fast-forward to this weekend. Jim

and I were hosting an appreciation supper for our church family to say "Thank You" for helping fund our most recent Mexico mission trip. I was preparing to assemble about 120 burritos and donned my favorite apron. I felt something in the pocket; reached in; and there were my old glasses. Yeah! Now, I have two pairs. Let's hope I can always find one.

-ob-

This frigid weather is about to drive Jim stir crazy. It really is too cold to work outside, so he's been holed up in the office. With his new computer.

I showed him how "WhitePages. com" works and may have created a monster. This is fair warning. If you ever worked with Jim or knew him in the past and have lost touch - he will find you. He's had more fun locating friends he worked with in Colorado over 25 years ago. Every conversation with an old friend puts him on the trail of another former acquaintance. One connection even led to an invitation to come visit in Thief River Falls, Minn. I hope we get to do it. Old friends are more precious than silver or gold.

## When telling your story, tell it straight

Several hundred young farmers and ranchers from across the Sunflower State will gather in Wichita Jan. 27-29 to learn more about leadership and hone these skills. As these young Farm Bureau leaders continue to grow and progress in their chosen profession, many will step forward to voice their opinions, to say what's on their minds and stand up for their beliefs - to make a difference.

It's not always easy to stand up and voice your convictions. It's certainly easier to go on about your daily business, do nothing and let someone else do your talking for you.

Leadership is not easy. I believe Sam Rayburn, Bonham, TX., who served as Speaker of the House under eight different American presidents probably said it best in one of his addresses to Congress.

"Leadership is that intangible quality in an individual that makes men do better than themselves; which makes men dream greater dreams and perform braver deeds."

Yes, in order to tell their story, these young leaders must cultivate a working relationship with the media while using every means of social media to tell

The following tips can help you tell your story – a story that only you as young crop growers and livestock caretakers can tell in your own words and from your own perspective.

To begin with, you must provide those outside the farm and ranch gates news with substance and provide them legitimate news about agriculture.

Using agriculture as an example, if

Insight John Schlageck



you're a farmer you could talk about the practice of minimum tillage to save the land and water. Begin by talking about leaving crop residue in place to hold this soil and moisture in place where wheat, corn, milo and soybeans can utilize it.

Farmers incorporate this practice beginning in April when they plant seeds for the next season's crop. The sprouts shoot through the soil saving cover, and in turn save soil and moisture.

In about a month, ag producers will begin spring planting of fall crops. Yes, there is plenty to tell about this conservation practice. As a farmer, if you choose to tell this story, remember to focus on who will hear your story.

Avoid using self-serving material when telling urban and suburban public about your farming operation or a specific agricultural issue. Talk instead about the meat and potatoes of the issue and downplay promotion of yourself.

Just as important as what you say or write about is the relationship you foster with your local and regional media types. Invite them to your farm/ ranch to share with them how you go about planting corn, feeding cattle or better yet how you care for them.

Give your media contacts your home

or cell number. Reporters always appreciate knowing where you can be contacted when they need a quote concerning a breaking agricultural

Never stick your head in the sand when a difficult situation occurs or bad news hits. As a spokesperson for agriculture, do your homework. Seek additional information and resource people knowledgeable about a controversial issue.

Provide factual information to media types and those you're in contact with via social media. If you run away from bad news, the media and your social media network will remember this the next time you come to them with good

If you want success in telling your story, respond quickly to inquiries from those in the news media. Remember it's all right to say, "I don't know," when you can't answer questions. But always offer to find the answer and follow up promptly.

Establish first-name relationships with the media in your community. Never hesitate to contact a reporter if you come across a story that may interest those in your town and enlighten them about your profession. Members of the media will remember your thoughtfulness.

Above all, remember that trust is the most important ingredient in any relationship, and this includes the media too. If you're ever caught in a falsehood, your credibility and future relationship with that person may be damaged forever.