

The legislature takes annual break

March 31, the Legislature adjourned for its annual break and will return to Topeka on April 25 for what is called "veto session." This break allows research and revenue staff time to review and assemble economic and tax collection data needed to make informed decisions on the budget when we return.

News from
your
legislator
Ward Cassidy



I have to return for an April 19 and 20 "omnibus session" in Appropriations. We will finalize the budget to be presented to the House at that time. We will also receive the information from the Attorney General as to how much money was actually sent to Kansas this year from the tobacco companies lawsuit. For the past four years, we have received \$58m dollars, and the Governor's budget projected that only \$38m would be received this year. There are many good programs that received major funding cuts, and hopefully we can adjust their budgets if more revenue arrives.

During the 2011 session, much debate ensued regarding the future of the Kansas Arts Commission. As a result, HB 2766 was introduced to create the Creative Arts Industry Commission in the Department of Commerce and absolve the Kansas Arts Commission and the Kansas Film Commission. The Creative Arts Commission would be the official state program for the arts and tasked with promoting, supporting, coordinating, developing, and measuring the outcomes of the arts in Kansas. I voted for the bill, and it is now being discussed in the Senate.

A very important bill, which I supported, is the Grandparents Rights Bill (SB 262). This bill requires grandparents to be considered when evaluating what custody, visitation, or residency arrangements are in the best interest of a child who has been removed from custody of their parent.

If, for any reason, the court decides it is in the child's best interest to be placed in SRS custody, the bill allows the grandparents who request custody of the child to still have preference in the placement evaluation.

The House passed a bill (HB 2764) that mandates private health insurance companies to cover Autism. There was also an amendment that states an insurance company cannot deny coverage to a child because of a pre-existing condition, when the bill goes into effect. I voted yes to help autistic children and their families.

Be heard, vote today?

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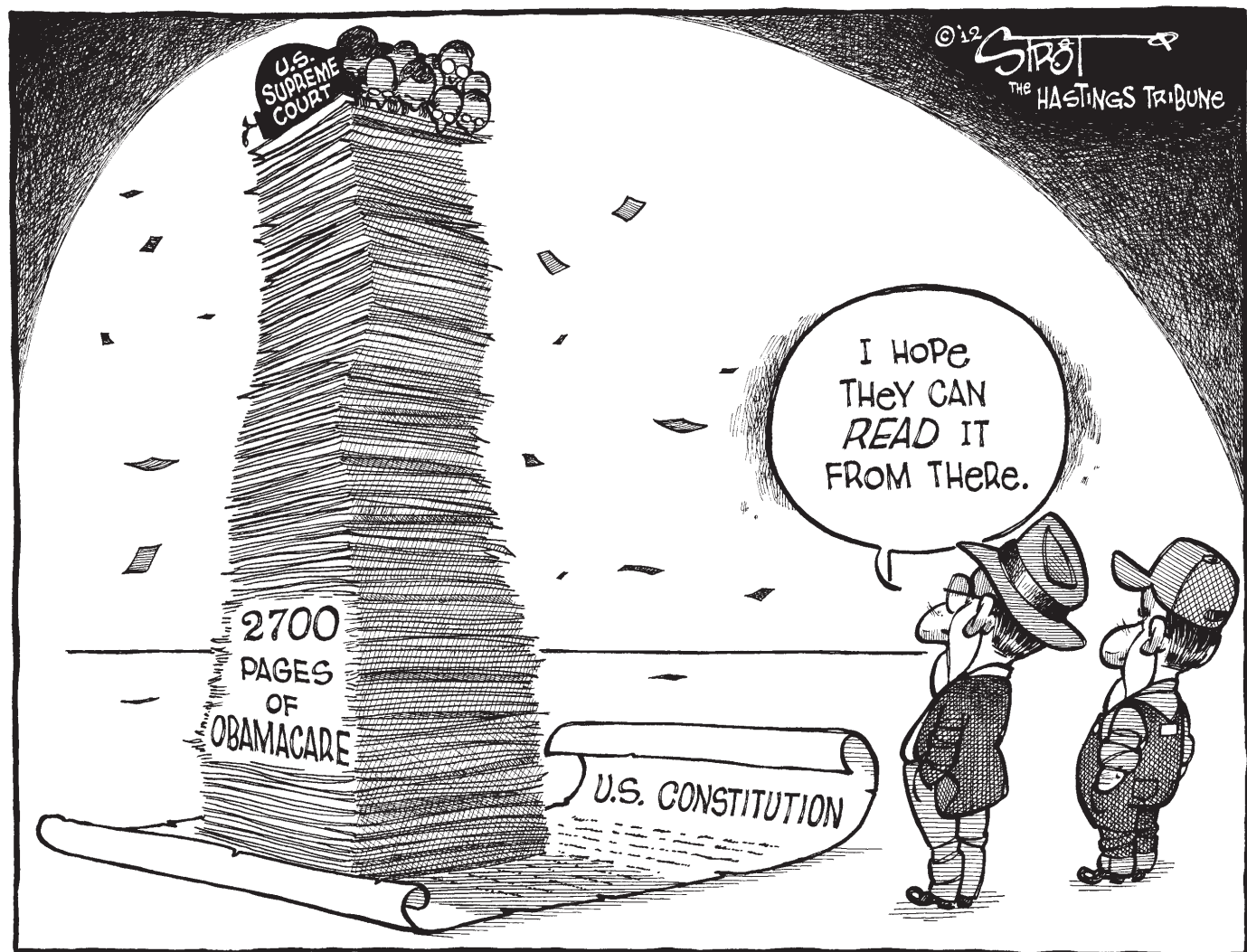
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Going green, old news or new idea

Caring for the environment used to be tough duty. During the last couple decades however, it's become a marketing opportunity.

Manufacturers are churning out more and more green products and retailers are finding in many cases they can be sold at a premium. But beware – not everything sold in the green garden is all roses. Over the long haul, selling green may be a lot more difficult than selling soap flakes.

Phosphate-free detergent, lead-free gas, aerosol sprays minus the chlorofluorocarbons and other green garden goodies have been available in some form or another since the early '80s. Today, they are nearly as common, or in some cases, more so than farm-fresh eggs, free-range chickens, hogs and cattle, fresh vegetables – you name it.

During this nearly 30-year growing period, consumers embraced the notion of buying green with a zeal that was almost patriotic. As they become more environmentally tuned in day by day, week by week, month by month and year by year, greenies bought beyond what was even required by law in a religious frenzy.

Some companies have launched their own label green brands. I can't list all the names here or I wouldn't have room to continue my column. Needless to say, many of these companies have grown their green products by the hundreds.

Many of these items are simply repackaged old ideas, you know, what's old becomes new when introduced to a new generation of consumers especially

Insight

John Schlageck



those who choose to paint themselves green. One such item is baking soda, which has been marketed as a more environmentally friendly way to scour pots and pans.

Can you believe it?

My mother and her mother before her used and understood that baking soda was the only real way to keep their kitchens clean or green nearly a century ago.

Another green product that has rocketed off the supermarket shelves are biodegradable garbage bags made from corn extract.

One item that's become green is dishwasher detergent and it's worthless. The only way to clean your dishes, knives and forks and pots and pans with today's detergent is to run your machine half full or a couple times. I know this is the truth, because I've had to do.

I've even visited with appliance dealers that have told me today's dishwasher detergents no longer have phosphates (banned as unsafe for our environment) which cleaned our tableware and did it right. Today's dishwasher detergents are not formulated to remove hard water minerals during the main wash cycle. Lemi Shine solves this problem.

Combined with your auto dish

detergent, Lemi Shine removes tough hard water spots, stains and film during the main wash cycle, so says the product commercial. You will be pleased to know that Lemi Shine is comprised of 100 percent all natural fruit acids and oils. That's right, Lemi Shine contains no phosphates or fillers.

Now don't you feel better? I know I do.

I could go on, but I know I may be losing some of you, dear readers – and that is not my intent.

One last thing, even that revered group that I now belong to, the aging Baby Boomers, is boarding the green train.

Why just the other day I read that U.S. residents older than 55 are opting for unbleached bathroom paper. Not only is it the correct way to help Mother Earth, it's also softer and easier on the ole' bottom. I swear to God I didn't make this up, although I kinda' wish I had.

When will the pendulum swing the other way – toward a common-sense compromise?

Maybe it already is. Some companies who have wrapped themselves in green are finding doing so has not seemed to raise their credibility with consumers. Some in the public who walk among us are skeptical of any large organizations that board the green bandwagon, particularly those that have little direct contact with the environment.

Although consumers, myself included, may want to accept social responsibility, few want to forgo quality in the products they buy.

To green or not to green?

Returning home after a rewarding trip

Whew! That was a sigh of relief. We are on the next to last leg of this marathon mission trip. By the time you read this we should be in our own home, sweet home.

What a trip this has been. One house built in Juarez, Mexico, the other in Acuna. We worked with two amazing teams; one from Wichita, the other from Colorado Springs. There were teachers, firemen, analysts, painters, students and business people. The one thing we all had in common, though, was the desire, (compulsion, really) to help those who couldn't help themselves. And to have fun while we did it. Jim warned our teammates before we started, "This will be the hardest work you'll ever love." It is hard work, but at the moment we hand over the keys to this nice little home to the recipient, it is all worth it.

Jim never misses an opportunity to have some fun with the more gullible of our teammates. Usually, a high school girl who hasn't heard all his jokes yet. His favorite is to pick up a rock and ask

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



her, "Have you ever seen Leaverite? This is a genuine piece of Leaverite."

The girl will usually reply something like, "No. I never have."

Here comes the punchline... Jim will throw the rock on the ground and say, "Yup! You leave 'er right there."

Dumb, but it gets a laugh every time.

To say we are exhausted would be a gross understatement. Jim was recounting how every bone and muscle in his body hurt. He said, "Even my hair hurts." Now, that's sore. We are both in agreement that two builds, back-to-back, is too much for us. We'll leave that to the younger bunch.

-ob-

The way this trip was planned out, we were able to spend two weekends with Jennifer and her girls, Alex and Ani, in San Antonio. Turns out they live about a half hour's drive from Oak Hills Church where Max Lucado preaches. If you get the chance to hear him in person, take it. He preaches just like he writes. In a simple, easy to understand way. The church is what I would call a "mega-church". Thousands attend the multiple services offered each week. I'm not sure how comfortable I would feel attending all the time, but we sure enjoyed it as visitors.

-ob-

It's also the last few weeks of her junior year for our granddaughter, Alexandria. That means prom and prom means a formal gown. She showed us a picture of the dress she wants and all I can say is, "El-a-gant!" It is beautiful. It's a black gown with a twisted silver band going over one shoulder and crossing the bodice. Hard to believe she was once a freckle-faced little girl. She is such a lovely young woman.