

## First Omnibus session held

I had the opportunity to serve on my first Omnibus session the third week of April. The Appropriations Committee returned to Topeka to review the final budget and make adjustments based on economic forecasts, current revenues, and the total amount awarded the state from the tobacco lawsuit settlement.

News from  
your  
legislator  
Ward Cassidy



The forecast and economic revenues are much better. Two years ago, we were \$550m in debt and now we are predicted to have a \$600m ending balance. It is hard to believe, but even with the aircraft industry layoffs, there have been 22,000 new jobs created in Kansas the past two years.

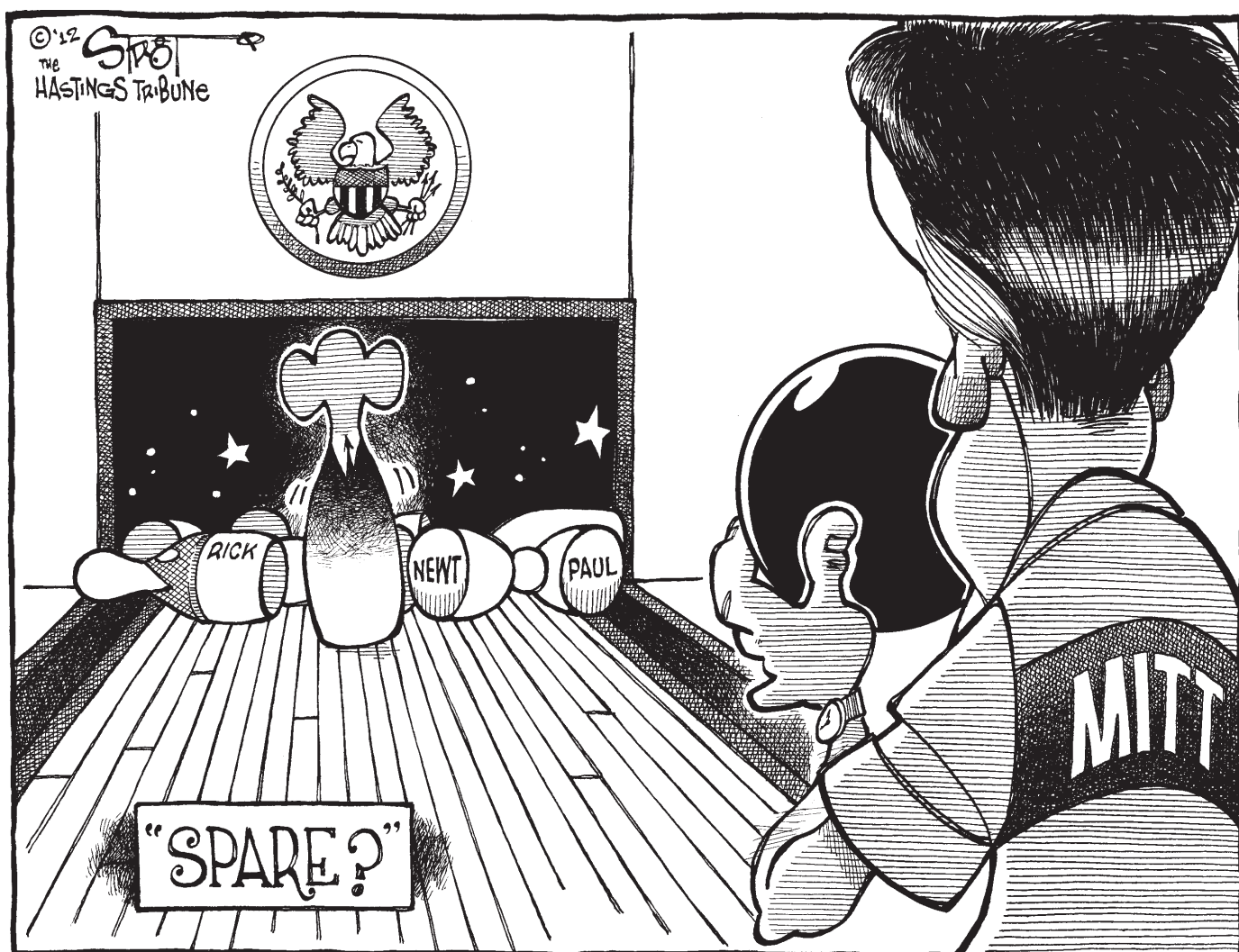
The tobacco settlement was estimated low, and it came in almost \$20m more than was allocated for the Children's Initiative Fund. The Governor is hesitant to put all of the increased revenue back into the fund. I personally will lobby for him to do so. I feel that all the programs the tobacco settlement fund supports are saving the state money in the long run; and it is not taking taxpayers' dollars to maintain them.

What was made very clear in Appropriations was that it was the Supreme Court who gave the furloughs to district judges and clerks—not the legislature. The Kansas Supreme Court Justice, Lawton Nuss, announced that he is delaying, not cancelling, the next two furlough days. We will be done with the budget by then and, hopefully, he will then cancel all the rest of the furlough days.

I attempted to reinstate the market pay package for our state employees, especially those who work in the prison system, and we were voted down 11- 8. The announcement of several jail breaks in Kansas has got the Governor's attention. He has stated that we need to give greater priority to our prison system. I have visited several prisons in the last two years and realize there are many prisoners that we don't want out on our streets. The key to any well-run business is strong leadership and good employees. The State just can't keep telling our state employees they are not important.

The legislature reconvened Wednesday, April 25. The same items I wrote about in the first column in January are still to be decided: the budget, KPERS (no additional updates are on my website), school finance, Medicaid, and redistricting. In addition, there are 100 bills that have yet to come out of conference committees.

Add all this up and include an election year for Senate and House members. I honestly believe we should not be worried about elections but should be about doing what is best for all of our constituents.



## A bit of neighborly cooking advice

How many cooks does it take to make a meatloaf?

If you had been in my checkout lane at the grocery store you would answer: as many as there are women around.

As I was shopping for groceries, a young woman was checking out behind me and asked the cashier what all she needed to make meatloaf. Another woman behind the inquiring cook offered her suggestions. I, of course, had to give my input in addition to the cashier's. We all told her she needed either, bread crumbs, cracker crumbs, oatmeal or even crushed corn flakes. It was agreed that no meatloaf was complete without at least one egg and ketchup. I said she needed onions, the cashier said bell peppers, the other shopper said to add corn. Corn? Whoever heard of corn in meatloaf?

As the young woman went in search of her missing ingredients, I said to the cashier, "I would sure like to know how this recipe turns out. After all the "help" we've given her."

Out Back  
Carolyn Plotts



-ob-  
Our little town has its own newsheet. Its staff is all volunteer and it is published once-a-week. It even has its own "yesteryear" column and I was browsing through news stories from the 1950s when something caught my eye. It was my name.

It seems little Carolyn Sue Kelley, 3, a backseat passenger of the car her mother was driving, fell out the door and suffered a minor brain concussion. Remember, this was before the day of child locks, car seats or even seatbelts. Guess it caused no permanent damage.

-ob-

This past week I've been like an expectant father pacing the waiting room floor.

Once, sometimes twice a day, I check my new flower beds looking for any sign of life. I planted dozens of bulbs and so far – nothing. Something's got to pop soon. I'll let you know when the "babies" arrive.

-ob-

Speaking of babies – this will be the summer of new chicks.

I Googled the inquiry, "How many years does a hen lay eggs?" The answer: about three years.

Well, there you have it. The "old girls" will be retired this summer and their replacements are settled into the new do-it-yourself incubator.

Its capacity is 30 eggs and I'm counting on the law of averages being on my side and allowing us to get at least 15 pullets out of the hatch. That would leave 15 roosters for the stew pot.

To whom it may concern,  
On Saturday, April 7 Southern Valley Booster Club held a five on five basketball tourney.  
A team called the Northwest Ballers from Norton, Ks. entered our tournament. These young athletes played the game with the utmost respect and sportsmanship for the game of basketball. They showed respect to the officials, other team members and coaches. Our concession people even commented how polite these young men acted. So, as the director of the tournament and as an official, I would like to tell these players what a fine job they did in representing not only their selves, their school, but the whole City of Norton. Be Proud!  
Mike Quinn  
Southern Valley Booster Club Five on Five Chairman

**THUMBS UP!** Thank you to the Prairie Dog State Park staff for making the park look so good in the early spring. We are so lucky to have great recreation at our back door. Here is to a summer of fun at the park. Emailed in.

Call Dana for your next ad. 877-3361!

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## Attack of the bam-bam dandy lion warrior

On the last day of April 2002, son Ben, Dinnie Wooster (our Sheltie) and I went for a walk. Not too long into the journey, I spied some dandelions in a deserted lot on the east side of the street.

These weren't just any old dandy lions as my then 2 and a half-year old pronounced the word but rather perfectly shaped white fluff balls just waiting to be blown off their stems.

I reached down and picked a couple and told Ben to watch as I placed the dandelion a few inches from my mouth. I gave a stiff blow and the miniature parachutes flew in a southerly direction with the prevailing wind.

Watching them drift through the air, my young boy danced with glee.

"Let me do it Daddy," he pleaded.

I picked a couple more and held them up for him to blow. He didn't get the hang of it right away and had difficulty blowing them off the stem.

That's when I spied a small stick, walked over, grabbed it and proceeded to practice my infamous golf stroke using the dandy lion head as a golf ball.

Ben saw this and raised his jig one notch higher anticipating the fun he would soon have "bamming" these dandy lion heads.

"Give me the stick, Daddy," he demanded.

Once in his tiny mitts, he proceeded to strike the planet. That's right he hit the dirt, rocks, grass and almost everything on the ground before he finally connected with the dandy lion head. When he finally perfected his aim these white-headed victims were in danger of being wiped from the lot. But then tragedy struck.

Insight  
John Schlageck



Ben threw down his small, 2-foot branch and announced it was too small and that he needed a BIG stick.

Next, Ben proceeded to beat his feet like a drum, flail his arms in the air and scream for a bigger stick. What man hasn't – at one time in his life – cried out for a bigger stick?

When a two-and-a-half year old wants something – he wants it yesterday. Ben expected me to produce a big stick and do it now.

While I'm not a magician, he sometimes expects me to produce television shows, cookies, chips, sticks, just about anything and everything upon demand.

I quietly explained to him that we would have to look for a bigger stick. The emphasis was on the two words, WE and LOOK.

There was no way Daddy was going to search for a stick while his son remained rooted to the ground while screaming at the top of his lungs.

We set out together in quest of the BIG stick. I was prepared for an epic journey through the neighborhood to find the perfect stick. In fact I suggested we go home, have dinner, watch Sponge Bob, sleep for the night, have breakfast – all before we continued our search.

Ben was having nothing to do with any of my suggestions.

Being twice his height, I spotted

a stick I knew would do the job and motioned Ben in that direction.

He threw his head down and dashed full speed ahead. When he spied the dandy lion killer, he shouted, "There it is Daddy. A BIG stick."

His little mind outran his feet and before he could stop and pick up the stick he tripped and launched himself head first.

Not to worry. He never said a word, picked up the stick and proceeded to stand up and looked about for the dreaded dandy lions he was about to slay with his new BIG stick. His smile stretched from ear to ear as he waved the weapon several times over his head.

When he finally found the first dandy lion, he proceeded to club it into the ground. He didn't give up until the plant was undistinguishable from the black soil. The smile never left his face.

After he'd performed his own childlike version of a scorched earth expedition on the hapless dandy lions, he puffed out his chest a bit more and proceeded to drag his war club at his side, looking a bit like B.C. in the Johnny Hart comic strip.

He wasn't giving this weapon up for nothing and yelled a resounding, "NO," when I suggested he leave the club for next time. In fact he carried it another quarter mile to our yard where he abandoned it only after his mother announced it was time to eat chicken dinosaurs.

"I will bamm those dandy lions again tomorrow," he announced chucking his wooden club on the ground and trading it for a silver fork.

So it goes in the world of my 2 and a half -year-old bam-bam warrior.

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