

## Schools forced to cut back on meals

On the  
Prairie Dog  
Steve Haynes



Parents and students are astir about cutbacks in school lunches intended by our nanny government to fight teenage obesity: no more seconds on meat, no oil in the salad dressing, more fruits and vegetables, less of the carbs and meat kids sometimes crave.

Especially put out are the parents of kids in sports, who might need two to three times the calories each day that the average child could get by on. The new rules strike at the heart of this bunch: the football and volleyball players, runners and others who practice every day.

The no-seconds rule is the biggest visible change, but ever-tighter limits on salt and carbs, and increased servings of fruits and vegetables, may have more impact.

So, if the football players are still hungry? "They can always go back for another helping at the salad bar," one school official sniffed.

Or, they might, probably will, go load up on candy, chips and other unhealthy snacks between school and practice, then down a huge supper when a big lunch would have been better for them.

The reaction of administrators is something like, "Well, it's a federal decision, and we have to go along."

Which is both disingenuous and not exactly true. What's true is this is a decision by the Obama administration, and while they don't have to go along with it, they will – because they don't want to lose their federal lunch money.

Always the strings with that federal money.

Our schools are addicted to federal money, which can make up a big chunk of a district's budget, depending on what programs it's heavy into.

Obesity is an epidemic, no doubt. The only debate should be about whether it's something the federal government should try to fix, or whether it's best left to states, school districts and families.

Administrators should be much more concerned about the damage done by No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top and all these redundant and sometimes harmful tests our kids are taking.

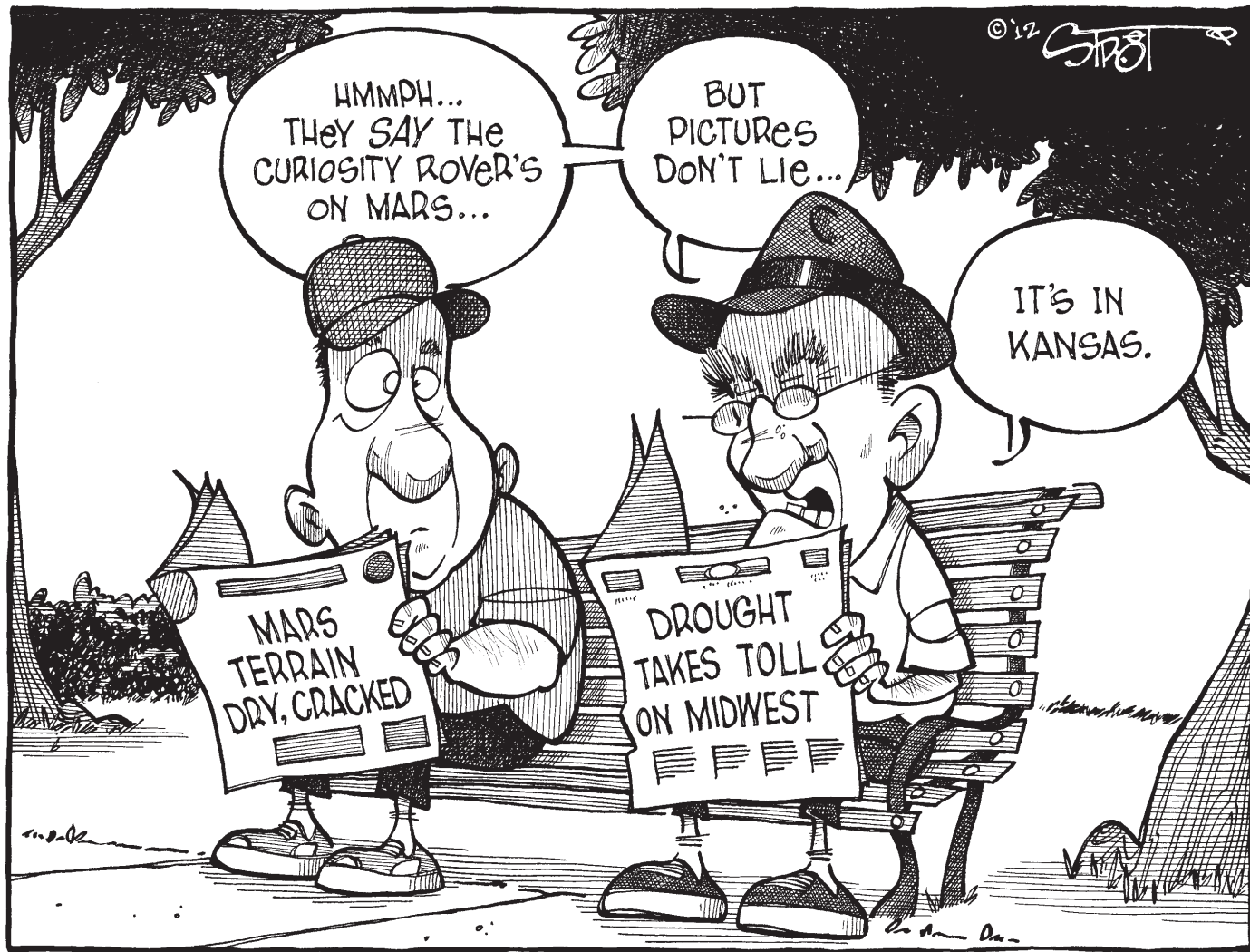
But the lunch issue strikes to the heart of the matter when kids come home and say that they're hungry because of Obama's rules, or that they won't eat the salads because the oil-free dressing "tastes icky."

As John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau points out, kids don't come in one size, and one size of meal doesn't necessarily fit every one. It's also true that in small, rural schools, where most kids take part in some sports activity, obesity may not be the problem it is in the city.

However, the lunch ladies don't want to have to look at the kids and decide who's fat and who can have a second helping, either. One size is a lot easier to deal with.

As long as there's federal money involved, the do-gooders are going to win. Nanny knows best, and if we know what's good for our federal money, we'll go along.

There's an alternative, but no one wants to hear about it. – Steve Haynes



## Look at political issues more closely

The hubby, who follows these things more closely than I, has been worried about Egypt and what Israel will do if Iran gets a nuclear weapon. Now, the US Ambassador to Libya has been assassinated.

With the conventions and impending November elections I have not been paying attention to the bigger picture.

Unfortunately, extremists never sleep.

As I write, the story is still unfolding. Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, describes the situation as "confounded". By all accounts Libya and Egypt are appreciative of the role the United States played in disposing their former leaders. The current leaders have condemned the violence.

We must remain mindful that it is not just in the Mid-East that flash issues cause people to think with their hearts not their heads.

Senior citizens, and those about to retire, rail against any changes in Medicare or Social Security. Certainly we should not take benefits away from those receiving them. But what is going to happen if we never have the conversation? Every economist and sensible person realizes the system cannot continue as it is. If those of us who currently or are about to benefit from these programs live long enough, we will find ourselves with nothing at an advanced age; when we are the most vulnerable.

Another divisive issue is the so-called "War on Women". Men who have said

### This Too Shall Pass

Nancy Hagman



and done stupid things on women's issues deserve the scorn heaped upon them. I'm hopelessly old fashioned and think what goes on in the bedroom is private. Shame on those who have brought it into the area of public policy! On the other hand anyone silly enough to make a decision for or against a candidate solely because of women's issues, lacks an understanding of the real problems we face.

Gun control, gay marriage, or a candidate's religion all fall under the realm of heartfelt issues that contribute to extremism.

People selfishly tend to align on the side of an issue that most benefits them. It is easy to lose sight of the common good.

Those who murdered Ambassador Chris Stevens, have a great deal in common with the occupy Wall Street Movement, the Birthers and other groups on both sides of the political spectrum: hatred.

They do not represent the average Libyan any more than Timothy McViegh represents the citizens of New York, where he was born, or Kansas, where he resided when he blew up the Murrah Building.

We must defend ourselves against those who attempt to manipulate us. Those who say Social Security will end if Romney is elected. Or there will be death panels when Obama's health care program goes into effect.

The real issues in this election are the economy, the national debt, and jobs. Solving these problems is going to cause pain for everyone. The first step: stop blaming each other.

It is easy to confuse need with want. Everyone needs food and shelter. We don't need salon nails, hair extensions, granite counter tops, stainless steel appliances, cruises, destination weddings and I-Phones. If you don't have these things you are not under privileged.

Our kids do not need \$300 dollar sneakers to be successful in school. They need parents who will take the time to help with homework and attend parent teacher conferences.

People who have more than you or I do are not evil.

Nor are people of another religion, color or political party.

In America we have decided it is permissible to hate the rich because we are poor. Christians believe it is okay to discriminate against gays and kill abortion providers rather than let God sort it out.

In Libya some extremists decided Americans should be punished because of a film no one even saw.

Pay attention and tell me: Is there a difference?

## The problem of the new school lunch program

At the first parent/teacher conference of the year, my mother would tell the parents of her second graders, "I'll believe only half of what I hear happens at home, if you believe only half of what you hear happens at school." With that in mind, I listened as two of my grandchildren told me Michelle Obama had passed a law and now they don't get much food in their school lunch."

I proceeded to inform them the First Lady can't pass laws, only Congress can do that. She can, however wield incredible influence. First Ladies have a unique advantage to promote an issue, be it childhood obesity, as Michelle Obama has done, or literacy like Laura Bush. What does and did happen in December of 2010, was Congress passed and President Obama signed into law the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA). Compelled by this action, Mrs. Obama and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack worked to find ways to improve the school meals served to 32 million children daily.

The new standards were enacted in July of this year. You know the saying, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions?" Well, welcome to the new road.

### Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



The concept is children when taught about healthier foods will choose healthier foods. I'm not sure about that. Also not all the studies link childhood obesity with higher fat foods, i.e. whole milk, now not included in the school meals. The addition of fruits and vegetables to the menu is a good one, however appearing on one's plate does not necessarily mean it will find it's way to a child's palate. Just ask me about the creamed spinach of my school lunch days.

Too often we decide a problem (obesity) is caused by one factor (unhealthy foods). Lifestyle changes have also played a major role in childhood obesity, which has tripled over the last generation, now afflicting 17 percent of our youth. Latchkey children seldom play outside after school as children once did. Recesses

and physical education programs have changed over the years as well. Presently, only 4 percent of elementary schools, 8 percent of middle and 2 percent of high schools offer daily P.E. classes and many schools have limited their recesses as well.

In an ideal world, every child would sit down with their 1.9 siblings and mother and father for a complete breakfast and lunch each day. For many children, the school meals are the only meals they will receive. I'm not saying that's right, I'm saying it is a fact.

My concern is that instead of encouraging children to make healthy choices we have changed their diet in a way that doesn't say satisfied, just says change. I'm sure Mrs. Obama and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack believed in what they were doing, but maybe more work needs to go into school lunches before we unveil a new diet. Believe me, as someone who knows a lot about diets. There are lots of overweight adults who grew up (thin) on not so healthy school lunches. Maybe the problems are as much about society as about the lunchroom. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Dear Editor,  
We would like to voice our support for a new swimming pool for the City of Norton and the surrounding area. In a letter to the Editor a couple months ago, a lady from Norton stated that "The job market in Norton is zilch." Ma'am, nothing could be further from the truth.



Consider the following local employers when you speak of hiring: Ag Valley, Husky Hogs, Department of Corrections, Valley Hope, New Age Industrial and Natoma Corporation.

All of these large local employers have either hired or are hiring large numbers of new employees. For example, Natoma Corporation has added 12 new employees since the first of the year and is looking to hire another 30-40 more employees in the next 3-4 years.

Norton has a more dynamic, diversified economy than virtually any town our size in the state of Kansas. We need every advantage we can find to attract young families to move to our area and stay here! A new swimming pool is a necessity, not an unnecessary luxury, in order to help attract these young families that our community needs to grow our economy.

Gail Boller, Todd Boller, Darin Campbell, Mark Griffey, Diana Smith, Lisa Herman, Clint Hammond, Mitch Hempler, Steve Seaton, Karen Wright, Stephanie Cookson, David Schlegel, Brandon Peterson, David Black, Travis Chisham, Lisa Donovan, Georgia Mann and Cindy Boller.

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ISSN 1063-701X  
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654  
Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.  
Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654  
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press Association

