

Legislature looks at immigration

One of the most divisive issues for the Kansas Legislature this coming spring might be immigration, which oddly enough, is mostly the responsibility of the federal government.

Conservatives will be fully in command of the scene in Topeka, and they look to agree on many things. Social conservatives will push for laws

restricting abortion, drugs and maybe even strip clubs while trying to defend religious liberty. All of those are areas where people have a lot of protection from the federal courts, however, so whatever the Legislature does is liable to be more for show than substance.

Victory on the floor will make a lot of people feel better after years of having social initiatives suffocated by more liberal governors, however, and Gov. Sam Brownback is liable to sign many of these bills.

Another thing liable to unite disparate conservatives is cutting the budget and keeping tax rates down. While last spring, compromise on drastic tax cuts enacted at the last moment appeared likely for the coming session, all bets are off now that conservatives have solid majorities in both Houses behind a conservative governor.

The smart money says there may be little incentive to raise more money to close an alleged \$700 million budget gap now. Instead, the emphasis may be on cutting programs and slashing the budget even more. The administration maintains it plans to put more money into public schools, however, and not less.

Whatever happens, low income-tax rates pushed last year by the governor appear to be with us for the next few years. Now neighboring Missouri is making noises about copying Kansas rates to keep pace in economic development. Lower taxes are seen as attractive to businesses looking for a new home.

But immigration is the rub. Gov. Brownback and his allies, including the state Chamber of Commerce and farm and ranch groups, tend to look at the situation from the standpoint of labor shortages. They know the state has jobs which can't be filled without immigrants. It's a practical matter with them.

The xenophobic wing of the party, led by Secretary of State Kris Kobach, wants the state to enact restrictions on hiring illegal immigrants, along with tougher-still election laws and maybe even an Arizona-style law requiring police to check the status of possible illegal immigrants.

Mr. Kobach pushed the state to require voters to show photo identification, though he had no proof – and still has none – that illegal immigrants were voting or that there was any kind of problem with voter fraud. His "issue" sounded good enough that he got the bill through a conservative Legislature which should have been concerned with the civil liberties problems it raised.

When push comes to shove, and with more than 50 freshman legislators, no one really knows how to count the votes, but the issue could split the solid-red statehouse down the middle. And make a supposedly slam-dunk session more than a little interesting.



On the Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes

Steve Haynes is a columnist for The Norton Telegram. He is shown in a black and white portrait, wearing a light-colored shirt and a dark jacket.



We have a broken government

If you ever want to know how broken our government is, you only have to look at the recent vote on the Senate floor. Thirty-eight individuals voted against ratification of a United Nations treaty on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Some said they didn't want to ratify a treaty in a lame duck Congress, although it has been done repeatedly. (I might add, don't take your paycheck in a lame duck congress, either.) Others in the opposition said it would allow states to interfere with a parent's treatment of their child. One can only assume these members are uninformed or just dumb. If this is reflective of the general atmosphere of our country then we are in even more trouble than I previously thought.

Even the appearance of a wheelchair bound, frail former Senator Bob Dole, failed to convince the naysayers of the need for this treaty and to temper their fears. What do they fear? A take over by the United Nations? In fact, yes.

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



One senator said the "treaty by its very nature threatened U.S. sovereignty." George W. Bush negotiated the treaty in 2006, President Obama signed it in 2009. Then it goes for ratification, only to fail. The treaty has been ratified by Britain, France, Germany and 123 other countries. And it failed on the floor of our U.S. Senate.

Twenty-two years ago, the United States passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. Not a big deal? Let me tell you what I fear. I fear sitting in my home because stores don't provide access to their facility. I fear watching people who are powerful people, like

Bob Dole, unable to get to the Senate floor because of a group of frightened people who are afraid they will lose their "rights." This treaty provides the same rights around the world that we are privileged to have in this country. Veterans who want to travel, college students wanting to study abroad. Benefits that we all may need now or at some time or forever.

One comment went something like this, we established the Americans with Disabilities Act, we should be taking something to the U.N. not them bringing it to us. That was from an adult, not some snot nosed six year old.

I have had it with spoiled, self-serving, people running our country. Grow up. Get a grip and WORK with compassion, intelligent and the absence of fear. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Don't make it a habit to forget your blessings

As Christmas draws near, we spend hours seeking out perfect gifts for those we love. And we think about what we want.

Though I am content with what I have, I find myself making a list. Because the kids are going to ask, "What do you want?"

The best gifts are not always things you buy in a store; wrap and put under the tree. They may come unexpectedly. We may not even recognize when we receive them, thus we fail to thank the giver.

Whenever a reader makes a point of telling me they enjoy my column it is a gift. I fear I am not always as gracious as I should be because I feel somewhat embarrassed.

Last May, a woman came over to our table at a restaurant in Smith Center. She called me by name, saying she recognized me from my picture; then told me how much she enjoyed the column. The youngest daughter was with us. Her jaw dropped. It is one thing to be noticed but when your kids witness it, well, I sort of felt like a rock star!!!! The perfect gift at the perfect moment!

This week I received another gift when I was visiting with Deanna Braun. She had kind words about the column I wrote on bullying.

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



The conversation moved on to her mother-in-law, Leonora, who recently passed away. As we discussed her life and the things that brought her joy Deanna said, "In 45 years she never once criticized me or anything I did."

The same could be said of my mother-in-law. What a beautiful tribute: She never criticized.

I went back and reread the bullying column. I do not know what about it struck a chord with Deanna.

Perhaps it was the same thing that strikes me when pondering a mother-in-law who never criticizes. I am flawed; I'm in awe of unconditional love!

When I die no one is going to say "She never criticized!"

I do hope they will say, "She had a great sense of humor." Laughter is good medicine. BUT----

A friend I've thought of as compassionate has posted a series of rather arrogant and mean spirited things on Facebook in the wake of

her candidate's victory in the recent election. I believe she is doing this because she thinks it is funny. I hope my readers will give me the same benefit of the doubt when I offend with a thoughtless attempt at humor.

The only network television show I watch regularly is Dancing With The Stars. Those who are voted off each week are almost always entirely gracious. Could the words they utter actually be on the teleprompter?

They thank their partners, the fans and the judges. They are grateful for the opportunity, for friendships made, for the things they have learned about dancing and themselves.

Maybe they rehearsed the speech, after all some of them (being critical here) had to have seen it coming!

It is easy to fall into the habit of forgetting our blessings. It is easy to crab about mother-in-laws, because that's just what we do, right? It's a reflex, a bad habit.

Deanna's gratitude for her mother-in-law made me realize how thankful I should be not only for mine but for so many things.

And how much happier I, as well as those around me would be, if I just stopped criticizing!

What a gift! Thank you!

To Wrestling Family & Friends:

I wanted to share a nice letter sent to Norton Supt. Greg Mann after this past weekend's St. Francis Tournament. I took the Varsity Team to Hoxie on this same day, so I was not even around for this event in mention. But as the Head Coach I am very blessed to have outstanding Asst. Coaches and wrestlers at every level on this team.

Listed below is the letter we received.

Coach Bill Johnson

Good Morning:

I wanted to send a brief email to commend Coaches Shane Miller and Tony Fiscus and the Norton High School JV Wrestling Team for their model behavior during the St. Francis Invitational Wrestling Tournament last Saturday. Not only did they wrestle very competitively and with good sportsmanship; but also near the end of the tournament, Coach Shane Miller came to me and requested some large trash bags so that Norton could clean-up their area in and around the bleachers. They all pitched in and did this when the tournament was over. It is worth noting that no other team volunteered to help-out in that way.

We really appreciate the gesture and the help and commend your coaches and your wrestlers!

Carl M. Werner
Athletic Director, St. Francis High School



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OFFICE HOURS:
8 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.
8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday
Phone: (785) 877-3361
Fax: (785) 877-3732

STAFF

Dana Paxton..... General Manager
Advertising Director/Managing Editor
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay Sports
nortontelegram@nwkansas.com
Michael Stephens..... Reporter
Society Editor/Area Sports
mstephens@nwkansas.com
Vicki Henderson..... Computer Production
Marcia Shelton..... Office Manager

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Thumbs up to the NCHS ladies who sang the National Anthem at the Norton/Goodland basketball game on Friday. What a wonderful job, its was absolutely beautiful. Great Job! E-mailed in.

A huge thumbs up to the United Methodist Church Living Nativity committee for all their hard work, and to all the community members who helped to provide the community with such an uplifting experience. E-mailed in.

Thumbs up to Gladys Harper for 50 years of dedicated service to Prairie Land Electric. There have been a lot of changes during her career! E-mailed in.