

## Decision on school finance lawsuit coming

The Kansas Supreme Court heard arguments in yet another school-finance lawsuit this month. A decision is expected sometime after the first of the year, and it's anybody's guess what the judges will do.

Many expect the court will rule against the state again, as it did in the Montoy case six years ago. The price tag then was something under \$1 billion, which the Legislature ponied up at the time.

Things are different today. Conservatives opposed to that kind of spending are firmly in charge of the Statehouse. The courts have been under attack, with Gov. Sam Brownback winning authority to appoint new judges to the state Court of Appeals, bypassing a commission made up mostly of lawyers who used to decide on the nominees.

And while the price tag this time is "only" about \$440 million, the state doesn't have the money – not without undoing some of the tax cuts enacted by the governor and Legislature last year.

Big-government, big-spending backers decried those tax cuts last year, but they are in place today. And there is no telling whether the Legislature would reverse course just because the judges say so this time.

The result could be a standoff, a "constitution crisis," between co-equal branches of government in Topeka. No one knows who'd win. Or if the judges of the high court want that kind of confrontation.

These school suits are nothing new. Kansas has been faced with them for some 40 years, the Associated Press reports. They are common in other states as well. Most often, they result in more money being spent on schools, which already consume half our state's budget. But when one program comes out a big winner, others, from highways to state colleges, must be on the losing end.

It's hard to say just how much schools actually need. No one knows for sure, though the 2006 Supreme Court decision was based on a study paid for by the Legislature – much to the leaderships' later regret.

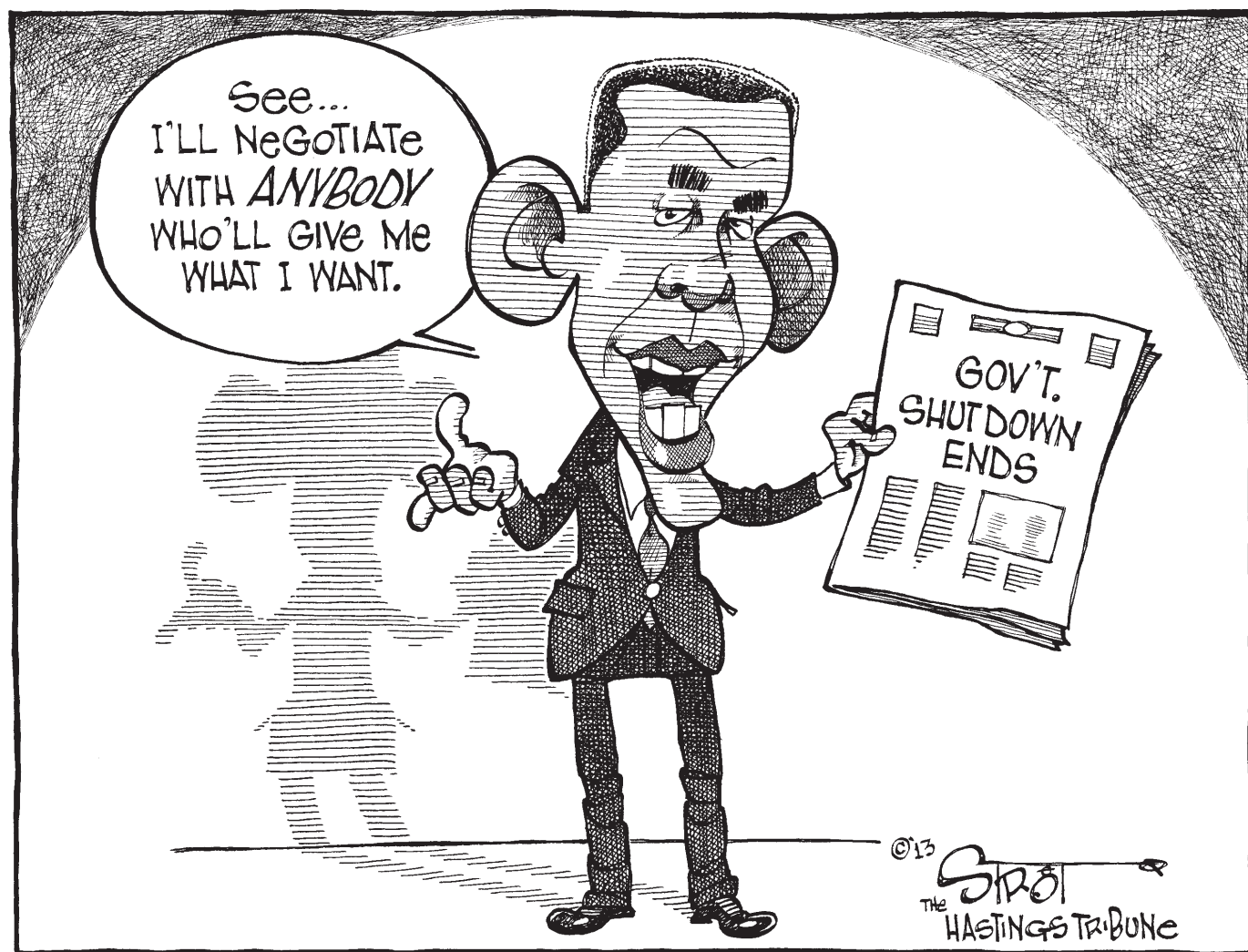
What happens is, if schools don't get what they want, school boards get together and finance a lawsuit – with taxpayer money – to force the state to spend more. Attempts to outlaw using state money to sue the state have failed, despite many complaints about the practice.

Sure, many school administrators and teachers would like to have more money to spend. Wouldn't we all? But school money has to come from taxpayers, and for the most part, they've been saying they pay too much already.

That cry was seldom heard until the present administration, which actually cut state spending for the first time in decades last year. The Legislature slashed taxes, a move that was much decried by those who like to spend tax money, and those who benefit, such as the teacher unions.

Will the lawsuit change all that? Stay tuned. The first of the year is not far off.

– Steve Haynes



## Connecting to community companies

I love newspapers and no matter which newspaper it is, I never miss the following: of course, the obituaries, then the houses for sale and the help wanted. You find out a lot about where you live when you read these, but today I want to focus particularly on the help wanted ads. I am always interested in how companies, outside of government, fill positions.

Often jobs are created for people. Recently a friend of mine, in Norton, answered a help wanted position advertised in the Telegram. When the company realized her particular skills, they created a position for her. They filled the original position and hers. Two positions came from the one. A company with a good history and with clear vision as well.

Many companies use an indirect way of seeking just the right person. Sometimes they hear of a former resident who wants to return to the area. They

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



contact the person to see what would draw them to the company and to the community. They understand that a connection to the community is as important as a connection to the company.

An executive with a company may post a request on their Facebook page. This finds potential applicants with a similar work ethic and value system. Often the word is spread through friends or some other means of networking. They then focus on an already narrowed applicants' list, which may either be a plus or a minus. There are companies who run the

same ad, or virtually the same ad, repeatedly. Is there no response or a high employee turnover? Maybe this company fails to deliver the comparable salaries and benefit packages of other companies. Perhaps the existing employees do not take part in finding new ones because they themselves feel undervalued. Or maybe, just maybe, the company wants the community to believe they can't find qualified employees in the area or ones willing to relocate. Perhaps this is their way of laying the groundwork for a potential company relocation. It doesn't mean it is a bad company, but it clearly means it is a company not invested in the community.

What keeps our community strong is the workforce which powers it. Those companies who realize their role in keeping the local business community solid are a valuable tool for the whole area. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

## We all just need to have a little faith

I love fall. The leaves are going to be particularly colorful this year! (It's true; I read it on the internet!)

Corn and the milo fill the trucks. Everyone is scurrying. Busy and mostly joyful, harvest represents prosperity. And that's always good!

Soon the geese will return. How can one not be uplifted when the geese fly?

The wheat is coming up; bright green providing a stunning contrast to the rusts and golds of autumn. Wheat, more than anything, proves the faith of a farmer. It lives, dies and lives again.

"Who plants a seed beneath the sod and waits to see believes in God."

In a month it will be Thanksgiving. But each day brings a reason to be grateful.

If you watch the news, which I'd advise you not to do if you are having problems finding reasons to be happy, you'd think the sky was falling.

You'd think this country never faced a problem before.

Has anyone read the book "John Adams" by David McCullough or watched the miniseries? The founding of this country was a mess. It was contentious.

There was great risk. The signers of the Declaration of Independence were traitors. From almost the beginning of the Revolutionary war the Army was a ragtag outfit ravaged with illness, lacking in supplies and starving.

Many people in the colonies did not want to break away from Mother England. Even those who did, in all cases, did not have the most noble of reasons.

### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



There was betrayal and great hardship.

Yet after all that, the USA has been a stunning success for the European types that founded it. And for anyone else that buys into the idea that democracy and capitalism are great things; which I do.

Does this somehow exclude us from the moral imperative that we take care of each other?

When it comes to abortion, pro-life people say: We cannot decide if a life is worth living. Only God can. I agree. The problem is once we get all these people here, why are we opposed to taking care of them?

Many debilitating diseases are genetic. From birth some need extensive and expensive health care. There are accidents no one can predict. Poverty can be as real a handicap as any physical limitation. Some people choose not to get insurance, some don't qualify.

For many, many years our family had less than adequate health insurance. It is not something you think about every day. But you think about it!

Hospitals do write off large amounts each year in bills that cannot be collected. Critical care cannot be denied. But is this any way for the greatest country

on Earth to run health care? It is not efficient or cost effective.

In recent days it appears perhaps Kathleen Sebelius will become the sacrificial lamb for the debacle of signing up for the Affordable Care Act. Historically I've not been a Democrat and even disliked her. But I'm angry about how she has been treated. For one thing, she was Insurance Commissioner of Kansas so surely she has some qualifications for the job. Plus I always thought she was smart and she is, after all, a Kansan. Anyone who says, oh, but she is not native born must realize, not all are so lucky as to be: it is a privilege even I was denied!

Kansas has a negative image in much of the country. A study was done and Kansas is the state most people said they would avoid even driving through! I suppose that explains 1-80 in Nebraska!

I saw a list of things we all do that we think no one else does. Here is something I do: when I see a strange looking piece of metal or plastic on the road, I think about countries where you would never drive over such a thing because it would be an IED.

And then I'm thankful! The world is not ending. Our country is not failing. It is and has always been messy.

We fought and won our independence from the British Empire and made PEACE! The Affordable Care Act pales in comparison.

Have a little faith. This too shall pass.



Thumbs up to David and Sara Brehmer for the beautiful landscaping around the Remington statues at the library. Called in.

Thumbs up to every single person having something to do with the newly donated Remington statues. Starting at the top with Sue Sharp to the Fullers, the Brehmers, the Millers, the Sharps and everyone in between. Norton is blessed to have such talented and caring people that recognize a great thing. emailed in.

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