

## The fall election will lead to an interesting year

Kansas voters can't say they don't have any clear choices when they go to the polls this fall.

GOP conservatives, who peaked two years ago after decades on the outs in Kansas politics, will have to defend their control of state government from what may be an onslaught of liberal-moderate reaction.

Gov. Sam Brownback has opposition from a prominent Democrat, Rep. Paul Davis, minority leader of the Kansas House. The choice between the two is stark: the governor has slashed income taxes, cut state spending for the first time in decades and turned Topeka away from an every-growing budget.

While his policies have been criticized as favoring the rich over the poor, undoubtedly, many ordinary Kansans who voted for him are more than pleased with his performance.

On the other side, he faces an alliance of teacher unions, liberals and many moderate Republicans, who are out of power and not very happy about it.

By November, we will know if the conservatives can hold on and get time to prove their economic theories – or to meet with failure. After little more than a year, despite the harsh judgments of some big-government fans, it's way to soon to tell.

But Mr. Brownback's opponents don't let that bother them; they know in their hearts he will fail.

Two years ago, frustrated by moderates and liberals in the state Senate blocking their reforms, conservatives mounted a drive that gave them control of both houses in the Legislature. If anything, the new Senate is even more conservative than the House. It insisted on inserting untried policy reforms into a bill answering a Supreme Court order on equalizing two funds in the school finance formula.

It remains to be seen if they can hold their beachhead, or will be driven back this fall. While Rep. Davis seems to have some traction – and is attracting money both in the state and from outside – no one has a handle yet on how legislative races will go. Surely there will be some good races, but enough to shift control?

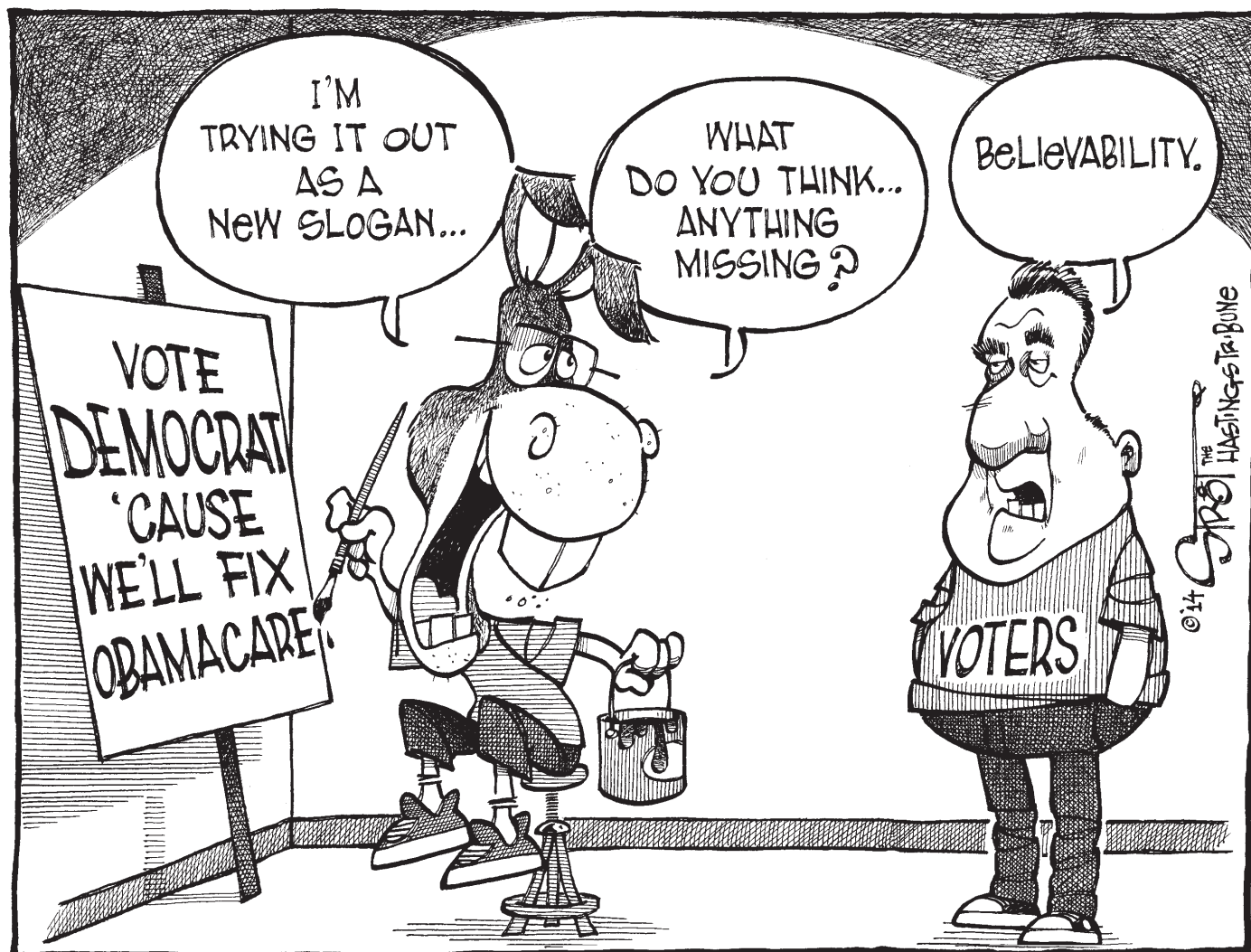
And while liberals decry the involvement of the conservative Koch brothers of Wichita and their political groups, including American for Prosperity, national unions and liberal groups will target Kansas, which is now seen as a battleground of ideas akin to Wisconsin a few years ago. The conservatives held out there, however.

However this election goes, it's likely to be a watershed year for our state, which could go either way. At this point it's hard to see control of the Legislature moving back to the left. It's also hard to say the governor is in trouble, though we don't think the school finance debate helped him much.

It may be true that, as his opponents claim, slashing the income tax means the state can no longer afford some of the programs it once had. Money for colleges, highways, even public schools will be tight for some time.

But it remains to be seen whether the average Kansan disapproves or whether people will be more comfortable with a smaller state government. And that's what makes this such an interesting year.

– Steve Haynes



## Don't like the weather, give it five minutes

Unbelievable! Sweating one day – grabbing long johns the next.

Saturday, I worked outside wearing a cotton shirt. Sunday, we were in blizzard conditions. I shouldn't be surprised, though. This is Kansas weather at its usual unpredictable best. But I know who will be surprised. My sister, from Florida, who is coming for a visit.

Kathryn, who transplanted herself from New York to Orlando about four years ago is coming Tuesday for a visit. She hasn't seen snow in all that time. She may not see it this time, either because in two days it could all be gone and we'll be opening all the windows to cool off the house.

If they didn't freeze, Kathryn will get to see the beautiful tulips she sent me several years ago. They are an exotic variety and are just ready to open up. I noticed how thick the plants are and

### Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



think they ought to be spread out a little. Time to "google" tulips and find out when is the best time to split the bulbs.

Kathryn hasn't been here since Mom's auction. My goodness, that was over 15 years ago. I know because our granddaughter, Taylor, was just six weeks old when we had the sale and she turned 15 in January.

That seems to be how I tell time. I use life events as markers. Like, we lived in Ohio for a year. My daughter,

Kara, was born in 1972, she was in the fifth grade which made her 11, so that made it 1983 when we came back to Kansas.

We're not sure how long Kathryn will get to stay, but there's lots of things we want to do while she's here. Go out to the farm for sure. Go to sunrise services at the little country church where we both grew up. Go to Liberty-Star Club. Visit old friends and neighbors. Aunt "Toots," Veda and the Anthony boys are probably the only ones left that she might remember. Look at lots and lots of old pictures and see all of our brothers.

If we run out of things to do and Kathryn tells me she's bored, I'll tell her what I tell my grandkids, "Go water something."

## Dressing for safety when on the farm

What's today's fashionable farmer wearing to work?

If you guessed any of the high fashions featured in GQ, Vanity Fair or Esquire, guess again.

Looking good is great when you go to town but safety and comfort are more important when dressing for farm chores.

Let's begin with the head, after all that's where thinking about safety should start.

Head injuries are common on the farm and tend to be serious. When doing work that may involve head hazards, trade your comfy ball cap for a hard hat.

When you're spraying chemicals overhead, wear a wide-brimmed hat that is impervious to liquids. Make sure the brim is wide enough to keep chemical spray from drifting down on the back of your neck or face.

Eyes have been called the "window to the soul" but just like all windows they can break if something is hurled, splashed or sprayed into them.

Safety goggles and sunglasses should be just as much a part of your daily garb as a good pair of steel-toed shoes. Sunglasses are important because they lessen eye fatigue after long hours in

### Insight

John Schlageck



the bright summer sun.

While many people consider the farm and rural America a place of quiet tranquility, many farmers experience hearing loss.

As a general rule, whenever the noise level reaches 85 decibels, farmers should reach for ear protection. While farmers don't carry testing equipment to measure decibel level, they should wear protection when in doubt as to the noise level. Wear ear protection for comfort as well, loud noises can be distracting.

Ear covers are preferable to ear plugs because the latter can cause compaction of ear wax that is difficult to remove.

While they may be more comfortable, avoid wearing loose fitting clothes. If you plan to stay in the sun most of the day, wear sun screen for protection from the sun's harmful rays.

Avoid wearing sweats with long drawstrings that hang from the waist or around the neck. These strings are made of extremely strong nylon or other artificial fibers. Such fibers don't rip or tear as easily as clothing like cotton. It's easy for dangling strings to catch in augers or other moving parts.

The same applies for long hair. Tie hair back and avoid the risk of becoming entangled in moving parts.

Shoes and boots can provide foot protection and good traction. Make certain your shoes are clean of mud and manure that can cause slipping and falls.

Good fit is important for both day-long comfort and stability. When spraying chemicals, wear waterproof or impervious footwear.

Rings hang up on bolts, sharp corners or just about anything you find around a farmstead. Always remove rings and other loose-fitting jewelry. If you fail to do so, you could easily lose or injure a finger or some other limb.

While the safely-dressed farmers will not make the fashion pages of GQ, Vanity Fair or Esquire or even their local paper, you won't find them in the hospital, emergency room or obituary pages either.

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