



Opinion

Speaker should resign as attorney in lawsuit

Rep. Mike O'Neal, speaker of the Kansas House, has done a bad thing. He needs to admit it, correct his error and get on with the session.

The Hutchinson Republican is maybe best known in this area for representing Dr. Victor Hilyard in his disputes with the Colby hospital, but now he's not only a lawyer in private practice, but the leader of the state House of Representatives.

It was a mistake for him to sign on as the attorney for a group protesting a bill which "swept" \$5 million in unused money out of state trust accounts to help balance the budget. Groups ranging from real estate agents to workers-compensation insurance pools complained that this was not the state's money, but theirs, money they paid to the state in trust for future use.

These groups may have a good case, and as Mr. O'Neal says, they certainly deserve to be heard in court. We have no argument with that. On the surface, at least, it looks as though they may be right.

But the speaker should have left this case to some other lawyer. It's unseemly, having a high state official involved in suing the state, especially in a year when many are unhappy with school districts using state money to sue the state.

It just doesn't look good.

And, the longer he sticks with this lawsuit, the

more Speaker O'Neal will realize that in public ethics, what looks bad is bad, legal niceties aside. It won't make much difference what else happens in this case. His enemies, both within his own party and in the other party, will make hay.

Mr. O'Neal can call this "playing politics," as he has, but it won't wash. He's a big boy, and he should have seen the problem. Suppose the governor decided to represent someone suing the state? Or, God forbid, the attorney general?

Other House Republicans see the error of his ways, but they're mostly afraid to cross the speaker, who can cast death spells on their bills. The Dems have no such qualms.

"In my opinion, there is too much inherent conflict of interest in that situation," said Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, who introduced an amendment to bar legislators from taking similar cases.

Makes no difference who complains. It will weaken Rep. O'Neal's position. The longer he hangs on, the worse he will look. He'll be hurting his party and eroding his own power.

Give it up, Mr. Speaker. Let someone else handle this case.

And get on with the people's business.

— Steve Haynes

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick

scmccormick@nwkans.com

My step-father, Richard Seno, ended his battle with cancer last week. After more than a year of ups and downs battling the incurable disease, he left on his own terms.

Richard had had enough of hospitals. The last two weeks he was able to be home with loved ones. His wife, Susan, and three children, Roland, George and Regina, and

their spouses and children, kept a constant vigil.

The Italian-American from Chicago was surrounded by the familiar smell of tomato sauce simmering on the stove. Priests and Catholic laymen prepared him to be with his Creator. And all the while, a family member was near to comfort him and make him as comfortable as possible.

When the last hour approached,

By Casey McCormick

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Richard was listening to Luciano Pavarotti sing operatic arias. Then a rerun of his favorite television episode was put on: M*A*S*H's "5 O'clock Charlie." He was not alone in the warmth of his home.

May we all be as blessed to leave this world as rich a man as Richard Seno.



Citizens are a credit to county

Letter to the Editor:

To the citizens of Cheyenne County:

You are a credit to the good old Red, White, and Blue and the system of government we all question at times, but wouldn't trade for anything else in the world! You came out in record numbers to greet our representatives from Topeka. And I assure you, they left here with that indelible mark!

Thank you, Alisa Rath and the Farm Bureau for your graciousness in responding to the request for a larger venue and for getting things all arranged.

Thank you, journalists and pho-

Letter to the Editor,

Let me start by saying that it was wonderful to see citizens from across Cheyenne County united in one room on Saturday with a common purpose. It is more important than ever that we all work together to keep what we have in this wonderful county, as well as strive to make it an even better place to live. Many services have already been taken away from us and we need to stem the tide.

At least our legislators got the message that we care about what is happening in Topeka and that we will keep paying attention to what they do. They don't have an easy job even in the best of times, but they need to know what our feelings are, and we need to stay in touch with them about any issues that affect us.

No one wants to pay more taxes (or even current ones), but we all expect the government, whether it be local, state or national, to provide the services we personally

tographers of *The Saint Francis Herald* and *Bird City Times*, for being there to make sure this event was covered.

Thank you, Superintendents Schiltz and Bolen (and Werner!) for making sure that sham information was not allowed to go unchallenged. I am sure our good legislators will do their homework a little better the next time they come our direction.

Thank you, Community Builders and others who worked on getting the word out and getting the rest of us educated on the issues.

need or want. Most Americans say that they want smaller government and lower taxes, but would be appalled, for instance, if children died of E. Coli because we didn't have enough food inspectors. We might force the school to cut their budget, but then complain because kids aren't getting enough education. Of course, we want the clinic/hospital/emergency medical service to have the personnel and equipment to take care of us when we get sick or hurt. And, we certainly expect our streets and roads to be properly maintained!

Maybe we tag our vehicles in another state or shop there because the taxes are lower, but somehow I fail to believe that we can call that state when we need the fire department, the ambulance or a bridge repaired. When you shop online, (sometimes that is the only place we can find what we need), you are not only hurting the local merchant, but hurting yourself because there is no sales tax rev-

And most of all - thank you for all who got up early on a long weekend to be there to share the concerns. If the same percentage of population of one of the big counties would show up in their respective areas, there would not be a venue big enough to hold them. We may be small, sparse, and far from Topeka, but in a political system based on the common man...we were BIG!

Topeka - are you listening?

Mary Beth Miller
St. Francis

venue that will help us locally and statewide. If the local merchant goes out of business because of a lack of customers, then it hurts our economy with lost jobs and less sales and property tax, and maybe fewer kids in school.

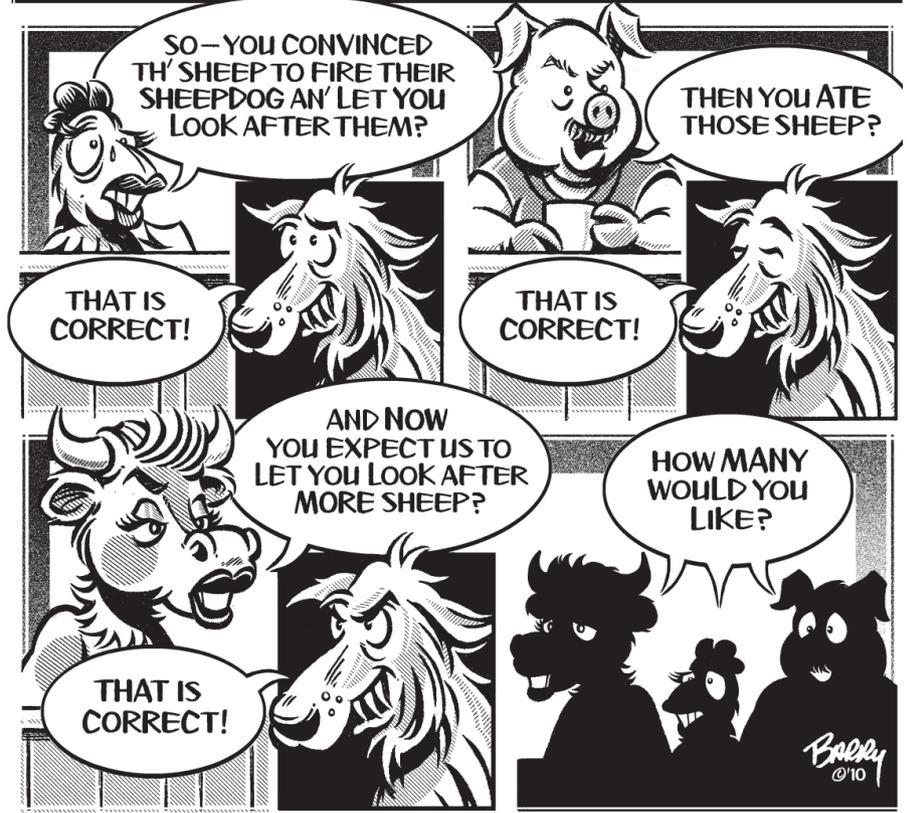
Please be supportive of Cheyenne County government and businesses, and let our Kansas and U.S. Representatives and Senators, as well as local officials, know your opinion of issues they are considering.

If you hear a rumor about something, find out the facts. There have been a lot of falsehoods floating around about the funding issues. If there is a meeting being held, be sure to be there. We all need to stay informed as to what is happening, and not feel that we are helpless to doing anything about it. You can make a difference!

Sherry Schultz
St. Francis

Letters to the Editor

Inquiry into Predator Deregulation - Shades of the Wall St. Flap?



Writer wants State to cut back

The following letter was sent to our representatives and I believe the letter tells a simple solution, since it is inappropriate for the state government to tell the local government to sacrifice at the same time that they are adding staff. I believe that our state taxes are high enough to support a reasonably-sized state government, and that reducing the size of the bureaucracy is the solution. I believe in cutting back at the upper levels to help support the local levels where the real service and work is going on. Dear Rep. Faber and Sen. Ostmeyer:

Thank you for coming to Cheyenne County last Saturday to hear our concerns and questions. I wish to take this opportunity to further explain my requests.

Our state is in a financial crisis brought on by mismanagement at a number of levels. As a former employer who had many employees and large budgets, I know that getting out of a hole this size probably takes both an increase in revenue and a decrease in expenses. I am semi-retired and have limited income, but I suggest a half percent sales tax increase (some of which is paid by people traveling through the state) for 6 months ONLY to increase revenues.

Our schools and medical facilities are the mainstays of the community, but are struggling to maintain services in a reasonable and quality fashion. We are told to keep cutting back (reduction of staff and services, etc.), but that has been done before and we can not

Letters to the Editor

cut back any more.

In the mean time, our bureaucracy at the state level has grown significantly to the point of consuming the tax revenues plus lots more. A former governor added huge numbers of new jobs to our State government employment. Our current Governor has proposed adding over 100 new jobs to the State for this next year of financial crisis! What are people thinking? Everyone else is demanded to cut back except the State employees.

Many of the State jobs could be done away with as redundant. For instance, the financial consultants that will come to the local school district and do an audit and recommend how to save money: Are they really necessary or just doing what the local school board and upper educational administrators are supposed to be doing? The branch of the State Fire Marshals Office that does building inspections throughout the State could be dropped and the duties given to local fire chiefs.

There are many similar suggestions that need to be examined for their impact prior to implementations, but I believe that many reductions could be made. There is the concern of unemployment for former State employees, but remember that many of these bureaucrats are people who can find jobs elsewhere quickly due to training and experience.

A financial system and government like ours can not withstand a huge bureaucracy that other people (working in private business) have to support. We have come to that point at both the Federal and State levels that our bureaucracy is too large to be supported by the tax payers who work in non-government jobs. We MUST cut back at the State level, not just the local level! Who will champion this cause against a powerful bureaucracy? I will. Will you?

Rick Reeser
St. Francis

GOD SAYS
He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth.
Psalms 104:14

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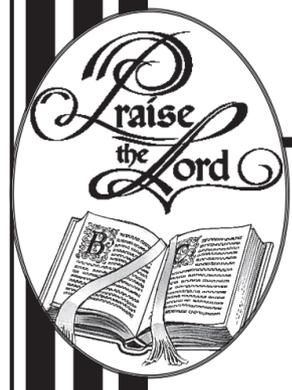
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