



## Legislature gave up without finishing job

The Kansas Legislature ground to a halt Sunday, nine days overtime and leaving a couple of pieces of important business undone.

The House and Senate did manage to pass a \$14.3 billion state budget which includes tax cuts, a 3 percent cut in overall state spending for the first time in years and a \$464 million cushion, or ending balance, as required by law.

Another accomplishment was passing a plan to reform the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System, which covers state workers, teachers and educators, and many city and county employees as well. Existing pensions would be protected with new revenue sources, and new employees would go under a different, less expensive plan.

Left undone was the biggest job of the year, however, drawing new boundaries for all House, Senate and congressional districts as required by federal court rulings and the Constitution. This must be done every 10 years after the federal census so districts have roughly equal population.

The redistricting could and should have gotten done if a spirit of compromise had prevailed among conservative and "moderate" Republicans and the Democrats, but that was not about to happen.

Halfway through the session, conservative groups announced plans to file candidates against seven or eight more liberal Republican senators in a bid to break the moderate faction's hold on Senate leadership. Many were popular incumbent House members.

Senate leaders countered by drawing a Senate map that put many challengers outside the districts they'd filed in. Conservatives, such as Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer representing northwest Kansas, were

given no say in their own districts.

And the fight was on. Another major failing was to pass a tax-cut plan that even conservative leaders admitted may have been too aggressive. Instead of phasing income-tax cuts in over a decade, the bill which passed both houses will cut everything right away.

Many project the need for big cuts in state spending down the road, though some would see that as a good thing. It's an issue the next Legislature likely will have to revisit.

The redistricting now apparently will fall to the U.S. District Court, where a three-judge panel could wind up drawing the lines. The only other alternative would be a special session, but that might only delay the inevitable.

As it is, the August primary may have to be put off, no matter who draws the districts, since the June 15 deadline to file for state and local office is fast approaching. Secretary of State Chris Kobach says the maps must be ready by Friday, June 8.

Who will wind up in control of the Senate is anybody's guess, but voters in some districts may not cotton to what will be seen as a power play by business — the challengers were recruited by a group tied to the state Chamber of Commerce — and allegedly, the governor.

How the new district will affect the outcome is anybody's guess. Legislators on both sides may wish they'd gotten along better.

While the session undoubtedly produced some accomplishments, failing to handle the big issues is not a point of pride. Voters and citizens should not be pleased with either side for that.

— Steve Haynes



## Hangin' With Marge

By Margaret Bucholtz



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Darrin and his family came out on Friday night so they could help Lexi celebrate her high school graduation. They were not able to attend the graduation on Sunday, but went to the party on Saturday evening.

Early on Saturday the hunting began with Darrin and Tucker, who is seven (going on 21) to hunt for rabbits. The rabbits are eating my garden and flowers so I was happy to see them wanting to hunt.

The first kill they made was a sparrow. They had to take a picture and write on the shell that this was his first bird.

Then it went on to the rabbits. After several times of spotting a rabbit in the yard they finally got one. Again a shell was marked and a picture taken.

Tucker was a little unhappy that he had to quit and go to the party, but he went and had fun. After the party Darrin and Dina told the kids it was bed time. They explained that they were leaving at 7 the next morning because Darrin had to be back for his school's graduation.

The next morning Darrin tried to wake up Tucker and he didn't move. Then Darrin went to the window and quietly said, "Tucker,

I see a rabbit." Immediately Tucker was on his feet and ready to go. What a disappointment when he was told they just wanted him to get up.

As they were loading up two more rabbits were in the yard. Needless to say the guns came out, another was shot. Then came the documentation and finally at 8:15 they pulled out of the yard.

Everyone was happy except Dina and Sawyer who really don't like the hunting skills that Tucker is learning.

## Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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Do you ever wonder about how we are made? Why do our minds and bodies work as they do? One asset that we all have is the gift of memory.

Imagine if each day when we awoke our brains were a blank slate. Every task, small or large, would have to be learned new by trial and error. We would not get too far without a record of experience.

This amazing talent allows us to

recollect events and people that not only help us survive, but hold on to the things that have touched our lives.

Our family recently journeyed together through a couple of graduations and a funeral. All three events imprinted themselves on us, along with the many memories we have of the people involved.

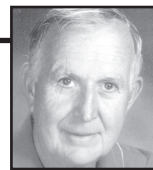
Now with time the emotional edge of these feelings will begin to

dull and wear down. This will help us to remain sane to deal with the next situations that will arise along the road of life. But those "snap shots" that we have of the ones we love will remain in the photo albums in our minds.

Now isn't that a wonderful gift to have?

## Legislative News

By Ward Cassidy



120th State Representative

What a second year in the legislature! I have got to see firsthand how ugly politics can be. The whole issue of the redistricting process has amazed me. It amazes me how people can have \$100,000 to \$200,000 in their campaign fund for an \$88 a day, 90-day job. I am sure most of you have read how there is a strong move by the Governor and the strong conservatives in the Senate to move out the moderate Republicans. That has caused important issues, yet to be solved, to be put on hold.

There is a compromise from the House and Senate on the important issue of our state retirement system (KPERs). I feel I will be able to vote for the compromise as it is at least a good first step. I have felt all along that by allowing new hires to remain in the current program, we are just adding to the fiscal concerns. Many of the concerns that the 120th constituents have expressed to me have been addressed in the compromise, other than putting a large chunk of money into the program. There will be over \$40 million of the Kansas Expanded Lottery Act Revenue Fund (ELARF)

money going into retirement system this year. The projections do show that the program is safe for thirty years and that if all projections hold it will improve after that. There will not be a cost of living adjustment in the future. I will have the final Kansas Public Employees Retirement System compromise on my website after the session.

How is this for a predicament? Last week, I voted against the Senate tax plan because of my fear of the negative fiscal projections. The bill passed, however, and the governor has said he will sign it. He would prefer that the House and

Senate conference committee develop a different plan. The conference committee came up with a plan that I still don't like for Northwest Kansas. If I don't vote for this plan, the Governor will authorize the Senate plan that I really didn't like.

Friday morning, most of the representatives will wake up and have to move out of their apartments. There is a big race for rooms in Topeka, and all the available beds are sold out. That should help move things along. Who knows?

GOD SAYS  
He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.  
Proverbs 28:13

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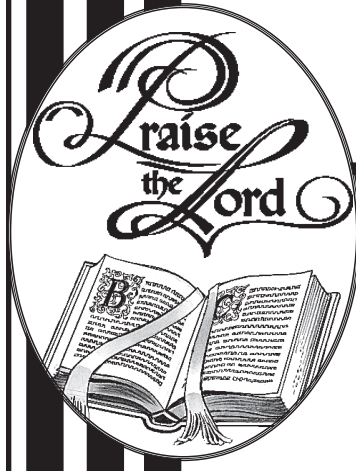
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