

Who speaks for us when governments lobby?

A bill in the Kansas Senate this year that would have prohibited lobbying by public agencies and local government apparently has gone nowhere fast.

While there are interesting arguments on both sides of this issue, it's hard to believe that lobbyists from cities, counties and school districts always represent the interests of "their constituents" when they gather at the Statehouse.

They represent the interests of their employers and/or members as public officials and public agencies, and that can be far different.

Public officials often want to spend more taxpayer money, for one thing, and their constituents may or may not agree with that. But when a city or county hires a lobbyist to argue for the ability to spend more on something, or make it easier to borrow money or raise taxes, there's usually no consulting the voters first.

In fact, the taxpayers' interests seldom come to the fore in these discussions - and may be diametrically opposed to the interests of public officials.

A lot of public-agency or local-government lobbying is conducted by associations which owe no allegiance to the voters. These associations, and their staffs, are beholden only to the municipal, county and school officials who elect them and hire them and keep them in office.

Their interest is in keeping their jobs and representing their constituents, the public officials who pay and hire them.

That doesn't make these groups bad per se, but it doesn't make them representatives of the voters, either. And while you'd think the legislators themselves would represent the voters, many of them are former city, county and school officials who see things much the same way these groups do.

When the lobbyists for local government come to the Capitol seeking a change in state law or to block a bill that might make it more difficult to raise taxes, it's hard to see them as representing taxpayers.

The same goes for state agencies that try to influence legislation. The Department of Revenue, say, may have an interest in increasing the tax take by changing certain rules. Who represents the taxpayers then?

Another thing local-government associations often want is more secrecy. These groups typically oppose changes in open meetings and open records acts to make information more accessible to taxpayers. They push to ease requirements for publication of public documents, reports on public spending and the like, and back proposals to allow local government to hide their "publications" on obscure city or county websites.

Voters pretty clearly need and want more information, not less, and these "public" lobbyists are not representing them in Topeka when they do this.

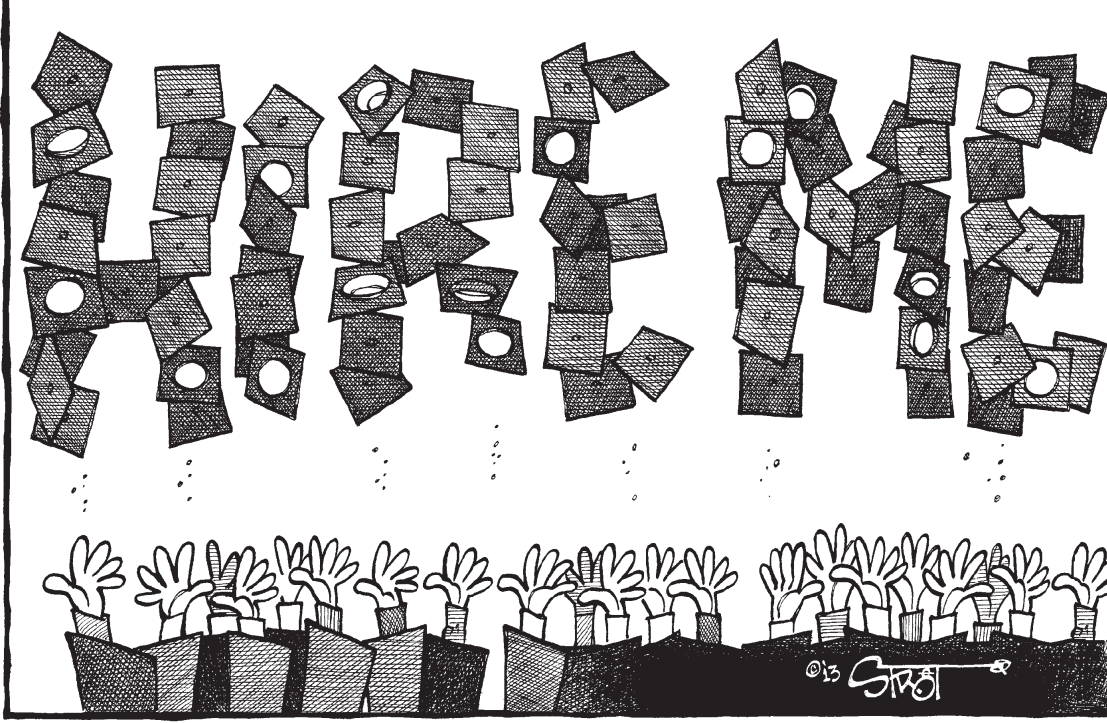
The idea of SB 109, which would have banned use of any public money to lobby the Legislature, may seem a little harsh, but in the current system, taxpayers' needs generally get lost among the wants and desires of their elected officials.

Democracy is best served by open government, a free flow of information and a regard for the voters' and taxpayers' interest that is largely lacking when local governments spend taxpayer money to lobby. It's a system that should be changed.

There should be severe limits on how a government agency can spend money taken from taxpayers in ways they may not approve.

- Steve Haynes

the Traditional Kansas Graduation Cap Toss



Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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What will we do now? Lezlie and I are at a crossroads in our lives together. With Joey graduating this weekend, the last of the Hilt-McCormick brood will be moving on in a direction of their own.

Granted we still have a summer, Joey will only be as far away as Goodland and older brother Trevor is working and living in the area. But life will be different.

For the past couple decades our schedules have had to bend and mold between two main things:

our work and the kid's school. No longer will evenings and weekends be the times of school programs or sporting events.

From now on if we choose to attend school-related gatherings, it will be because of freewill rather than obligation.

Basically, I imagine we will have more freedom and time in what we do.

With a couple things I have no doubts and feel very satisfied. Knowing that our kids have grown up in a community where

hard work and values have shaped them is an asset to us all. In addition they have been provided a superior education that will help them along life's bumpy paths.

Back to my original question. Will that extra time be taken up traveling, remodeling the house or getting in shape? I guess time will tell us what to do now.

The Gardener

By Kay Melia



Thousands of gardeners, much more capable than I, devote a great deal of their time in the garden growing roses. I have noted over the years that there are many who grow very little else than roses. Small wonder! The rose has long been America's favorite flower, and while they can sometimes seem to be a bit obstinate in their growing demands, they will probably always be America's favorite.

This year, the American Rose Society has announced that there are many new roses to plant, cultivate, and enjoy. The most prominent development for the year 2013, and the only All America Selection for the year, is a beauty named "Francis Meilland Hybrid Tea Rose." The name alone is magnificently significant because it's named after the famed French rose breeder Meilland family. The family notoriety began in the 1940's when they introduced the most famous rose of all time, one called "Peace," which adorns more gardens today than any other rose.

While the Francis Meilland Hy-

brid Tea Rose was actually bred by the Meilland family in the year 2006, changes in the structure and habit of the rose has been improved upon in the past seven years. It is being introduced this year as the All America Selection by the Conard-Pyle Company, a leading horticultural innovator for 150 years, and is based in West Grove, Pennsylvania. The rose is available now on the 100th birthday of the late Francis Meilland, the leader of the prolific rose breeding family.

The rose is truly breathtaking! It produces soft pink to white blossoms that are set on long stems and glossy green leaves. The plant will grow to 6 feet tall in warm environments, but about half that in areas such as ours. It produces a strong citrus-like fragrance that always lets you know it's there.

I notice that several mail order houses have it available for \$19.95 plus shipping, and you might see it in your favorite greenhouse and garden center. This introduction just may be the most coveted rose to come along for many years. If you love roses, you must have this one!

It is noteworthy that the aforementioned distributor of quality rose stock for many years, the Conard-Pyle Company, is also the home of today's most popular general line of roses, the "Knockout" rose. The Knock Out rose family is introducing two new roses this year. There are a number of named Knock Out roses, and seem to be readily available around the area. They are perhaps best known for their almost total resistance to "black spot," one of the greatest enemies of roses, and also their seemingly adaptation to the environment in which they are grown.

Plan to plant a rose or two this spring. Always look for the potted bushes that are a minimum of 2 years old. Roses, properly cared for, are forever!

Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Steve Burr, Manhattan; Stanley Little, Daingerfield, Texas; Matt Martin, St. Francis; Kenneth Criswell, Yuma, Colo.

Reader shares his opinion on those threatening Christians

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor, Christians persecuted in the United States of America?

This is surely a misprint

The cold hard facts are that the Obama administration in conjunction with the Pentagon has publicly called out and threatened Christians in the military for sharing their faith with their fellow soldiers. And what is the punishment for these high crimes and dastardly, cowardly treasonous acts? Court marshal, dishonorable discharge and prison time.

Chaplains in the military are so encumbered that many are leaving the service. This is intimidation and persecution in the most egregious form from our nation that was formed around the concept of

freedom and especially the freedom of religion and free speech.

The question has to be asked, why is this government so afraid of Christians and Christian precepts?

These precepts are at the very core and foundation of the United States of America. Our pledge of allegiance proclaims 'One Nation Under God' and our currency reaffirms our corporate dependence, 'In God We Trust'.

Our president and each legislator placed their hand on God's Holy Word, the Bible and swore to defend and protect the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights and yet they have taken every opportunity to break and dishonor their vow and to dishonor the citizens of the United States.

There has always been persecution of Christians starting with

Christ himself. We should not be surprised then when an evil government seeks to eliminate freedom of religion, the sanctum of free speech and our right to defend ourselves.

After all, this government considers Christians to be a threat to this government and classify Christians in the same category as terrorists that maim and kill. Our forbears shed their blood so I could have freedom without government interference. Was the blood that was shed to purchase these freedoms shed for naught?

Will persecution and government control worsen? As Christians we should resist this persecution even as our forefathers did, but by God's grace, we can rejoice that we are considered worthy to suffer for Christ.

Kent Voorhies, McDonald

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GOD SAYS

"It is mine to avenge: I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."

Deuteronomy 32:35

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