

Combining local and national elections would cause less interest locally

A proposal that gained little traction in the Kansas Legislature last year, but could resurface in the current session, was a cockeyed plan to change the date of municipal elections from spring in odd-numbered years to fall in even years.

The effect would be to merge city and school elections with those for county, state and national office, and that would be a bad idea.

It's one of those things that may sound OK at first, but the more you think about what would happen, the worse it looks.

The idea is to get more people involved in local elections, but it wouldn't work. Instead, local elections - covering cities, schools and other districts - would be lost in a sea of state and national issues.

It's true that city and school elections seldom attract the number of voters that turn out in presidential years, or even to vote in the "off" years for governor. But just because city elections might run at the same time as presidential races doesn't mean voters would know who is running for mayor.

There's no way to say the result would improve city government or local schools. The reverse might be true.

City and school elections were carefully

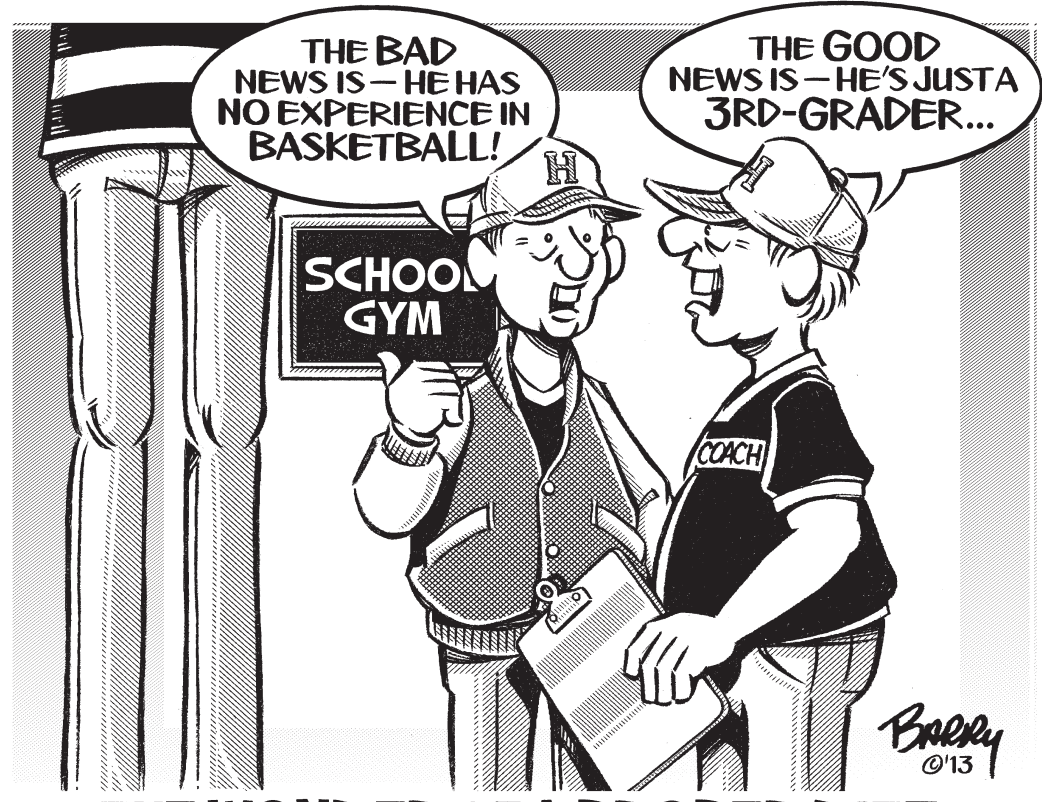
separated from partisan voting for state and county office by an earlier generation of reformers. We say they should stay where they are, in the the spring in years when no one else is running for much of anything.

It's fashionable to decry a perceived lack of interest in local government, city, county and school, whether talking about low voter turnout in elections or a lack of citizens at public meetings.

However, voters have shown time and again that if they want change, they'll demand it. City and school officials have no trouble discerning what people want when voters decide things are not going the right way. Citizens show up for meetings, make themselves known, even run for office.

Most of the time, we think, taxpayers are pretty happy with what they get from their elected local officials, and they are content to let them do their jobs. It's the same with local elections. Shifting them to the fall, when partisan politics dominates, won't change things.

In fact, it might result in less interest and understanding of local issues as voters focus on the big races. Leave things well enough alone, we say. Spring elections have served Kansas cities and schools well; there is no need to change. - Steve Haynes



THE WONDER OF A PROPER DIET...

Open Season

The empty chair

By Cynthia Haynes



Steve's chair is vacant and every time I walk past it, I feel a little hole in my heart.

That was Jezebel's sleeping spot.

Oh, she had dozens of spots. She was, after all, a cat, and sleeping was one of the things she did best.

Jezebel wasn't our cat. She was rescued from under a neighbor's porch by youngest daughter back in her college days.

That early taste of life in the wild stayed with Jezebel the rest of her life.

You could walk into the room one day, and she would look up and never bat an eye. Later the same day, she would take one look at you and take off as if she had never seen you before and was fairly sure that you ate cats for breakfast.

She was one spooky cat. The woman who helps me with cleaning saw her only once, she said, and that was just the tip of her tail

disappearing up the stairs.

Youngest daughter says that she was a lot friendlier when she lived with her. Maybe so. Maybe it's just time that makes things seem warmer, fuzzier and more comforting than they really were.

Daughter lived with Jez, Rupert and Penelope for several years, while she was in college and after she started teaching in eastern Kansas. They all moved south when daughter started graduate school at the University of South Carolina.

And even when Brad came into the picture, the cats were a part of her life. But Brad is allergic to cats. It's not that he doesn't like them - he just can't be around them for more than half an hour or he gets really congested.

Soon Brad became more important and the cats were parceled out. Penelope went back to Steve's sister, who had given her to youngest daughter. I didn't even know that

my sister-in-law took returns on cats.

We got Rupert and Jez. I have to admit, Rupert was my favorite. Sweet, mellow and loving, I loved Rupert, but one year after we'd been gone for 10 days, she just didn't come home. That was five or six years ago.

Since then we've had Jez. But, a month ago, when Jez didn't look well, I took her to the vet.

She was suffering from kidney failure, he said. There was nothing much that could be done. He suggested wet food instead of the dry we usually use. I bought the fanciest wet food, I could find, and she turned her nose up.

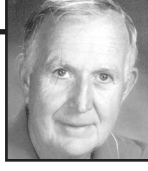
Over the last month, she got skinnier and weaker day by day, and by last week, I knew it was time. We took our last trip to the vet.

Now, I don't think about it much except when I pass Steve's empty chair.

Legislative News

More items that will be considered this year

By Ward Cassidy



120th State Representative

It amazes me how much money is spent on political campaigns. The election for Governor will be this coming November, and the cash the candidates have on hand (so far) to spend is big dollars. The Brownback/Colyer ticket has \$1,990,905 and the Davis/Docking ticket has \$1,002,839. There will be more money going into both campaigns this summer. Election year politics can be all about not upsetting the electorate.

It will be interesting this year on what bills and programs the Republican Leadership brings forward. The only requirement

the legislature has is to complete a budget bill and that has already been done with our two-year budget completed last year. If there is ever a year when we could save taxpayers money by adjourning early, this is the year. Again, that is dependent on the school lawsuit ruling.

Last year, I made a successful amendment to the budget bill that would not take away funding from community and technical colleges. The amendment was successful, but it was for one year only. I lobbied the governor to include the funds in this year's adjustments but that was not done. I will now propose this in my budget committee and if successful I will then have to get it through my Appropriations committee. Any time we make a monetary amendment, we have to find the money in another budget and take it from them. The process is called Pay-GO. So I can make one entity happy and one rather upset.

The governor has included in this year's adjustment money for the gas and oil exploration fund, which is very important to many western Kansas counties.

Repealing laws that limit cor-

porate farming was one of the goals of our retired Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman. I am hearing that it will be an issue again this year. Kansas farm organizations oppose the concept.

The state's water supply is becoming an increasing concern as the Ogallala Aquifer continues to decline at alarming rates. We need to do something but the Ogallala Aquifer involves more than one state and when we involve the federal government it becomes even more complicated. The governor is working many angles to help this situation. He certainly made it a big part of his State of the State speech.

There is a strong chance that prescription pot will have a bill this year. The Kansas Silver-Haired Legislature officially has come out in favor of medical marijuana, and polls show 70 percent of the state would approve cannabis for medicinal purposes.

There will be many topics coming this year and as always I will be glad to answer your questions and will work at keeping Northwest Kansas informed.

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GOD SAYS Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. I John 4:10

Casey's Comments

Walt Disney brings joy to many

By Casey McCormick



By Casey McCormick mccormickcasey@rocketmail.com

Last weekend, Lezlie and I caught a film at our local movie house. By the way, the new marquee looks terrific.

We saw "Saving Mr. Banks," which told the story of Walt Disney's persuasion of P.L. Travers to allow him the screen rights to her book, Mary Poppins.

Seeing the scenes set in 1961 took me back to my childhood. In the mid-60s, the folks loaded us kids into the family station-wagon and headed west from Denver. Today, I have a picture of my twin brother and me in navy blue sports shirts, names

embroidered on, standing with Snow White at Disneyland.

I learned a couple things from the movie.

First, Walt Disney grew up in Kansas City.

Second, upon looking into the former, his inspiration for Disneyland and Disney World came from a theme park in that town.

Electric Park, an obvious name because of the countless light bulbs, was built by the Heim Brothers Brewery.

The first location was near the brewery (with cold beverages piped directly in) in the late 1800s. The second lasted from 1907 until 1925, after a fire rav-

aged much of the facility. It was located at 46th Street and the Paseo, in K.C., Missouri.

Walt would take his sister, Ruth, to Electric Park as often as possible as it was only 15 blocks from their home. Some of the building designs would be recreated in California, along with the beautifully manicured flower beds, which added to the magic of Disney's creations.

In a world with so much chaos, it is hard to deny the joy that Walt Disney's vision has brought to so many. Knowing of his ties to this area explains a bit of that.



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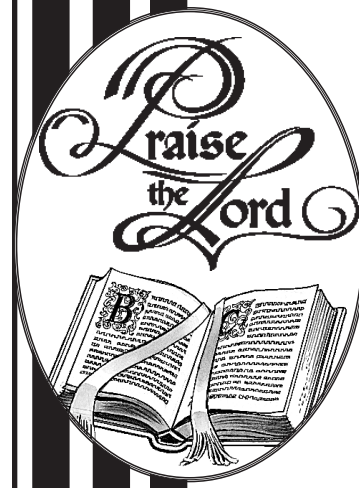


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