

## Kansas school funding is also a national issue

Everyone tends to see things through their own lenses, viewing the world around us from our particular seat at the table. So, it might seem unusual that the decade-long fight over school funding in Kansas suddenly pops up in the *New York Times* as a national issue.

"What's the deal," you might ask. "Kansas is a small state in the middle of the country. Why would the *New York Times* editorial board stoop to give advice to our Supreme Court?"

It's because this is not just a Kansas fight, but a national movement concerned with perceived equality in education and with taking authority over school spending out of the hands of the elected legislatures by court action.

And right now, if you listen to the voices of the largely liberal East Coast establishment led by the *Times*, the wrong side is winning in Kansas.

Other than being firmly in control of conservatives, Kansas is not unique in this battle. Forty-five states have faced school-funding lawsuits, most aimed at increasing spending. These draw support both from civil-rights groups concerned with the fate of urban schools and minority students, and from teacher unions and education groups that want more money.

The *Times*, in an October editorial, advised the Kansas Supreme Court to back a district-court order to restore public-school funding to 2008 levels, spending an estimated \$400 million more each year.

"The State Supreme Court should uphold that order," the editorial board intoned, "while making it clear that the Legislature does not have the power to unilaterally shortchange school children."

While the *Times* allegedly refused to run a full response from Gov. Sam Brownback, it did run a short letter from the governor noting that education spending had increased \$200 million on his watch and defending his income-tax cuts.

Those cuts really bother the pro-spending side in this struggle, because they see them representing dollars the state could be putting into teacher salaries and other programs, forever lost.

While it did not run the governor's full response, the *Times* did run an opinion, or "op-ed,"

column attacking the state's education funding stance by two "experts" committed to forcing higher school spending, titled in a play off the old William Allen White editorial, "What's the Matter With Kansas Schools?"

The piece puts the struggle into the national perspective: "Many of these lawsuits successfully forced elected officials to increase school funding and to deliver more resources to poor students and those with special needs. If the Kansas Supreme Court rules otherwise, students in those states may begin to see the tide of education cuts return."

The authors were David Sciarra, who heads the Education Law Center, which describes itself as "a public interest law firm specializing in the reform of elementary and secondary school systems in New Jersey," and Wade Henderson, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the Leadership Conference Education Fund, and among other things, former head of the NAACP Washington office.

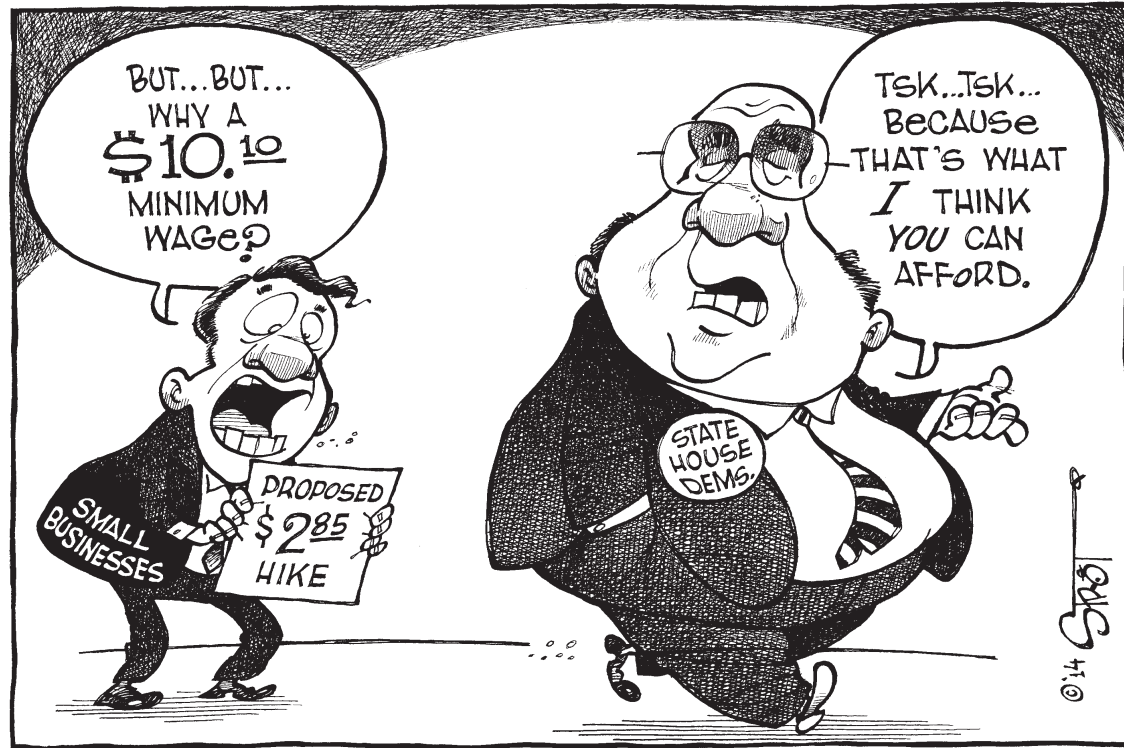
Their article implies that Gov. Brownback was somehow responsible for school budget cuts - most occurred in 2009, while he was still in Washington - and cast his tax cuts ("a \$1.1 billion tax break ... benefiting upper-income Kansans") as a big part of the problem.

There is more, much more, to this fight, too much for one day. Meantime, schools go on, Kansas test scores remain relatively high and no one seems to know just how to fix the inequalities that do exist, except to spend more money.

At the crux of the battle, however, is the basic question of whether democratic decision making or the courts will control school budgets. Which side people fall on seems to depend on whether they want more money to spend or lower taxes, not whether they believe more in the power of the people and their elected representatives, or the (often necessary) power of the courts.

In the best of all possible worlds, the discussion would be about what works for kids, not about how much to spend or who controls the purse strings. But basic issues of democracy and fairness tend to overshadow that right now.

- Steve Haynes



## Reader urges research GMOs

To the Editor, I would like to comment on Mike Callicrate's letter to the editor in *The Herald* Jan. 16.

Being in the natural health field for 34 years (I am a chiropractor), I have spent a lot of time studying my profession as well as nutrition.

Helping Dad on the farm in my early years, I understand more bushels equals more profit (or at

least enough cash flow to farm again next year). From the standpoint of decreasing costs and increasing yields sounds like a win/win situation. However, at what cost to society? If GMO doesn't affect our generation, it will certainly affect our future operations.

There are many reports out there

and that is why several countries have banned GMO's.

Please, do your research, look at websites like mercola.com and learn more about GMO. Let's leave the planet a better place than we found it.

Greg Peter  
Huntsville, Tex.

## Reader says snow dumped on sidewalk

When we moved back to St. Francis and bought our home it was with the understanding that we lived on a snow route. We THOUGHT we knew what that meant. Well, we were wrong. Evidently what it means is that all the snow from the west side of the hospital will end up on our sidewalk and lawn. This morning was really the frosting on the cake. At approximately 5:00 the City started plowing the street on the south side of the hospital - piling it up in the middle of the street and then loading and removing it. Then they plowed both the east and west side of the hospital. When they started on the west side of the

streets west. The last sweep that was made was fast enough that it threw the snow up onto the sidewalk and lawn. While that may not seem like a big deal to the City, it is to us. Especially since we are required to scoop our sidewalks in a timely manner after a snow. The few minutes that it might have saved the snow plow just doesn't seem necessary. We now have approximately a foot of snow on the sidewalk instead of the 5-6 inches we actually received. We hate to think how much there would be if we had actually had a foot of snow fall.

When this happened last year, we spoke to the City Manager and two of the City Council members. One of the responses we got was "we have heard that from several people" - not we will see how we can correct the situation. We were also told they would discuss it at the City Council meeting. Well, that didn't happen and to date - nothing has changed. It does seem that this problem should at least warrant a discussion in a City Council meeting and for them to resolve it. After all - that is what they are elected to do.

Thank you  
Shelly Klie

## Reader concerned about government

Kris Kobach (Letter 1/Mar/13)

When I voted -6- Nov-12 I knew all the elected officials and voters there (Bird City) - They all knew me. Pushing more rules and regulations on the people and government debt - taxation without representation and union dues to get a job and the cheat-off crowd seizing part of every sale of crops of livestock and Roe vs. Wade and farce of global warming and a foreign pipeline and depleting ground water (pumping it in the river) and spying on the phone and mail - shipping it all over - local mail should have a cheaper local only stamp and the mirage of raffles lotteries and insurance (it would buy a lot of necessities) and cost of using tax paid officials to force sell insurance - compulsory insurance shatters the

cornerstone of liberty, innocent till proven guilty and government taxing everybody to benefit any one and social security stealing savings - whose money was ever kept and returned too? Candidate deception and incumbent fraud and aliens and those who don't vote.....All super-

sede bloated ballot boxes! How many voters are voided by thy political zeal??? "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" Prov. 16:29

Frank Sowers  
Benkelman, Nebraska

## Casey's Comments

### Hitting the Hollywood Lottery

Phillip Seymour Hoffman won the lottery!

That would be the "Hollywood Lottery." As movie actors go he did very well. An Oscar winner, he could reap huge amounts of money while cherry picking what roles appealed to him. But that life led to an early grave following a drug overdose.

How often do we think, "If

only I could hit that million dollar jackpot, all my troubles would go away?" It is so easy to fall into the money-can-buy-happiness trap.

I'm as guilty as anyone. I need to check myself often to make sure the correct course in life is being followed.

When not, it's time to look at all I have right here and now.

By Casey McCormick



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God has certainly blessed me and I believe he will continue to come through.

Yes, living in the moment and realizing that life is pretty good now sure beats living the life of a celebrity or hitting the lotto.

## Thank you for clearing the roads

A great big thanks to our city, county and the state crews for the highways they plow for the great snow removal job they do

### Letter to the Editor

each winter around town. After seeing Atlanta turn into a parking lot with only 2-inches of snow we are certainly grateful for the speedy and excellent service we get here.

A modest request for the business folks on Main Street. Could those of you whose business is on the corners of Main Street please ask or remind your snow removal gang to clear the access ramps at the corners of the in-

tersections so those of us using them to access the sidewalks can navigate with our electric scooters...Mine doesn't have a snowplow attachment. It would be greatly appreciated.

Ron Ewing  
St. Francis



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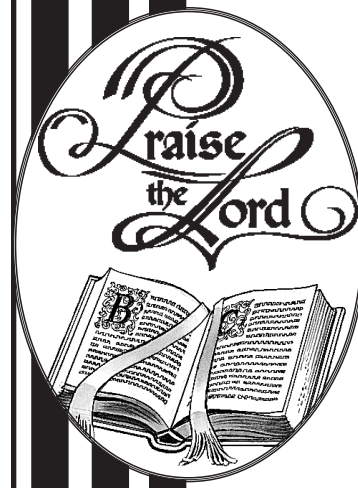
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