

School finance decision is no victory for anyone

The Kansas Supreme Court's school finance decision was no victory for the school districts looking to force another \$1 billion in state spending, but it doesn't appear to be much of a win for anyone else, either.

The carefully crafted ruling seems to have enshrined the status quo, where cuts in general school funding (and income taxes) made during the late recession survive - at least until the next governor and Legislature take a look at things.

The court, however, was careful to stake out authority over school spending, claiming a right to review the Legislature's work and to apply a constitutional standard to school spending.

It did not assert that authority in this case, as it did in the Montoy case a few years ago. It limited its decision to the equity of the school finance formula as it applies to local property taxes in two limited areas, the capital expenditure and local option funds each district maintains.

Poor districts, those with lower property valuation per student, are at an unfair disadvantage, the court said, because they cannot raise as much for these two funds as wealthy districts. That means these poorer districts may get more state money to spend, but overall, Kansas schools won't see much gain.

Gov. Sam Brownback saw the light and grabbed hold of the compromise offered by the court. He urged the Legislature to do likewise and quickly fix the inexpensive (an estimated \$129 million) equity problem, avoiding further litigation of this case, at least.

It's likely some sort of compromise can be

reached. If that happens, the court will have cut off much potential support for a Constitutional amendment to change the way justices are selected. Conservatives have pushed that, claiming the way things are done now leave the selection mostly in the hands the state's lawyers.

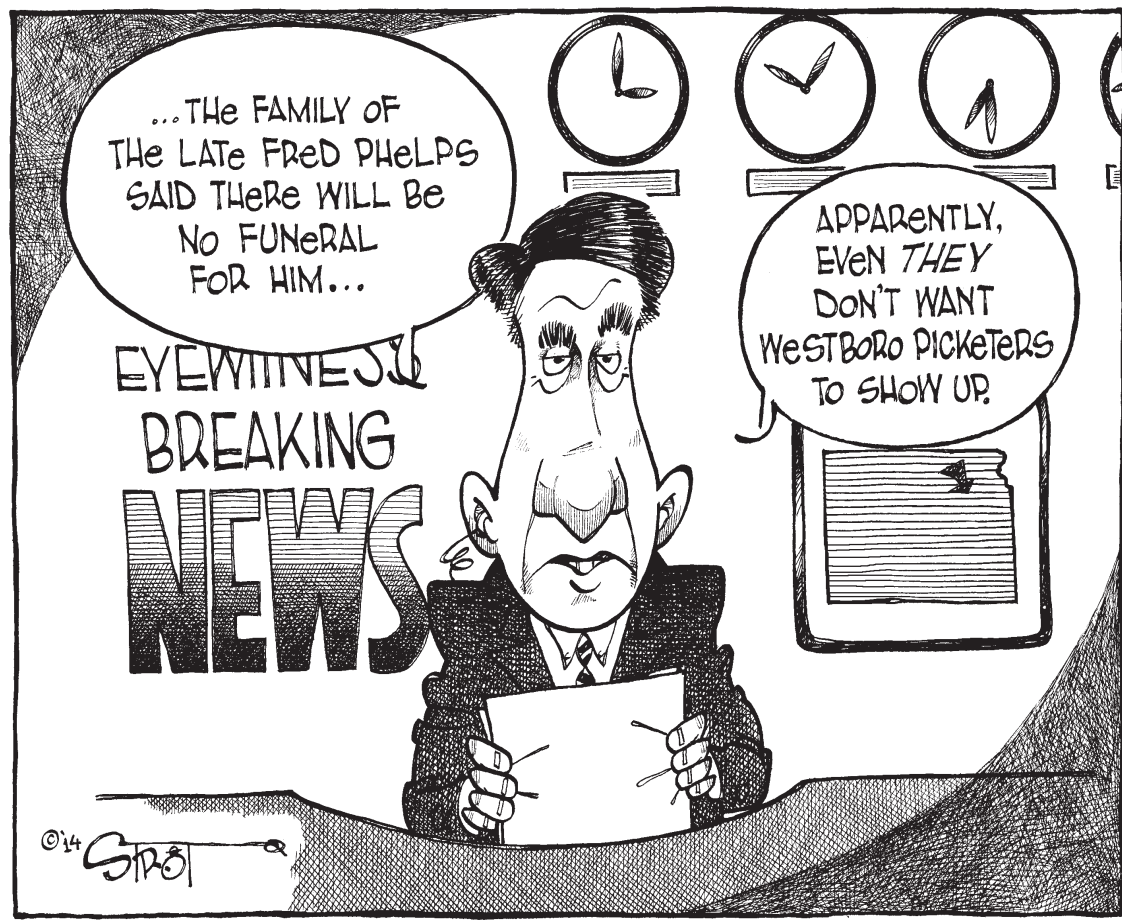
The court left authority over the school budget mostly in the Legislature's hands, not ordering a major increase the suit and its backers had sought. The state spends about \$3 billion a year on schools now, and backers - including the state's teachers' unions - had envisioned much more. Now chances for bigger, court-controlled school budgets may have slipped away.

Proponents of more spending, for schools and other state agencies, now must focus more on electing a more liberal governor and state legislators.

The campaign by Democrat Paul Davis of Lawrence to unseat Gov. Brownback has support from a few more liberal Republicans, including three members of the "Gang of Six" supporting Mr. Davis' campaign. But while Davis is drawing in a lot of outside money, it remains to be seen if his movement can sweep the governor out, let alone the Legislature.

At this point, we certainly wouldn't count Mr. Brownback out, and the conservative domination of the Legislature is strong and deep right now.

The high court seems to have both sides backing down from a legal fight and focused the state back on the electoral arena. And that is where such decisions should be made. - Steve Haynes



The Gardener

The benefits of Master Gardener classes

By Kay Melia



vkmelia@yahoo.com

As I speak today, there are dozens of devoted gardeners in our area and others who are spending valuable time in the classroom. There are housewives, retired businessmen, and maybe a few bachelors, all studying hard to learn more about their favorite hobby or pastime. These people will soon become known as Master Gardeners. They are spending these 45 to 50 hours of intense study, not only to increase their knowledge about the art of growing things, but also to give themselves a "heads up" on ways that they can help other people.

Master Garden trainees learn about lawn care, seed selection, weed control, fertilizer application, and soil building. And that's just a few of the facets of gardening that they learn. The program is available to all individuals whether they are active gardeners or not. All anyone needs is a desire to learn more and to help others. In Kansas, the cost is about \$90 for the entire course.

For less than a hundred bucks, these trainees are getting an absolute wealth of information that

is not available elsewhere. The Master Gardener training program is offered and supervised by the various state Research and Extension services. Here in Kansas, it is administered by Kansas State University in Manhattan, and in Colorado by Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

Here in Kansas, the Extension Service conducts the training classes in late winter at several alternating locations each year. This year in Kansas, the training is being conducted in Oakley, Liberal, and Salina, among other locations in the east. In Colorado, the training is conducted online at different times. Your Colorado Extension office has details.

Here in the Sunflower State, some of the University's finest talent are conducting the course, including Ward Upham and renowned Floriculturist, Dr. Alan Stevens.

One of the most valuable assets of the Master Gardener training program is the handbook that all trainees receive. It is a huge three ring notebook stuffed with every facet of the good things about learning how

to do the right thing in gardening. It is truly the Bible of gardening, and contains just about every subject pertaining to plant life. It is available nowhere else! I took the Master Gardening program 10 or 12 years ago and hardly a day goes by without referring to it. Ward Upham is the man who put it together, and still appears each year at the various sessions of the training program.

After receiving the Master Gardener designation, each graduate must give several hours of their time each year to help others in their effort to become a more efficient gardener. Becoming a Master Gardener is very simply the most significant 40 hours I have ever spent, and it came after the age of 70. I invite you to call your Extension office soon to find out where and when next year's training begins.

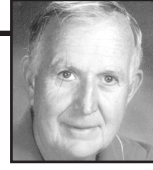
Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Wilma Lampe, St. Francis; Jon Magley, Bird City; Deloy Rogers, St. Francis; Kacey Harper, St. Francis; M.J. Day, St. Francis; Rodney Myers, St. Francis; Delores Wiley, St. Francis; Brendon Alsup, Scottsdale Ariz.; Rodney Radcliff, St. Francis; Morrow Garage, St. Francis; Heidi Tice, St. Francis; Stanley Lamb, St. Francis; Congressman Huleskamp, Dodge City; Marvin Orth, St. Francis; Roger Orth, St. Francis; Trista Orth, St. Francis; Norris Anderson, St. Francis; Gilbert Ochsner, St. Francis; Dave Hickert, Bird City; Edie Howard, Mission.

Legislative News

Education ruling may prove detrimental

By Ward Cassidy



120th State Representative

The Gannon decision sent the matter of determining adequacy of funding back to the District Court. The decision fundamentally shifts focus from money inputs to outcomes. The Supreme Court's decision rejected the District Court's ruling that "suitability" of education under the state constitution is determined only by a dollar amount. Instead, the Supreme Court instructed the District Court to look toward outcomes to determine adequacy. The District Court is instructed to examine Kansas public education by adequacy based on the Rose Standard, which is already contained in current Kansas statute.

on a Kentucky court case from 1977, and it states: "An efficient system of education must have as its goal to provide each and every child with seven components." I will not list the seven components. They can be found in the Kansas statutes.

This ruling is going to be the cause of much discussion. The Supreme Court, recognizing that the amount of money spent is not the sole determinant of adequacy of funding, indicates that the original school finance lawsuit known as Augenblick and Meyers is considered flawed. The Gannon decision clarified that school finance includes not only State General Fund spending (Base State Aid

Per Pupil), but all other funding sources. This includes the cost of the teachers' retirement plan, known as KPERS, capital outlay spending, local funding, transportation, and even federal funding.

My personal opinion is that school funding will be reduced, in the years to come, and that school consolidation will be at the forefront of many discussions. What might have seemed to be a windfall to those filing the lawsuit might very well prove detrimental to education.

Casey's Comments

Circus comes to town

By Casey McCormick



mccormickcasey@rocketmail.com

Plenty of dark news is filling the world of media lately. Missing jetliners, Russian imperialism and deadly mudslides, just to name a few of the top sad stories.

So it was nice to come across the escaped circus elephants in St. Louis.

This could have been an equally depressing event as three giant pachyderms from the Moolah Shrine Circus got spooked and took off into the parking lot of the Family Arena in St. Charles, Mo. Luckily they only managed to cause some mi-

nor damage to some cars before they were safely returned to a proper place.

It reminded me of the time the circus came to Bird City.

Several years ago a group of trucks was traveling East on U.S. 36 when one of them tried to pull into the parking lot where Frontier Ag and its gas station are now. The driver miss judged the turn and dropped one side of his semi's rear wheels into the drainage ditch.

What followed was a little bit of confusion as local authorities contacted a tow service and they

discovered that one of the circus drivers had an existing warrant out.

The truck was only transporting equipment as the animals either went through before or after these trucks. Eventually the semi was freed and the caravan continued on its way to a scheduled stop down the road. Not sure what happened to the fugitive from the law.

But I still think it qualified for having the circus in Bird City.

The Saint Francis Herald

(USPS 475-960)

A Century of Service to Cheyenne County

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050
Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices.

Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050



Nor'West Newspapers

8:30 a.m.-noon - 1:00-5:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday
(785) 332-3162 Fax - (785) 332-3001
E-mail - sf.herald@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Karen Krien Editor/Publisher
Doug Sloper Sports Editor
Tim Burr Advertising Manager
Amanda Miller News Writer
Doug Sloper Office Manager
Casey McCormick Columnist

GOD SAYS
Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope. Psalms 119:116

Church of Christ 332-2380, Pars. 332-3424 502 W. Spencer Norman Morrow - Minister Bible Class 9 a.m. Morning Worship 10 a.m.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church 625 S. River • 332-2680 Fr. Carlos Ruiz Santos 1st Sunday of the month Morning Mass 8:30 a.m. Sunday Mass 10:30 a.m. Weekday Mass 8:00 a.m. Confessions Sat. 4-4:30

United Methodist Church Office 332-2292, Church 332-2254, 512 S. Scott Pastor Warren Cico Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m. Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m.

Salem Lutheran Church 332-3002 Pastor Chris Farmer Morning Worship 10:30 a.m. Communion 3rd Sunday

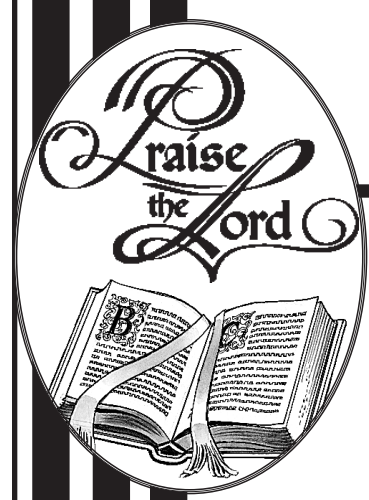
Solid Rock Baptist Church 412 S. Denison Welcomes You! Pastor Allen Coon Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 Prayer Meeting, Wed 7:30 p.m.

First Christian Church Pastor Jeff Landers 332-2956 • 118 E. Webster Bible Fellowship 9:15 a.m. Church Service 10:15 a.m.

First Baptist Church 2nd & Scott • 332-3921 J.W. Glidewell, Pastor Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m., Wed. AWANA Club 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

St. Francis Community Church 332-3150 204 N. Quincy Street www.sfccfamily.com Pastor: David Butler Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Potluck & Communion - Every 2nd Sunday Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.

Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC 202 N. College Pastor Randy Nelson Church 332-2928 Parsonage 332-2312 Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Communion 1st Sunday



St. Francis Equity

St. Francis Herald