

Open government achieves a milestone

Backers of open government achieved a milestone victory last week as the Kansas Legislature approved a compromise bill to open up affidavits filed to obtain arrest and search warrants, making Kansas the last state to make these public.

The bill had passed the House, but bogged down in the Senate over amendments that had nothing to do with these affidavits. In the time between the end of the regular session and the wrapup "veto" session, however, supporters got together with the state's prosecutors and came up with a compromise.

With backing from Speaker Ray Merrick, this version was adopted by a conference committee, then passed with Senate 40-0 and the House 123-1. It's not perfect; provisions allow prosecutors and defense attorneys to delay release as long as 10 days by asking for "redaction" of sensitive information such as Social Security and driver's license numbers, phone numbers and addresses and some police secrets. They can even ask the judge to seal the records for good.

However, the change represents a quantum step forward for Kansas, which had been the only state not to make these documents public. In federal court, for instance, they routinely posted in online files available to any user of the court's computer system. These sometimes make fascinating reading.

Prosecutors had opposed opening up the records, at least partly because they feared it could produce more pretrial publicity which might be endangering a defendant's right to a fair trial. Backers pointed out that wasn't likely,

since Kansas has never had a defendant released because of pretrial publicity.

Another argument was it would be a burden on the attorneys to go through every affidavit to seek redaction of specific items, but there's no requirement that either side do so.

A 10-day delay is less than perfect, but it's something people will have to put up with for now. Given some experience with the new law, it might be possible to cut that time down later.

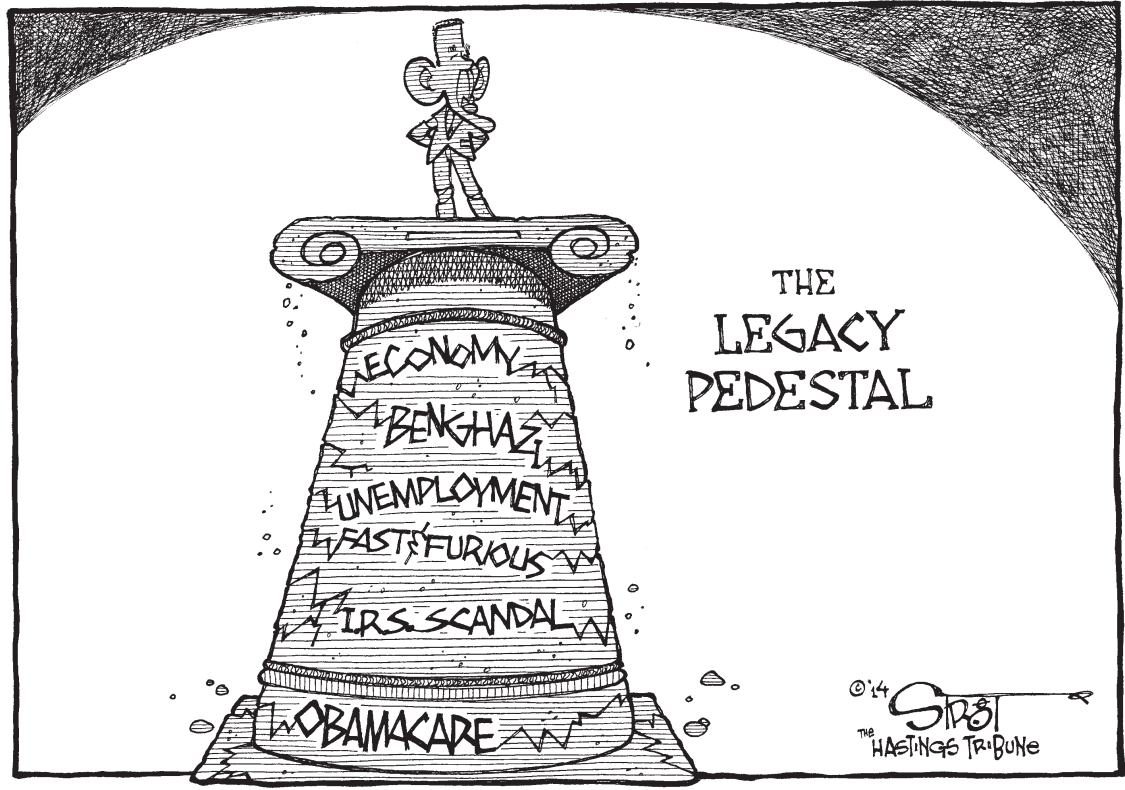
For now, it'll be possible for any citizen to get to the bottom of why someone was arrested or why a house was searched. That would have come in handy for the Kansas City-area family who wound up being held at gunpoint while drug agents ransacked their house.

After a year and thousands in legal fees, they found out it happened because they had bought supplies for their son to grow tomatoes in the basement. The cops thought, after searching their trash and finding wet tea leaves, that the couple was growing marijuana.

One real benefit for the public will be a source of honest, factual information about crimes major and minor, to replace the current flow of rumors. Prosecutors and defense attorneys will be able to turn questioners to this source and avoid making any comments, as court rules require.

Otherwise, in Kansas, it's sometimes six months to a year before citizens' legitimate questions about a crime can be answered. That's one reason why the Kansas Press Association was a major backer of this bill.

All in all, this law, which now awaits the governor's signature, is a major step forward for open government. — Steve Haynes



Reader is thankful for hospital

A Letter to the Editor, On Sunday, April 26, at 8:00 a.m. I got very sick and I knew something was very wrong. So my mother and I went to the hospital. As soon as I walked in the door a nurse asked if she could help and took me right into the ER. Then two more nurses came in and started checking me out. Shortly Dr. Miller showed up, and in a matter of minutes they had found

Letters to the Editor

I was having a heart attack. Dr. Miller and the whole staff were wonderful and calming. They got me ready for the plane ride to Kearney. St. Francis should be very proud and thankful for the wonderful staff we have at the hospital. They are the best! Thank you St. Francis for all the phone

calls, thoughts and prayers. You have no idea how much I miss the people of St. Francis. They are the best too. A Big Thank You to Mike, Kelly, Stan and Linda, don't know what I would have done without you.

Sincerely, Steve Orth

Reader gives Mother's Day tribute

Mom died in 2011, just 10 days after celebrating her 87th birthday. "Celebrating" is the correct term. She was at our home (which had become hers five months earlier) and in the company of Tony and I, her eldest daughter and husband (who had driven 500 miles for the weekend), and a three-year-old great-granddaughter. We ate, visited and played card games—a bit slower than in the past, but just like Mom always enjoyed.

Mom was a farm wife. She helped in the field when needed, had a large garden and raised chickens that supplied the majority of the family's needs, sewed most of her children's clothes, and passed on her strong Christian faith to her children and grandchildren.

She and Dad raised nine kids, none of whose pictures ever appeared on the "10 Most Wanted" posters.

The last 35 years was done alone. Dad died in 1976. Four of my siblings had not yet graduated high school, the youngest was 9 years old. Mom cared for Dad at home during his four-year battle with cancer.

I never heard Mom complain. She never truly was "alone". She enjoyed being surrounded by family, hosting family gatherings, cooking impromptu meals for a "crowd", and playing card games with her kids, grandkids, and even great grandkids. Children's play and laughter would bring a smile to her face, often accompanied by a chuckle.

I don't think Mom ever considered any of this as a hardship, it's just what you do in life.

And yet, Mom wasn't that unusual. Everyone has a story to tell about their mother, the sacrifices made, values taught, and love shown in so many ways. Perhaps the years are taking their toll, the vigor is gone, her shoulders stoop a bit more, and her movements get slower and more deliberate with each passing year. Yet, when you think of everything she has done for you throughout the years, you gotta' love her!

Mother's Day is May 11, let your Mom know she's still special to you.

—Joan Gienger

Cheyenne County Kansans for Life

Casey's Comments

Education Never Ends

By Casey McCormick

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So, what have you learned lately? I hope you will agree that an education never ends. My thoughts are that we are built to continue to question and find answers to the world around us. And the process never ends.

Much of my continuing ed comes through books.

For instance, I finally figured out who the Scotch-Irish (or Scots-Irish) are. Probably not a bad idea since they're a big part of my makeup.

English King James I, back in the early 1600s, had a problem which would last for centuries. What to do about the rebellious, Gaelic speaking, devout Catholic people of Northern Ireland?

His plan was to begin a new colony using lowland Scots and boarder English, who were Protestant, in a large area called the Ulster Plantation.

These people were used to fighting and staying together, so they adapted well in the hostile environment. As it was, they were not treated much better by the crown than the existing Irish. So when the opportunity came to keep moving on to the New World these Scotch-Irish sailed across the Atlantic.

Coincidentally, the established hierarchy in the American colonies had the same idea of placing these people along the western boarders of the expanding coastal regions so they could take care of another difficult group who stood in the way of colonial growth: the Native American Indians.

Needless to say, the Scotch-Irish were a good fit here also, but they, along with other colonists, grew tired of taking orders from an English king and the rest is his-

tory.

My hope is that we are not like a bunch of mindless jelly fish floating around in an ocean of nothingness as we pass the time of existence.

So I ask again, what have you learned lately?



By Casey McCormick
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Dear Editor, I am writing this letter in hopes of raising awareness for something near and dear to my heart. May is Melanoma Cancer Awareness Month.

In January, my 30 year old sister went in to the doctor for a kidney infection and was diagnosed with melanoma cancer that metastasized to her brain, liver, kidney, both lungs are full of spots, spine, collarbone, and some tissue (elevation places in all).

She had been diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer seven years ago and after they removed it, told to see her dermatologist every six months, which she has done. However, she was not being scanned and checked to see if she had it internally because she was not told to.

She is fighting the FIGHT of her life and her main request has been, get the word out to educate people about melanoma. There is a misconception that it is only skin can-

cer. It is so much more and it can be one of the deadliest forms of cancers because it's not usually found early when it is internal. Please do monthly skin checks from head to toe and see a dermatologist yearly. If you have ever had melanoma skin cancer, please talk to your doctor about being scanned for internal melanoma and have see an oncologist for the rest of your life. They will catch things with a PET scan that a dermatologist wouldn't find. It could save your life.

If we can save even one person, it's worth sharing her story with a million people. Educate yourself and your loved ones.

The black ribbon represents Melanoma Awareness. Thank you. —Angela Bonham Goodland, Kansas



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GOD SAYS All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. II Timothy 3:16

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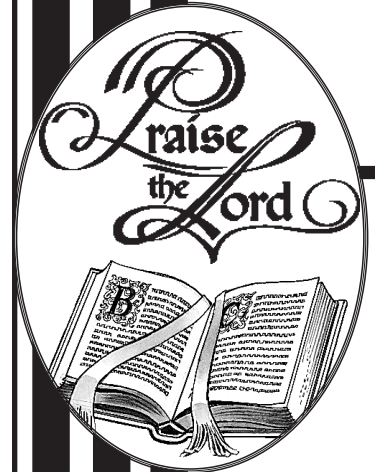
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