

St. Francis candidate's proposal sparks hot debate across state

Editor's note: The following article was taken from The Colby Free Press.

Superintendent Milt Pippenger knows some of the children in his Garden City school district are the children of illegal or undocumented immigrants.

If one State Board of Education candidate got her wish that wouldn't be the case, even though a 20-year-old U.S. Supreme Court ruling prohibits public schools from denying immigrant students access to a public education.

Connie Morris of St. Francis proposes barring the children of illegal immigrants from attending public schools, saying the cost of educating them was draining away state tax dollars. The Republican candidate has no Democratic challenger in the general election.

Morris, a teacher, has said she's aware of the court ruling on the subject. "We'll cross that bridge when we get to it," she said.

Differing responses to the proposal came from candidates in the governor's race.

Republican Tim Shallenburger said, "Ask me in a week. I have to think about it."

Democrat Kathleen Sebelius believes Kansas should provide an education to undocumented immigrant children.

"We have an obligation to educate every child living in Kansas, period," said Sebelius spokeswoman Nicole Corcoran-Basso.

School officials like Pippenger are caught in the middle of the debate. More than half of his 7,900 students are Hispanic, with other students from southeast Asia, Africa and Europe.

Many of the families were attracted to high-paying jobs at the ConAgra meat packing plant in Garden City. They stayed in the southwest Kansas town even after the plant was destroyed in a December 2000 fire.

Pippenger said he would continue teaching the children of illegal immigrants, even if federal law didn't require it.

"From a moral standpoint, I owe it to educate every youngster living in my district," he said. "They have no control over what their circumstances are."

He's backed by people like Joseph Berra, an attorney with the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in San Antonio.

Berra said the question of providing public school education to immigrants had been resolved with the 1982 Supreme Court decision. He suggested that the only reason it may become a question in Kansas is because of the increasing number of

immigrants.

"It's an indication how some irrational fears and prejudices against immigrants have come back into our culture to the point that issues that have been settled for 20 years are now live issues. Maybe Kansas is experiencing more recently an influx of immigrants that has driven some concerns about undocumented immigrants," Berra said.

The Hispanic population in the state has exploded, more than doubling between 1990 and 2000. Hispanics now make up 7 percent of Kansas' population.

Supporters of educating the children of undocumented workers argue that their parents pay taxes. Many of the parents and their children eventually become citizens, they say, and with their education improve the labor force.

But groups that want restrictions on immigration side with Morris.

"The country should focus on giving the best education to the children who are here legally; the children whose families have a stake in the United States," said David Ray, a spokesman for the Washington, D.C.-based Federation for American Immigration Reform.

"People who can be deported tomorrow and have no ties to this country, it's debatable whether taxpayers should spend a dime on them."

Book Review

St. Francis Public Library
A Midwinter's Tale

By Andrew Greeley

With his unique blend of humor, Irish-American charm, and unmatched point of view, Father Andrew M. Greeley continues to attract a new generation of readers and delight his legion of loyal fans. *A Midwinter's Tale* is the first volume in the twentieth-century saga of the O'Malley family of Chicago. Moreover, it is the lighthearted yet ultimately poignant story of Charles Cronin O'Malley's coming of age on that same city's West Side—and is postwar Germany.

In high school, Charles, "Chucky" Cronin O'Malley is a short, wiry youth with flaming red hair and a gift for the blarney. Too small for the important positions on the football

team, he is the ball holder on kickoffs and an honorary "fourth string" quarterback. He becomes a legend when a comedy of errors and lucky mistakes helps him lead his team to the city championship.

After graduation in 1946, he joins the Army and becomes a wisecracking clerk-typist in Bamberg, Germany, under (far under) General Eisenhower. The war is over, but the aftermath is a dangerous and heartrending time: Hunger is everywhere, the black market is booming, government agents are hunting down refugees for the ruthless Russians, and everywhere the streets are filled with human suffering.

All Chucky wants out of life is to go to Notre Dame, become an accountant, and have a nice, orderly life, but the Deity seems to have other

plans for him. Again and again his courage and compassion get him into impossible scrapes—with black marketeers, border patrols, his commanding officer, and the U.S. Army. Only his trademark combination of quick wit and blind luck (and maybe a little Heavenly intervention) sees him safely out of harm's way.

Except when beautiful seventeen-year-old Trudi needs rescuing from black marketeers and protection from the Army. It's impossible for him to fall head over heels in love. Or is it lust?

And what of a certain Rosemarie Clancy back home? He's never admitted he loves her.

But sure, and isn't that a story for another day? The O'Malleys have a lot of living to do...

Wal-Mart relies on groceries to shield against slowdown

By Rachel Katz

Wal-Mart Stores Chief Executive H. Lee Scott has opened about three warehouse-size stores each week since May. Some investors, concerned consumers are reducing spending, say he should keep up the pace.

These so-called supercenters, which include supermarkets, are part of Mr. Scott's strategy of encouraging consumers to do their grocery shopping at the world's largest retailer in the hope they'll pick up other products as well. He plans to open almost four times as many supercenters this year as regular Wal-Mart stores, which are about half the size.

Using groceries to attract customers more often is key for Mr. Scott to meet his goal of increasing earnings at the same rate as sales in a faltering economy, some investors said.

"Even when the economy's bad, you're going to buy toothpaste," said Maureen Depp, who helps manage \$48.8 billion in assets at State Street Research and Management Co., which owns about 4.33 million Wal-Mart shares. Wal-Mart is "in the best position possible, because of the high proportion of basic goods."

The Bentonville, Ark.-based discounter said second-quarter net income will at least meet its forecast of 44 cents to 45 cents a share even after July sales missed expectations. Analysts expect Wal-Mart to report profit of 45 cents today, according to Thomson First Call.

Low Prices

People will shop at Wal-Mart in a slowing economy because of low prices, investors said. A prolonged economic stumble may hurt because shoppers probably will skip more-profitable items such as televisions, they said.

"If there's a broad consumer slowdown, Wal-Mart's going to be affected," said Erik Becker, an analyst with Waddell and

Reed, which owned about 1 million Wal-Mart shares among \$26 billion in assets as of March.

Wal-Mart shares have fallen 16 percent this year, while the Standard and Poor's 500 Index has dropped 21 percent. No. 2 U.S. discounter Target Corp. has shed 22 percent.

Shares of Wal-Mart fell 79 cents to \$48.41 on Aug. 12. They have declined 25 percent since Mr. Scott took over in January 2000.

Consumer spending rose at a 1.9 percent annual rate in the quarter, the slowest pace since the third quarter of 2001, the U.S. Commerce Department said. Consumer confidence fell in July by the most in nine months, according to economic consulting firm Conference Board.

Wal-Mart's sales at stores open at least a year in July rose 4.5 percent, less than the company's predicted 5 percent to 7 percent. The increase was triple the industry's rise, which was 1.5 percent when Wal-Mart is excluded, according to Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi.

Bond Sale

Bond investors have bet Wal-Mart can maintain profit levels in an economic slowdown.

Wal-Mart last month sold \$1 billion of five-year debt at an annual interest payment, or coupon, of 4.38 percent. At the time, the interest payment was lower than that on all 384 corporate debt securities of similar maturity in Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc.'s U.S. Credit Index.

Mr. Scott declined to be interviewed, said spokesman Tom Williams. The 53-year-old executive was paid \$3.14 million in salary, bonus and other compensation last year, along with \$5 million in restricted stock.

The company missed Mr. Scott's goal of boosting earnings at the same rate as sales in 2001, when profit rose 6 percent and sales gained 14 percent. In the first quarter, profit jumped 20 percent while sales climbed 14 percent.

Grocery bills

Wal-Mart, with sales of \$218 billion last year, had 3,313 stores in the U.S. at the end of July, including 1,156 supercenters and 512 Sam's Club warehouse stores. The company also has more than 1,200 stores outside the country.

Mr. Scott also is testing traditional grocery stores called Neighborhood Markets. Wal-Mart's low prices enable people to cut their grocery bills by as much as 20 percent, analysts said.

"They're going to buy less, but what they do buy, they'll buy at Wal-Mart," said David Abella, an analyst with Rochdale Investment Management, whose \$1 billion in assets included 120,000 Wal-Mart shares.

Wal-Mart began using groceries to help insulate it from economic slowdowns in the early 1980s. Mr. Scott plans to open as many as 185 supercenters this year, an increase from 178 in 2001.

Rival Target, which doesn't offer as many groceries, is more susceptible to a slowdown because it sells a larger portion of discretionary fashion items, analysts said. Same-store sales at Target's discount stores rose 2.2 percent in July. Kmart Corp. filed for bankruptcy in January after trying to match Wal-Mart's low prices.

Non-essential furniture

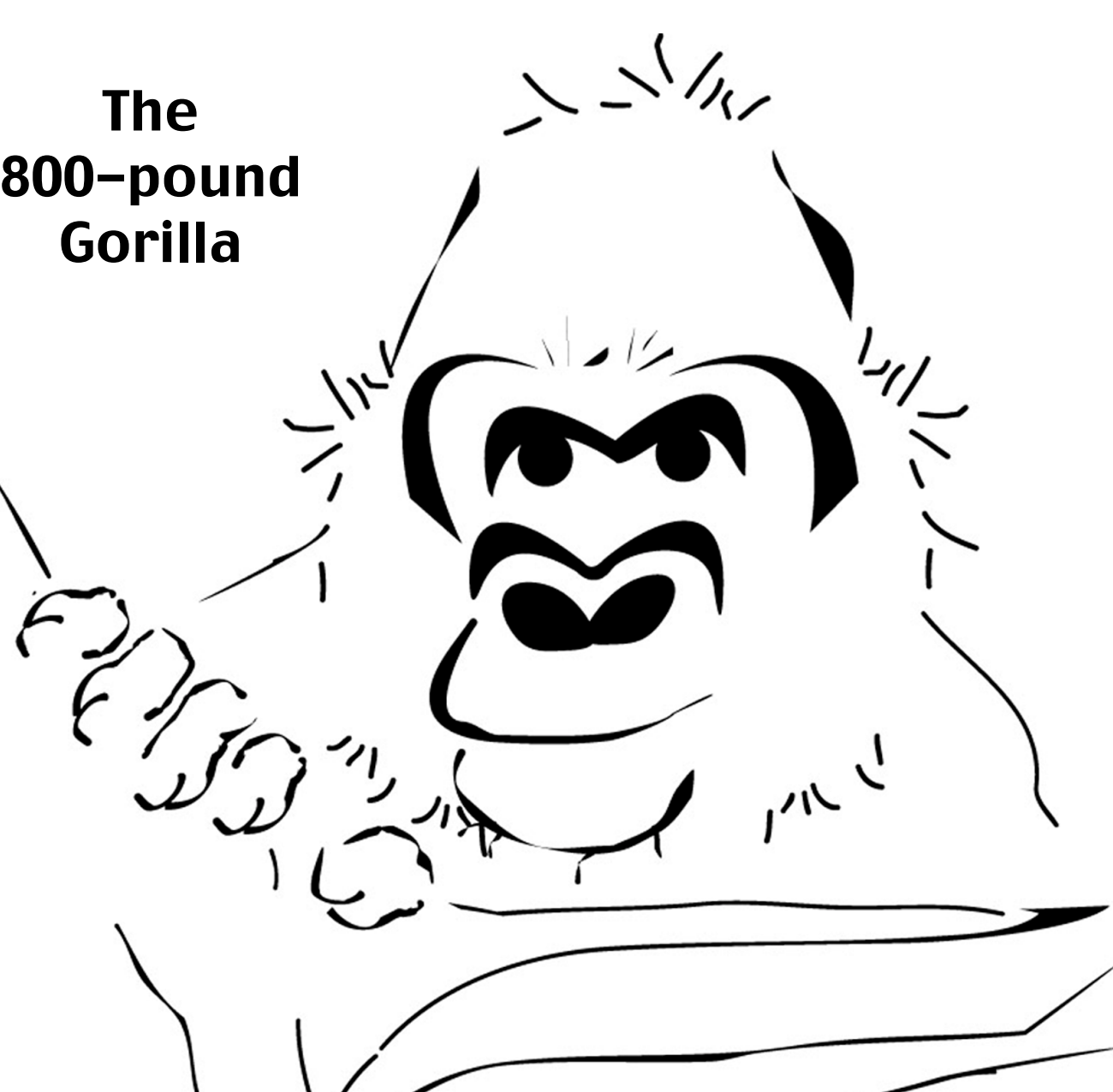
Wal-Mart's reliance on groceries, which are typically low-margin, may backfire in an extended slowdown, investors said. Wal-Mart needs to sell non-essential items such as patio furniture to meet Scott's earnings goal, they said.

"If consumers weaken dramatically, some of the bigger ticket items at Wal-Mart would suffer first," said Keith Goddard, director of research at Capital Advisors, whose \$900 million in assets include about 1.1 million Wal-Mart shares.

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