

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint

Raising speed limit is another bad idea

The Kansas Legislature hasn't done much so far this year, but sometimes that's for the best. The Legislature, so far, can't agree on school finance or gambling or a budget. It's saving those for the final minutes, when the worst laws are passed without much question. Right now, the Legislature is stalled on a bill to raise the 70-mile-an-hour speed limit on Kansas freeways. It's a bad idea, but there's some danger they will pass it anyway. This plan is being pushed by shadowy forces who claim that the difference between driving 70 in Kansas and 75 in Nebraska is keeping business away from our state. One sponsor, Sen. Robert Tyson, a Parker Republican, claims there is twice as much truck traffic on I-80 in Nebraska as there is on I-70 in Kansas. He's probably right, by the way, and we'd suggest that if he likes that, he go drive around in Nebraska on weekends. If you've been there, you know what we mean. The road is rough and pitted, traffic is awful and a person in a small car is fearful. Do we want that for I-70, I-35, U.S. 81 and K-10? More road damage, higher taxes, more accidents, big repair bills? Never mind that truckers and tourism officials, when someone asks, say they don't mind the slightly lower limit. Never mind that travel-center workers say almost no one calls to ask about the speed limit here when planning a trip. Never mind that many, especially those with green-and-white tags, already drive well past 70 on our freeways today. Never mind that the Kansas Highway Patrol says all raising the speed limit will do is cause more and more severe accidents. But do mind this: The 70 m.p.h. limit was written with rural Kansas in mind. Legislators wanted to keep the differential between two-lane roads at 65 m.p.h. and the Interstates at 70 to a minimum to encourage people to spread out and put some of the traffic back on the blue highways. There may be some pressure to drive faster and burn more gas on the freeways, but we don't see it out here. So do we want more and faster trucks tearing up I-70 and frightening our tourists anyway? Or do we want the safe and responsible drivers we have now, running 70 m.p.h. clear across the state? Like we said, sometimes that Legislature is best that does the least. With any luck, this turkey is done for the year.

Steve Haynes
Nor'West Newspapers

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- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorrison@ink.org web:http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
- State Sen. Stan Clark**, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: sclark@ink.org

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When an issue isn't an issue

THIS morning my e-mail load numbered only 296 — the number of messages coming in overnight. Three of them dealt with a “Conservative Alert” — a message from the American Conservative Union. This one is taking to task the Secretary of the Senate (?) for not docking Sen. John Kerry for the number of votes he is missing in the United States Senate as he barnstorms across the country seeking votes for the Nov. 2 election. The e-mail rambles on and on and on about Kerry's absence and says that “if a Senator is absent while the Senate is in session, his pay MUST be docked for every day he is AWOL.” Maybe it says this, maybe it doesn't. I haven't the slightest idea. But a no-brainer response would be this: if the U.S. Senate can set its own salary (which it does), raise its pay whenever it deems necessary (which it does), then it certainly could also skirt the rules punishing an absent member (only illness allows for an absence, the e-mail says) while the senators are in session. And I would also imagine that Sen. Kerry is not the only one who is violating the rules, if in fact these are the rules and I don't know if they are because I am not — and I am sure you aren't either — privy to those U.S. Senate rules. I have never in the past heard about senators being docked for days absent. The e-mail doesn't identify the secretary of the senate. I wish they would because I would like to contact that person. I smell something sour here, quite frankly. Probably the reason that rule isn't enforced, if there is such a rule, is because the secretary of the senate would probably be overwhelmed docking paychecks of violating senators. And I also wonder if this wasn't an issue with Sen. John McCain when he was actively seeking the presidential nomination on the Republican ticket four years ago. He certainly violated that rule on occasion. Or is it that we are just “select” in screaming for enforcement. Folks, it is



Tom Dreiling

• My Turn

just another campaign ploy...plain and simple. I use Sen. McCain as an example, not out of dislike because I admire that gent more than any other in the United States Senate. So, maybe the ACU — as in American Conservative Union — will need to shop around for another election year issue, which this is all about. I would advise my Republican and Democrat friends to look beyond the babble. Stick with the issues, forget the sideshows, which this Senate AWOL thing is. I'm more concerned with how candidates stand on issues I think important — the rural economy, for example, restrictive exports, outsourcing, health care, the federal deficit, pork barrel projects — the list is endless. I don't give a hill of beans whether Kerry is playing hookey or not. I do care how he stands on the issues that directly affect the pocketbooks of every person in Thomas County, and our neighboring counties. That's what I care about. And that's what the American Conservative Union should also care about.

AND on the tube this morning I was watching a general with what looked like a zillion stars on his shoulder try to convince me that extending the tour of duty for thousands of American soldiers in Iraq is okay. They're okay with it, he said. Sure they are, their choice in the matter is...well, there is no choice. I was in the mili-

tary — an 8-year commitment — and I fully understand that orders are orders. But I dislike someone like that guy spinning this issue like we're a bunch of dummies. Those troops are disappointed, they aren't dancing in the streets. I just once wish that the spokesmen for the Pentagon would become a bit more like we real humans are. Admit we have a problem and go find a solution.

NOW, for something on the lighter side. Take your time and see if you can read each line aloud without a mistake. The average person can't. Some of the wording is clumsy, but for a reason. Allow 40 seconds.

This is this cat
This is is cat
This is how cat
This is to cat
This is keep cat
This is an cat
This is old cat
This is person cat
This is busy cat
This is for cat
This is forty cat
This is seconds cat
Now go back and read the THIRD word in each line from the top down.
I'm an old person, it kept me busy for at least that long.

HAVE a good evening and a good weekend! And spend a little time in your house of worship this weekend.

Tom Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Wednesdays and Fridays. E-mail td@nwkansans.com, fax (785) 462-7749 or visit with him at his office at 155 W. 5th.

Arbor Day...and more

Sharon Steele, a member of the Colby Tree Board, dropped by the office for a visit earlier in the week. And of course we talked about trees. In her possession was an article-of-sorts about Arbor Day 2004, which, incidentally is rapidly approaching. She wanted to share the information tucked under her arm on that piece of paper with each of you. So, item #1 in this Friday's column is about Arbor Day 2004.

The last Friday of April — April 30 this year — is designated as National Arbor Day. This year Colby will have observances in two locations. The city ceremony will be in Fike Park, followed by a county event at the Thomas County Office Complex at 350 South Range.

The Colby Tree Board, in conjunction with Mr. Baker's fifth grade class will hold the city observance at 10 a.m. in Fike Park. Plans include transplanting a tree from the city tree farm at the airport to Fike Park. Former tree board members Herb Sunderman, Bill Piper and Jim Tubbs, along with the fifth grade class are to be special guests for the event. Mayor Hixson will participate in the ceremony.

The fifth graders have obtained a grant to pay for the costs of transplanting and planting new trees as part of the continuing maintenance and replacement of park trees.

Several Honey Locust trees, which appear to have been part of the original park plantings before 1912, were removed this spring because of old age, and the ceremonial tree will be one of the replacements.

Following that a second event will be held at the Thomas County Office Complex where a tree will be planted in the front lawn area. This will be part of a statewide tree planting effort in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Kansas Territory.

TD

• At Week's End

Current tree board members are: Vernon Flanagin, Mark Blatt, Marvin Bickner, Mike Woolfer and Sharon Steele.

You folks might want to circle those dates, times and locations on your calendar and make a special effort to attend. Sharon and the other members of the tree board, in conjunction with those fifth graders, have and continue to be busy planning for these two observances. Western Kansas isn't a tree-abundant territory, and the efforts of those on such organizations as tree boards, and students so interested, are to be applauded. Fifty years from now, those fifth graders will be able to look at those trees planted in their time with special pride. If you want to seek additional information at this time on the two observances, e-mail Sharon Steele at psteele@we.rr.com, or call 462-2558. -TD

Here's a little bit of 'Geriatric Humor':
On aging...

Eventually you will reach a point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it.

How old would you be if you didn't know how old you are?
When you are dissatisfied and would like to go back to the days of your youth, think of Algebra.

aging is that it is such a nice change from being young.

Ah, being young is beautiful, but being old is comfortable.

Old age is when former classmates are so gray and wrinkled and bald, they don't recognize you.

If you don't learn to laugh at trouble, you won't have anything to laugh at when you are old.

First you forget names, then you forget faces. Then you forget to pull up your zipper. It's worse when you forget to pull it down.

The Church Bulletin's bloopers note:
√A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.

√Potluck supper Sunday at 5 p.m. Prayer and medication to follow.

√Our "Low Self Esteem Support Group" will meet Thursday at 7 p.m.. Please use the back door.

√The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

√The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Church basement Friday at 7 p.m. The Congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

√This evening at 7 o'clock there will be a hymn sing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

√For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

√Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.

√Don't let worry kill you off — let the Church help.

Got something for "At Week's End?" E-mail td@nwkansans.com, fax 462-7749 or drop it off at the office or mail to 155 W. 5th, Colby 67701.