

# Opinion



## A Kansas Viewpoint

### Legislators may say “Bring it on”

From The Wichita Eagle

With the 2006 Legislature having used up 68 of its allotted 90 days, there remains no clear answer on whether K-12 public schools will get the millions of dollars more called for by the Legislative Division of Post Audit and the Kansas Supreme Court.

The reasons to wonder multiplied last week.

House leaders had proposed an imperfect three-year, \$500 million plan. But by the time it emerged from the Select Committee on School Finance, it was a one-year, \$175 million plan (albeit with provisions that would mean more funding in later years). And the Senate Education Committee last week narrowly passed a flawed three-year, \$660 million plan favored by Senate leaders — but there is no clear strategy in that chamber for how to fund the second and third years, the preferred gambling expansion having gone down in flames.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has said approving things about both chambers’ multiyear plans, though how even those would be viewed by the Supreme Court is uncertain: Can an unconstitutional situation be gradually remedied?

Meanwhile, the forces of resistance have been gathering strength, most notably conservative Republicans who contend the state budget and economy can’t withstand anything more than a one-year increase paid for by existing revenues.

Of course, if lawmakers try to stand their ground against the Supreme Court, they will be rejecting the hard work and clear conclusions of the Legislature’s own respected auditors. The January post audit report didn’t say it would be nice if public schools got more money. It said public schools need \$400 million more from the state just to pay for what they’re doing now, and that \$470 million more would be necessary to enable schools to meet escalating state and federal test-score mandates.

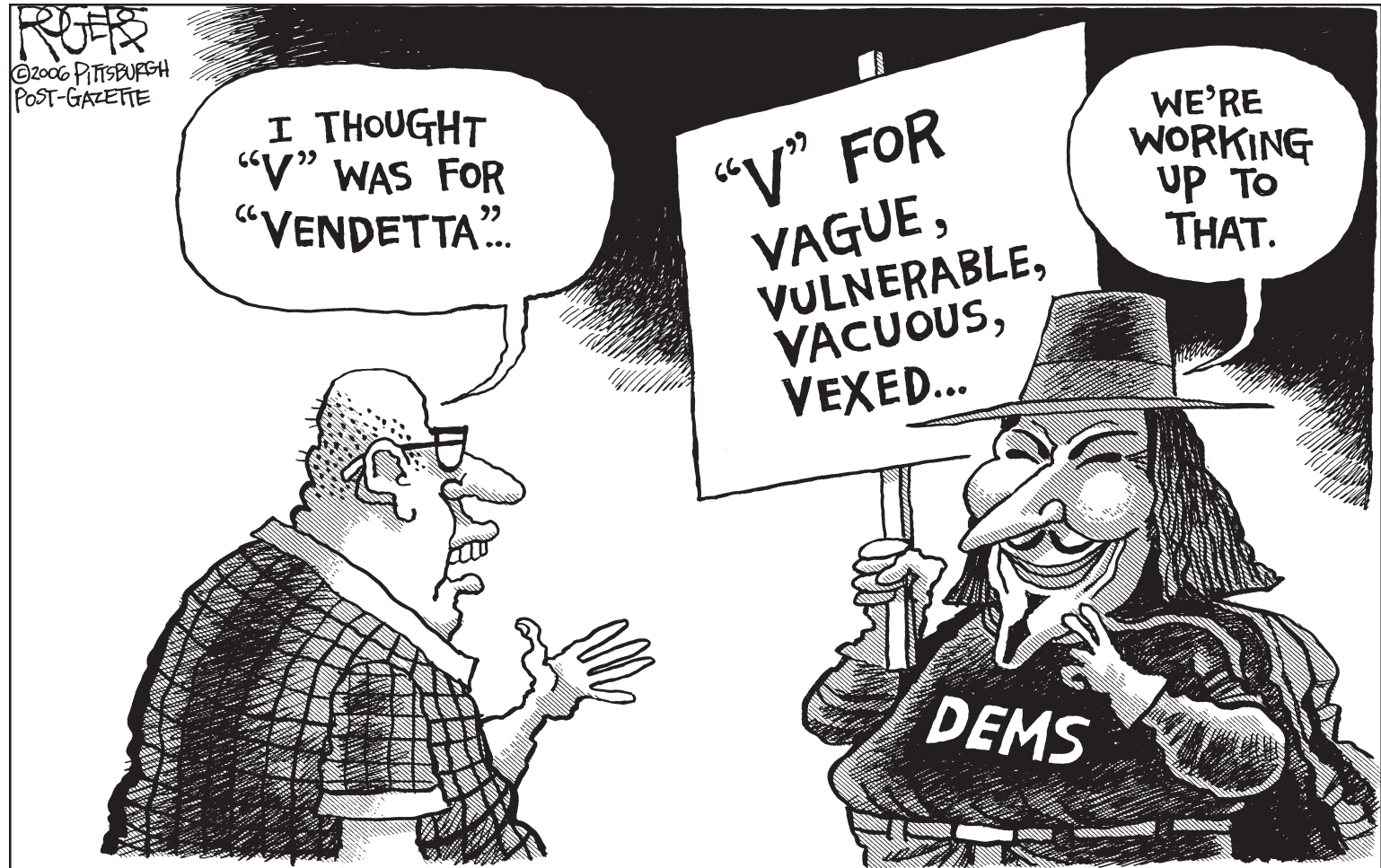
The auditors were unequivocal, just like the Supreme Court and a District Court judge before them.

So if legislators pass a small one-year plan, they will be telling the Supreme Court, “Bring it on.” And they likely will invite another costly early summer special session in Topeka, election year or not.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail [jvannostrand@nwkansas.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansas.com) or [pdecker@nwkansas.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansas.com).

#### Where to write, call

**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**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124  
**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) web: [www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison](http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison)  
**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 [ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)



## Pictures don’t lie

What a whopper that storm was! I checked with the National Weather Service in Goodland and it seems Colby got its second highest amount of snow on record Monday. Scott Blair at the weather service said there was a whopping 13 inches in some parts of town, compared to the Oct. 25, 1997, blizzard that dumped 19 inches of the white stuff.

I recall a similar blizzard in 1957 from photos my parents took when I was 2-years-old and growing up in southwestern Kansas.

Photos showed awnings from numerous downtown businesses strewn in front of buildings and piles of snow in the center of streets where city workers had put it.

The Great Blizzard of 1957 in the southern part of the state started just like northwestern Kansas’ blizzard of 2006.

First there was the rain. The rain started falling March 19 here, and March 20 there in 1957.

By March 21, people were shoveling 10 to 13 inches of snow this year; compared to March 25, 1957 they were shoveling 25 inches.

My folks’ photos showed cars being almost completely buried, not quite as bad this time here in the northwest.

While it made some people upset, Colby officials Monday banned driving for those without chains or four-wheel-drive. Smart thinking on their part to help avoid accidents, but it sure rattled some folks.

I heard gripes and complaints from various individuals who couldn’t get out and drive Monday. I, for one, was thrilled to hunker down and stay inside and work.

I jokingly told Steve Haynes I was the only person on staff who couldn’t be told to go home



#### Jan Katz Ackerman

- From Where I stand

during bad weather. I was already home!

It’s time like these that one of my largest pet peeves surfaces — people out on the roads who don’t absolutely have to be there.

My theory is leave the dedicated law enforcement and emergency medical staff, as well as state and local worker removing snow alone to do their jobs. Why make it worse on them and ourselves by being out and about?

Oh sure, I’ve done my share of being out in storms reporting and taking photos for the newspaper, but other than that I try and respect those people having to work in less than great weather conditions.

Goes back to my question, why make it worse? If I’ve said it once I’ve said it a thousand times, God will take care of us, but He certainly expects us to use some common sense.

Going back to the weather service, Blair gave me an interesting Web site you might find of interest. It’s the weather service site in Goodland and it’s [www.crh.noaa.gov/gld](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/gld).

And by the way, have a great time shoveling out from the moisture!

How about Lynette Ball of Menlo being inducted into the Kansas Amateur Softball

Association’s Hall of Fame? Little did I know before I interviewed her that we had such an athletic woman among us.

Ball, for most of her life, has been an avid athlete and as an adult has carried her love of sports into her every day life.

Great going Lynette.

About six weeks ago I noted in the confines of this column that Sappa Valley Youth Ranch was being closed by its operators, Topeka-based Kelley Detention Services.

Well, Rep. Dick Kelsey, a Republican of Goddard, has stepped up to the plate and is renting the facility located just east of Oberlin. If you haven’t ever been to the site, I’d strongly recommend asking for a tour of it.

Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, now to be known as Kings Camp, will take on Kelsey’s Christian devotion and become a faith-based camp for troubled teen boys age 9 to 18.

I was impressed when I talked to Kelsey about the fact his first action at the camp will be to create a chapel. A minister and businessman, Kelsey said he’s actively seeking a part-time chaplain to minister to the boys and staff at the camp starting next month when it opens.

I can’t think of this move by Kelsey as anything but an answer to prayer. No stranger to being around youth, Kelsey and his wife, Doris, having raised six children and training up eight grandchildren, is wished the best by me.

I’ll leave you now with a quote from Garrison Keilor, “God writes a lot of comedy... the trouble is, he’s stuck with so many bad actors who don’t know how to play funny.”

## Your turn

### How the man votes

Pam Pohly

Hayes

Last night, Congressman Moran had an hour on TV. I hoped he’d use this time to tell us why he votes the way he does in Congress. Not much talk about that.

Instead, Moran spoke philosophically about things he sort of wants, things he believes, things he’d maybe love to see happen, in the future, if things were different. He portrayed Washington as if all things there are way beyond his control.

He spoke like just an observer in Washington, on the sidelines even. Not like a salaried legislator accounting for his actions to the people who put him in office.

He’s not really an observer. Moran makes laws in Congress. He votes. He legislates. Voting and legislating are critically important to all of us. We hired him to do that. His actions directly impact us everyday - and impact the people we care most about.

Some say it’s always been this way with Moran — mysterious. The man talks - but if you want to know what he does, you won’t hear it. Instead, they say, you need to look closely at what he votes for. To know how he votes is to truly know the man.

Moran told viewers that he cares about education. This February, Moran voted to cut funding to student loans by \$12.7 billion dollars. It is the largest single cut the federal government has ever made to student aid and is expected to increase the debt burden for students and their

families. Surely some will drop out. Rather than cutting lender subsidies, the bill derives its savings by forcing borrowers to pay excessive interest rates on their loans and increasing interest rates for parent borrowers. \$12.7 billion gone from education.

On that TV program, a caller asked Moran what he knew about getting help with child support collection. This caller seemed a gentle person, kind, trusting. Moran casually waved her question aside, saying that child support enforcement is the responsibility of the state and not Congress.

What didn’t he say? In November, Moran voted to cut \$24 billion dollars from the child support enforcement funding given to state programs. Congress has always covered 88 percent of the costs of state child support enforcement and recently slashed it to 66 percent with the help of Moran’s vote in February. Congress now estimates that the cuts Moran voted for will mean a loss of \$8.5 billion to the states, and, still another \$8.4 billion lost to single parents in uncollected child support due to enforcement cutbacks. I would have liked Moran to explain these votes to that sweet caller, but he didn’t even mention it. Not a word.

Moran said he cares about health care. OK, what about his votes?

Last month, Moran voted to cut federal spending to programs by \$39.5 billion. Medicaid cuts will account for 27 percent of that \$39.5 billion, and another 23 percent of it represents

cutbacks in Medicare. What he says he believes - versus what he legislates. Words and actions seem mismatched, incongruent, even dissonant. Moran’s actions will result in 9 million unfortunate people being unable to receive health care for the first time. Why? His votes cause new state co-payment requirements that veterans, children, and seniors simply cannot afford.

Congress now estimates another 65,000 individuals will lose all Medicaid coverage outright. Eighty percent of these new savings that Moran legislated will come from decreased access to health care services. Another 1.6 million people who continue to qualify for Medicaid will lose some critical medical services.

Less health care to 1.6 million, 65,000 folks kicked out altogether, and 9 million suddenly unable to get any health care at all. That’s a lot of hurt. It’s certainly possible that Moran “cares about health care,” perhaps in some business-oriented way.

It doesn’t matter. We need look no further than at his actual votes.

Do we want a Congressman that uses his legislative power to oust helpless people from their medical programs? What we need, instead, is a Congressman that cares about the health of our grandmothers, our less fortunate neighbors, our students, and especially our veterans - and *proves it to us with his actions*. See, it’s not what the man says that matters — what matters is how the man votes.

#### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

