

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint



Progress made in effort for schools

By Governor Kathleen Sebelius
The most important job parents have is to prepare our children to lead happy, healthy and successful lives. To reach their full potential, our kids need to have the opportunity to attend first-class schools.

It's the state's duty to support those schools, and to ensure they are able to provide the education our children need to get good jobs and lead prosperous lives.

For too long, Kansas did not provide enough support, and our children suffered as a result. Last year, we took an historic step forward in our efforts to strengthen Kansas schools. Last week, another positive step was taken.

A coalition of legislators in the House of Representatives, Republicans and Democrats, came together, worked with me and my staff, and narrowly passed a multi-year plan to uphold our responsibility to the students of Kansas.

This is an important step forward, and it's the first school plan that has the elements I believe must be included, such as all-day kindergarten, help for students in need, and the freedom for communities to provide additional local support and control.

Strengthening our schools is the most significant step we can take towards ensuring the prosperity of Kansas for years to come. The passage of this school plan represents real progress, and it's an example of what can happen when we all work together for the benefit of Kansas children.

Now the challenge will be to mobilize senators to join in this agreement, and to ensure our future is not jeopardized by passing a plan that doesn't have the money to pay for the investment we make.

I ask you to contact your senator, and to call on him or her to join with us in our quest for the multi-year plan and the revenue, and my preference would be expanded gaming, to ensure our schools stay strong well into the future. You can leave a message for your senator by calling 1-800-432-3924.

I'm going to continue to work together with legislators from both parties, and I'm confident we'll be successful in providing every Kansas child with a first-class school no matter where he or she lives.

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@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.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 web: 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



A closed museum just won't cut the mustard

Keeping Prairie Museum of Art and History open ranks right up there with keeping the concentration camp museum at Dachau, Germany, open.

If we let Prairie Museum, or any other museum, close its doors it proves Thomas County and northwest Kansas residents have developed a major case of apathy.

With each museum door that closes, a door to the erosion of a society opens. Not only does a museum stand for a community or region's past, it holds the key to the future.

It's been said many times if you don't learn from your past you are doomed to repeat it. Learning from the past takes place at a museum and historical society such as the Prairie Museum of Art and History. It would be a travesty to lose such a fine facility. A travesty not only for residents of Thomas County, but the entire northwest Kansas region and the some 10,000 visitors to it each year.

For some unknown reason many of us who are approaching mid-life have failed to teach younger generations the importance of attending museums.

While my love for museums stems from growing up near Dodge City's famous Boot Hill museum, it wasn't until I was an adult that I developed a passion for history and museums.

I'll never forget living in Germany and seeing for the first time Dachau Memorial Museum. Dachau is located in southern Germany and it's where some 30,000 Jews were killed during the Holocaust.

At the time I lived in Germany, I was told a visit to Dachau was part of the children's educational requirement so they wouldn't forget what took



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

place there.

Have northwestern Kansans forgotten what took place here that a museum the quality of the Prairie Museum of Art and History is facing closure? Shame on us.

Dachau visitors view what remains of the first concentration camp built by the Nazis just before World War II. Visitors see the "model" for the concentration camp system which housed Nazi objectors. It was in camps like Dachau that Jews and others deemed undesirable to society – Gypsies, communists and homosexuals – were gassed to death. Hitler's anti-Semitic laws are highlighted through such a museum as Dachau, lest the world forget.

Apathy toward our own history and the need for museums is exactly what will bring about another wave of viciousness such as the one started by Hitler. We absolutely can't forget what took place in order for northwest Kansas to be what it is today.

What's housed at Prairie Museum and its adjoining acreages is not only part of Thomas County and northwest Kansas' history, it's part of America's history. The settlement of this region played a major part in the growth and changing face of the United States. Growth provided in the form of land rushes and changes like

the almost extinction of the buffalo rest among the history of the Great Plains region.

Like Germany, Kansas history holds its own viciousness as marked by gunfighters and outlaws, and the Dirty Thirties. Had it not been lessons learned in farming practices we'd probably be experiencing a similar time right now. That alone proves the point that if we don't learn from our past we are doomed to repeat it.

It's history like this which is available for adults and children at the Prairie Museum of Art and History.

Take for instance the Kuska collection. This 30,000 piece exhibit has some of the finest glass, coins, furniture, ceramics, toys, dolls, stamps, clocks, silver and jewelry a person would want to view. Donated by an estate, the collection is a teacher's dream for providing assignments for essays, reports and term papers. But you have to get the students to the museum in order for this to take place. A closed museum just won't cut the mustard when it comes to educating youth.

And the museum's 22,500 square foot building is only part of the drawing card for those wanting, or needing to know about the area's history. Outside the building stands Cooper Barn, the largest barn in the state. In addition there's the 7,000 square foot "Prairie Grasses to Golden Grasses" exhibit which teaches about the machinery and tools of agriculture.

Located just a quarter-mile from Interstate 70, Prairie Museum of Art and History is a priceless gem northwest Kansas can't afford to lose. It's time for us to stop resting on our apathetic laurels and fight for this piece of the prairie.

What are western Kansas lakes for?

From The Hays Daily News
The latest legislation to emerge as a way to curtail the release of water from Cedar Bluff Reservoir is less flagrant but still an attempt to trump state water policy to settle a primarily local dispute.

A House committee advanced a bill that would require a new stream gauge below the lake to monitor flow on the Smoky Hill River.

The idea is to measure the amount of water leaking from the dam and figure that into the equation that determines how much water to release.

This is one piece of a larger bill introduced to

limit the water that would be released for municipal use by the cities of Hays and Russell. While they have a worthy cause, and no doubt current drought conditions are raising fears of the lake level declining to alarming levels, micromanaging the use of the lake from a legislative standpoint is not the right approach to the dispute.

Dam seepage could be factored into the formulas that govern water releases.

But if it is going to be done for Cedar Bluff, then it should be done for all such reservoirs in the state.

The state does monitor flows below dams at

other reservoirs, but none of those gauges is exclusively to monitor.

We need a more thoughtful discussion about the purpose of lakes in western Kansas, a discussion in a larger context about water use. We probably should re-prioritize purposes for surface water storage and rank recreational, municipal, irrigation and flood control for the benefit of water policy for the whole region.

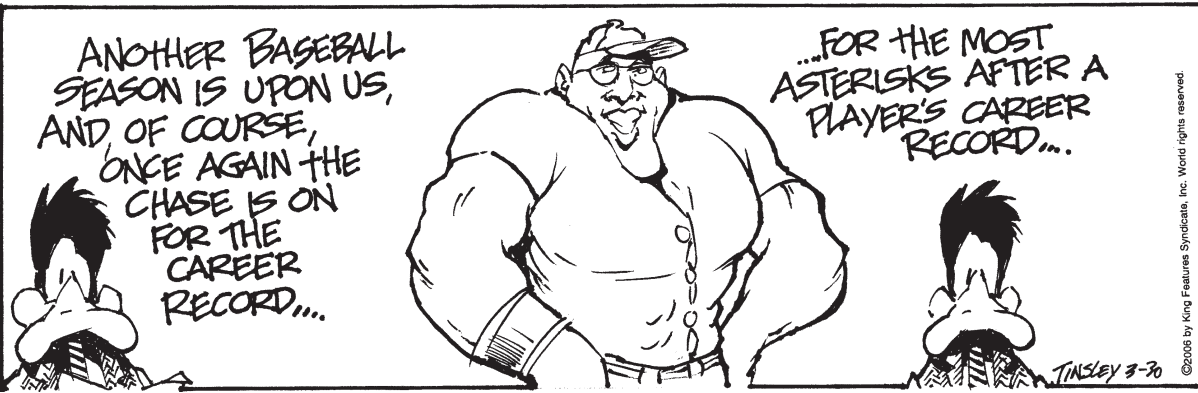
But by itself, the Cedar Bluff dispute between recreational lake interests and the cities downstream is being argued in the courts. The Legislature should concern itself with the bigger picture.

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