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Right wing wants to get Senate chair

By John Hanna
AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — For at least two decades, two big political prizes have remained out of conservatives' reach, even as they've gained the power within the Kansas Republican Party to steer it to the right.

Those prizes are the governor's office and control over the Senate's longstanding GOP majority.

The next governor's race is in 2010, and conservatives will have a good chance of winning it, if Sen. Sam Brownback runs as expected. Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius can't seek a third term, and her party has no one of her stature to replace her.

Meanwhile, all 40 Senate and 125 House seats are on the ballot this year, giving conservatives an opportunity to claim the key leadership positions in the Senate after the Nov. 4 general election.

"There are some significant pickup opportunities," said Sen. Tim Huelskamp, of Fowler, a conservative leader. "There are some really good opportunities."

Republicans have an all-but-certain lock on the their legislative majorities. They hold 30 seats to Democrats' 10 in the Senate and have a 78-47 advantage in the House.

But, of course, Kansas is a three-party state, and none of the three has enough strength to exercise power on its own. Conser-

vatives who strongly oppose tax increases, favor new restrictions on abortion and heave to the right on other social issues can win primaries but can't alienate too many Republicans who are willing to raise taxes for schools and are less conservative on social issues.

Moderate Republicans who drift too far to the center or left have trouble winning primaries but are formidable general election candidates. Some Democrats — Sebelius is the best example — have made careers of wooing moderate Republicans.

Republicans already may have been squabbling in Kansas at statehood in 1861. The split between conservatives and Bull Moose progressives in 1912 was so catastrophic that it became the only time in state history that Democrats captured the governor's office and majorities in both legislative chambers. It was the last time Democrats won control of the Senate.

Since the mid-1990s, the House has been led most often by conservatives, and that seems unlikely to change, despite some grumbling among Republicans about Speaker Melvin Neufeld, of Ingalls.

But since 1985, none of the Senate's presidents have satisfied conservatives: Bob Talkington, of Iola; Bud Burke, of Leawood; Dick Bond, of Overland Park; Dave Kerr, of Hutchinson; and the

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Scouts, others work to gather food gifts

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Girls Scouts teamed up with other volunteers to scour the town Sunday, picking up people's donations for the Genesis-Thomas County Food Bank just in time to help those who need something to eat for the holidays.

The "Trick or Treat So Others Can Eat Campaign" lasted from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Volunteers went door to door to ask people for donations or pick up bags left on the doorstep.

"We try to hit the whole town," said Penny Cline, Girl Scout service unit manager.

While the campaign started out as a collaboration between the Girl Scouts and the food bank, it has evolved into an event that involves several organizations.

Other groups that helped, Cline said, included the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts, the Catholic Youth Organization, the Methodist Venture Crew and members of Colby Community College cross country and track and field teams.

Nine Girl Scout teams helped with the collection, plus one made up of members of the Catholic Youth Organization, a Cub Scout pack and a Boy Scout troop.

The members of the college men's teams linked up with the Cub Scouts and the college women teamed up with the Daisy Girl Scouts, kindergartners and first graders.

After the everyone finished picking up food, they all assembled at the Thomas County Chamber of Commerce in the county office building, 350 S. Range, where they sorted the donations. The food will eventually go to the food bank, where it will be available to people who need a little help.

Cline said the group surpassed the amount of donations received last year, and expressed her gratitude to Colby citizens.

"The Girl Scouts would like to thank the community and the organizations for donating food," she said.

The food bank serves Thomas County residents, she said. The Scouts' fall collection has been going on for over 15 years.



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Lloyd Marcus, a conservative activist and singer-songwriter, opened a "Stop Obama" rally this morning at Fike Park with a song. "Marine Mom" Deborah Johns, mother of William Johns, a soldier who has served repeated tours in Iraq, criticized Sen. Barack Obama and endorsed John McCain at the rally. The group is touring the country in a specially marked bus.



Tour bus delivers anti-Obama team

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A couple dozen Colby citizens turning out in a chilly morning today as the national "Stop Obama" tour made a stop at Fike Park.

While the Colby rally was scheduled for 8:30 a.m., the red-white-and-blue bus pulled in around 8:45.

The tour comprises a group of Republican activists who are trying to convince voters to reject the candidacy of Illinois Sen. Barack Obama and throw their support toward Sen. John McCain, the Republican.

Featured at the rally were Deborah Johns, who describes herself as a "pro-troop movement leader" and Marine mom; singer Lloyd Marcus; and Mark Williams, a radio talk-show host and television commentator on Fox News.

Marcus started the rally with a song. He was followed by Williams, who went over the reasons he believed people should cast a vote for McCain. He was critical of Obama. "McCain will allow us the free-

dom to excel," Williams said. "Obama hasn't had any accomplishments yet."

Williams said Obama apparently doesn't think he's mortal. He encouraged citizens to tell the world that our country deserves better.

Johns, speaking last, criticized Obama's for what she felt was his refusal to acknowledge the success our soldiers were having in Iraq.

"Barack Obama says he is for change," Johns said. "Our troops brought change to Iraq, and Obama can't even acknowledge that."

Johns said vice presidential candidate Sen. Joe Biden, a long-time Washington insider, would be "the training wheels" for Obama's presidency. She said Biden will tell the Illinois senator how to do his job.

She applauded McCain for his decision to back a troop surge in Iraq.

The tour will run through Oct. 29, with the speakers traveling cross-country in a specially decorated bus. It is sponsored by a group known as the Our Country Deserves Better Political Action Committee..

U.S., states sue to block beef merger

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Regulators filed a lawsuit to block the world's largest beef processor from buying the nation's fourth-largest operation, saying such a deal could push up consumer prices for beef.

The Department of Justice and attorneys general for 13 states, including Kansas and Missouri, filed the suit against Brazilian beef producer JBS S.A. and National Beef Packing Co. of Kansas City, Mo.

In March, JBS had said it would acquire National Beef in a \$560 million stock-and-cash deal, which would make it the nation's largest beef processor. It also announced a deal to buy Smithfield Beef Group Inc., the nation's fifth-

largest beef producer, for \$565 million. The Department of Justice said it is not challenging that deal, only the deal with the larger player, which would combine two of the top four U.S. beef packers.

The lawsuit said JBS's buyout of National Beef "would complete a fundamental restructuring of the United States beef-packing industry," according to filings in U.S. District Court in the Northern District of Illinois.

The suit said the deal would put more than 80 percent of domestic fed cattle-packing capacity in the hands of three companies — JBS, Tyson Foods Inc. and Cargill Inc.

The combination would not only lead to

higher retail prices for U.S. consumers but also lower wholesale prices for cattle producers, ranchers and feedlots, the suit said. Regulators estimate if JBS were allowed to buy National, it would have annual sales of more than \$14 billion and the ability to slaughter more than one-third of U.S. fed cattle-packing capacity, at about 40,000 head of cattle a day.

JBS became the third-largest beef processor in the U.S. last year after purchasing Greeley, Colo.-based Swift & Co. for \$225 million.

Testifying before Congress in May, the head of JBS SA's North American operations said the buyout would mean more jobs and more competition in the industry.

Briefly

Senior Center plans potato bar

The Senior Progress Center will have a potato bar, bake sale and fund raiser to help pay the utilities from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Tuesday. For information, call Kaila at 460-2901.

Flu shots available this week

The Thomas County Health Department will be at the Colby schools to offer flu shots to students and staff Wednesday morning. A consent form was sent home with elementary and middle school children and will be available at the high school office. It must be returned to the school office by Tuesday. For questions, call Amy Hutfles at 460-5111.

Nurses will be at various businesses to offer shots from 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesday.

Center plans Halloween bash

The Colby Care Center at 105 E. College Drive plans a Halloween carnival from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday. There will be games, candy and a costume contest with prizes. Everyone is welcome.

Kiwanis plans feed Saturday

The Colby Kiwanis Club will hold a pancake feed from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall, 220 N. Lake St. The cost of \$4 per person, with proceeds going to Christmas, youth and other community projects.

Church plans big auction

Sacred Heart Catholic Church and School will hold its annual auction Saturday at City Limits Convention Center. Doors will open at 5 p.m.

for the silent auction. A live auction will start at 7:15 p.m. Call Kim Brier at the rectory, (785) 462-2179, for information.

Scouts out selling popcorn

Colby Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts are selling popcorn door-to-door until Sunday. Choose from among microwave popcorn, popping kernels and a variety of tins filled with caramel, chocolate or cheese popcorn. Anyone who isn't contacted by a Scout should call Gary Schuette, pack leader, at 460-0003.

Learn how to burn grass safely

Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development plans a school on how to burn off Conservation Reserve grass from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at the 4-H Building in Colby. The workshop is open to the public but registration is requested by

Tuesday for a meal count. Lunch will be provided by the Thomas and Sheridan County conservation districts. For information, call the Thomas County Extension office at (785) 460-4582.

Meeting will explain benefits

The Kansas Public Employees Retirement System plans a briefing for active and retired employees interested in understanding their benefits at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 27, at the Little Theater of the Colby Community Building. For questions, call the city office at 460-4400.

Lutheran youths sell greens

The Trinity Lutheran Church youth are selling fresh greens to arrive the week of Nov. 17. Orders placed by Monday, Oct. 27, can be shipped out of town or delivered here. To order, call Raenette Martin at (785) 462-3400 or Linda Pabst at 462-3497.

