

# Opinion



## Other Viewpoints

### Give choice back to cities, counties

With the uproar over taxes and government spending and the state in a budget crunch like few others, it is even more strange that Kansas legislators won't get out of the way so local governments can consolidate if they so wish.

With the Legislature in recess before its wrap-up session, House Speaker Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, said the prospects were not good that a city-county consolidation bill would reach a final vote before his chamber yet this session.

That is unfortunate and, again, strange. Such legislation would not require consolidation. It just would remove the requirement that such consolidations would have to come before the Legislature before proceeding. It would, in other words, eliminate a lot of red tape and delay.

This bill has been tough to pass for several legislative sessions now. This would seem to be a good time for legislators to shed whatever their hang-up is about it....

State Sen. Chris Steineger, D-Kansas City, has proposed compressing Kansas' 105 counties into 36. He points to a study by a University of Kansas professor that estimates \$700 million to \$800 million could be saved through county consolidation. Professor Art Hall says 21 of Kansas' counties rank in the top 100 of U.S. counties for the number of employees per capita.

Steineger isn't gaining much traction in Topeka with his idea, but the point remains. If you want to see evidence of government growth, size and waste, it can be found just as much at the local level as the federal. And Kansas ranks in the top three states for number of units of government per capita.

Based on the compelling merits of fiscal government efficiency, O'Neal should try to fashion a way to get a vote on this bill.

After all, do we want less government or don't we?  
— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

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### Studying language is, well, Greek to her

English has always been easy for me. And I don't mean speaking it, but writing it, diagramming it, making it rhyme and making it sing. There are endless possibilities to what can be done with a wide vocabulary and a little bit of an imagination.

But what I love even more is learning foreign languages. I didn't realize this until college, though. Somehow, I had escaped from taking any foreign languages in high school. And, honestly, I was afraid of learning Spanish. I didn't want to sound incompetent or, frankly, an idiot if I wouldn't know how to translate phrases like, "May I please use the restroom?"

I also didn't think learning a different language would be easy for me. I was good at English. I liked it and it liked me. It was a great relationship.

But when I began college in Tennessee, I was informed that my major, Mass Communications, required four semesters of foreign language. Choosing from French, German, Spanish, Greek or Hebrew, I decided to go with Spanish. I was sure college Spanish was going to be levels beyond high school Spanish.

Fortunately, I was wrong. I did have to study, but the concepts always seemed to click in my mind. And I was really good at rolling my "r's," which helped my confidence level even more.

Then I decided to transfer to Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., where a foreign language is not required for journalism students. At first, I thought, "What a waste. I attempted to learn another language for nothing."

The college only offers a beginning Span-



**Michelle Myers**

#### • A Moment with Michelle

ish class, which I had taken already, so there weren't any foreign language classes to take as electives. Well, there weren't any that I knew of, anyways.

When it came time to register for spring semester, though, I noticed a class called Intro to Biblical Languages. The class would cover the basics of biblical Greek and Hebrew as well as enhance Bible studies. I never had a strong desire to learn Greek or Hebrew, but curiosity compelled me to register for the class.

The first half of the semester would be Greek and the second half Hebrew. I'll admit that I was intimidated at first, especially when the syllabus read we would be learning to read the Lord's Prayer out loud. We also would have to master the alphabet. That phrase, "it's all Greek to me," took on a whole new, personal meaning to me.

Soon, we were debating over Jesus' usage of the word "love" in John 21, where he asks his disciple Peter three times, "Do you love me?" In Greek, "phileo" and "agapao" both mean love, but have different meanings. Jesus used both in John 21. We were trying to figure out if there is significance in Jesus using "phileo" when first asking Peter, "Do you love me?" then changing to "agapao" at the end.

That is a typical class for us. Whether we were reciting the Lord's Prayer or figuring out the function of a genitive, learning Greek was intriguing to me.

And just when I was getting used to Greek, it was time to learn the basics of Hebrew. Simply learning the Hebrew alphabet made me miss Greek. I found myself frequently saying, "It doesn't look like Greek to me." And I never felt so far from the English language.

First, Hebrew is read from right to left, unlike English, where we read left to right.

Second, Hebrew letters look nothing like, well, letters. The majority of them are very boxy and the tiniest stroke can completely change a letter. I felt like a kindergartner the first time I tried to copy the letters on paper.

Third, since the Hebrew language used to be completely consonants, vowels were added later to help make reading Hebrew easier. Vowels are combinations of little dots and lines that are placed above and below the letters. This means that not only do you read right to left, but also up and down like a wave.

Fascinating, isn't it? I probably won't ever master Greek or Hebrew, but I can already tell that my tiny bit of knowledge has changed the way I view the Bible. And this may not help my journalism career, but if you want to know why "Aleph," "Beth," and "Gimel," are in Psalm 119, I can tell you.

*Michelle Myers, a Colby native, is a student at Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., majoring in Bible and journalism. She enjoys the 32 Starbucks found within five miles of her campus.*

### Agriculture and 'Clean Water' at odds?

A recent court ruling will have a disruptive effect on production agriculture. It could also have an effect on existing policy in regard to what constitutes point-source and non-point-source pollution as defined by the federal Clean Water Act.

Here's what happened. On Jan. 7, the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, covering Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee, ruled in a case involving pesticide application and the Clean Water Act. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had earlier concluded that pesticides applied in accordance with the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act are exempt from the Clean Water Act's permit requirements.

The court held the rule was in conflict with provisions of the water act. Specifically, the court found that under the plain language of the statute, all biological pesticides are "biological material" and therefore pollutants. It also ruled that excess or residual chemical is discharged "from a point source" (the application equipment, sprayers, etc.) even though it becomes "excess" or "residue" at some time after being released from the equipment.

This issue is not limited to agriculture. It will also impact other applications, including vegetation management along highway rights of way, electric transmission corridors, mosquito control and chemical de-icing by state, county and municipal employees.



**John Schlageck**

#### • Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

"As it stands, this decision is a clear threat to agricultural production," says Terry Holdren, Kansas Farm Bureau's governmental relations national director.

EPA estimates this ruling could affect approximately 365,000 pesticide applicators who perform 5.6 million applications a year, if it should become law nationwide.

What remains for farmers is a slippery slope toward more regulation. In the days before the April 9 petition deadline, EPA elected not to pursue an effort for rehearing in front of the entire 6th Circuit. Instead the agency requested a two-year stay to allow it to develop new rules and a permit process for pesticide applications. The American Farm Bureau Federation has filed a petition with the court seeking a review.

Because of the potential impacts, it is disheartening the EPA did not seek a rehearing.

"Farmers should not need a permit under another law when they already are following an existing law," Holdren says.

This lack of initiative will complicate farmers' ability to farm and raise their expenses without improving the environment.

So, what is the next step for producers? The Sixth Circuit will rule soon on the Farm Bureau petition. Hopefully, wisdom will prevail and 30 years of interpretation and practice by EPA will receive greater consideration when the full court considers the issues. Otherwise, an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court may be the only avenue left for agriculture.

While this case makes its way through the courts, EPA may begin the process of developing the necessary permits. The looming question may be whether the agency allows the use of a general permit which would have minimal impact on pesticide applications or whether a permit will be required for each and every application of a pesticide. The latter will have obvious, enormous impacts on applicators.

This struggle is just beginning and will require carefully thought-out consideration in determining a solution that is reasonably workable for American agriculture.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley

