



Other Viewpoints

Smoking ban needs to include casinos

Even if there were still some room to debate the need for a ban on indoor smoking, there is no disputing the nuttiness of the Legislature last year in forcing a ban on private businesses while exempting state-owned casinos.

Overcoming the best efforts of those backing a full repeal, the Kansas House voted 97-26 in March to plug the hypocritical loophole in the Kansas Indoor Clean Air Act. Now the Senate needs to make it official when the full Legislature returns to Topeka.

True, senators will have to do so over the strong objections of the casino developers, who warn that a ban will mean fewer gamblers and less revenue for them and the state.

"A casino smoking ban will significantly reduce state tax revenues, resulting in reduced budget funding for state programs, fewer jobs and jeopardizing future capital investment in the state," Elizabeth Tranchina, vice president of legal affairs for Sumner County casino developer Peninsula Gaming, told lawmakers.

But last year, the owners of private businesses made similar pleas, which legislators rightly rejected in the interest of public health.

Neglecting the loophole now would only fuel charges that the state is looking out for its casino revenues instead of looking out for the health of casino visitors and employees.

Besides, the public verdict is in on the statewide ban. In a Public Opinion Strategies poll released in February, 77 percent of voters said they support the new law. Even among tea party types and smokers, the support was 65 and 54 percent, respectively.

A December report from U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin underscored the public good served by barring smoking in indoor public spaces, reporting that the chemicals in smoke are rapidly absorbed by cells in the body and produce disease-causing changes in cells. Smokers are far more likely than nonsmokers to have chronic diseases. Benjamin, like President Bush's surgeon general before her, concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to cigarette smoke.

Indeed, it would be preferable for the Legislature to go a step further and end the unfair exemption for class A and B private clubs licensed before Jan. 1, 2009 – which is being challenged in a pending lawsuit in Shawnee County.

Is the statewide law being enforced? *The Eagle* recently reported 12 complaints but no citations or fines in Wichita over the law's first nine months. While that probably means the vast majority of businesses are complying, patrons and employees need to be assured that scofflaws will face consequences.

Kansas needed the indoor public smoking ban passed last year. Now, it needs that ban to be fairly applied and consistently enforced.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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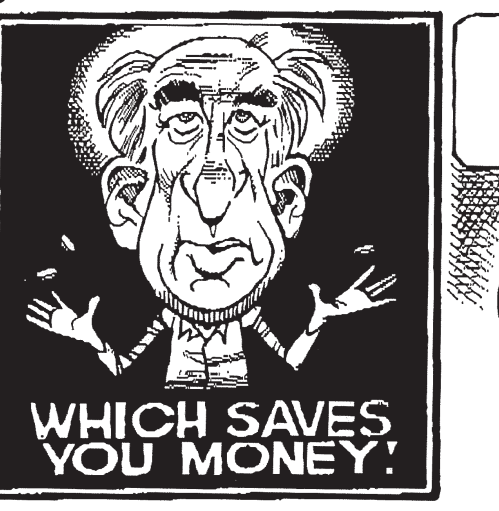
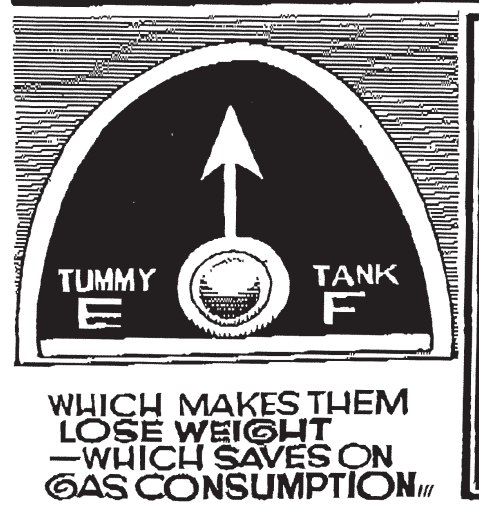
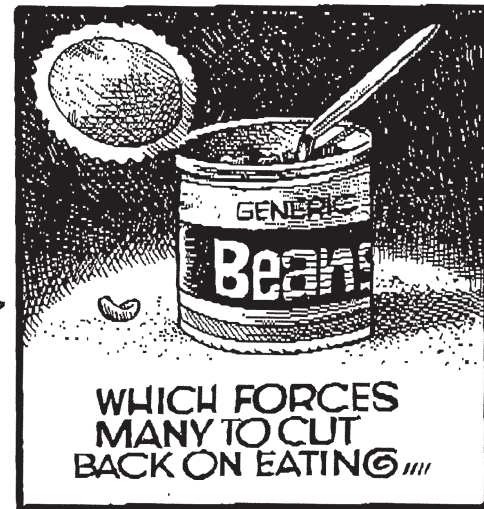
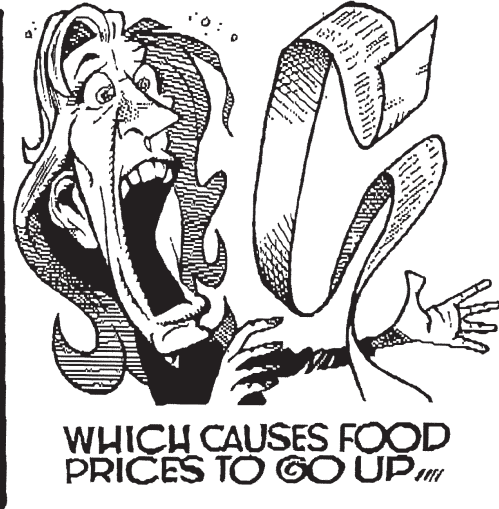
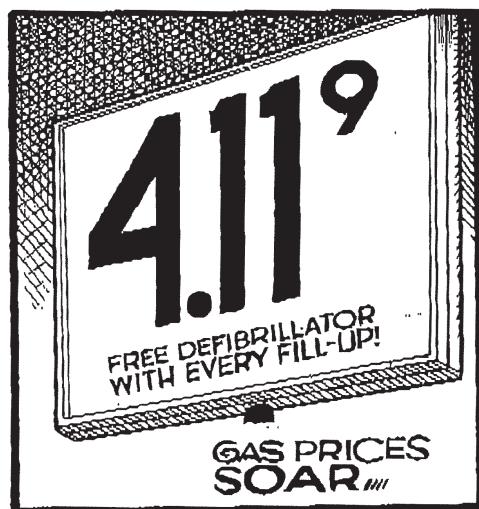
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Clipping brings back band memories

Do any of you remember the name of the band that woke up the dancing crowd and got everybody rocking and rolling here in Hays and the surrounding territory many years ago?

Does the name, "The Flippers," ring a bell? They moved into the spotlight in the early 1960s, if my memory is still functioning. The dance crowds just couldn't get enough of them. I was privileged to attend one of their dances on a hot June night and was so taken that I wrote an article about them in either *The Hays Daily News* or the *Ellis County Star*; I worked for both.

Lee Allan Leiker, a member of the band, e-mailed me a copy of that story, so I decided to bring back a few memories of an era in which a band changed our lives forever.

My story's headline roared: "Flippers, Hays' own rock and roll kings, rock picnic crowd."

"The Flippers," Hays' own version of the rock and roll kings, rocked the annual St. Joseph's and St. Mary's parish picnic to a smashing success Tuesday night. The dance was staged at 8:30 and up until 11 o'clock, over two-hundred teenagers and elders danced away. Despite the heat in the auditorium at Jefferson West, everyone engaged in the dancing activities were 'cool' man 'cool.'

"The Flippers, well known throughout this area, certainly deserve a word of praise, not only on their playing ability, but on their showmanship. Watching them play is a real treat.

"They, unlike other rock and roll bands, don't revert to the so-called 'hip' swaying to put over their act. Their ability as musicians was enough to tell all, they are great.



Tom Dreiling

• A View From the West

"Local boys comprise the band. They are: Terry Wierman, lead guitar; Johnny Fross, rhythm guitar; Tommy Bunker, piano; Dennis Rohr, drums; Lee Allan Leiker, vocalist; and Jim Gross, saxophone.

"The Flippers had everyone flipping with their version of today's top hits and the ones of yesterday. For many parents, this was their first opportunity to see just what goes on at a rock and roll dance. To say they overwhelmingly approved, would be an understatement.

In talking with some of the kids, their only wish was more dances of this nature throughout the school year. — T.D."

(T.D. was my signature early on in journalism, and I still use it frequently today.)

I don't know the status of any of the band members, but wouldn't it be a treat and a half if they all were still around and could get together in Hays — the town in which they organized — for a night filled with fun and I bet tears as the sounds of The Flippers bring back the memories of a wonderful time in our lives?

Thanks, guys, once again from this Man of the Plains!

Gov. Sam Brownback is to be lauded for the

bill he signed into law at several locations this month. The law creates incentives for people to move to population-starved counties, including all of northwest Kansas. He forgot, however, to do something that would have put meat into this new feature; he should have moved some of his family to one of those counties. Talk is cheap if it isn't backed by action.

I've got to brag about an honor received by a grandniece, Jill Marie (Dreiling) Wilson. She was recently presented the Teacher of the Year Award by the Aransas County (Texas) School District. Her grandfather is Dean Dreiling, a Hays native who has lived for many years in Corpus Christi, and graduated from what is now Thomas More Prep-Marian High School and Fort Hays State University. Jill's dad, Fred, is a well known Corpus Christi lawyer.

Snippets....

"I remember 35 mph speed limit during World War II. Dad said that was a heap lot faster than a horse and buggy!"

"If Donald Trump was elected president, could he get a different hair style?"

"...All I see are representatives who pander to the rich and greedy, and ignore the poor and needy."

(Snippets to the e-mail address at the bottom of this column; thanks)

Tom Dreiling of Aurora, Colo., is a former publisher of the Colby Free Press and The Norton Telegram, and a former long-time editor of the old Goodland Daily News. He is a life-long Democrat, a curmudgeon come lately and a newly minted Coloradan.

Paying higher prices, praying for rain

Like all Americans, Kansans are paying higher prices for their food. Attribute this rise in costs to freezes in Mexico or tight supplies in the pork market, still we're all digging deeper to pay for our next meal.

As a result, consumers should refigure their grocery budgets to account for a 3 to 4 percent increase in food prices this year, according to the Consumer Price Index.

These increases affect all consumers' grocery bills, including farmers and ranchers. They, too, shop at the supermarket and understand the pressure in the check-out line.

This nation's food producers also are taking a hit with production costs. Any Kansas farmer will tell you input costs are soaring.

Fertilizer prices have doubled. Edwards County farmer Darrell Wood paid \$190 a ton for liquid nitrogen fertilizer in 2010. The same 32 percent liquid nitrogen is selling for \$416 a ton or higher today.

Diesel fuel sold for \$2.50 a gallon last year and \$1.80 a gallon in '09. As I write this, it was selling for \$4.11 a gallon and seems to be going up by the hour instead of the day.

Will the cost of fuel double? "Thank goodness corn, bean and wheat prices are strong," Wood said, "but even with these high commodity prices, everything has to click just right."

That means buying inputs in bulk, months in advance, while marketing your crops or forward contracting at the optimum time to lock in a profit.

Even that can be incredibly risky in today's economic climate, Wood says.

"A neighbor of mine contracted his wheat



John Schlageck

• Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

crop at 10 bushels per acre (a minimal yield) and \$6 a bushel," Wood says. "He's worried he won't be able to grow enough wheat to fill his contract."

If the long-range forecasts are right, there may be little wheat grown in the western half of Kansas. With hit-and-miss showers bringing only 10 or 15 hundredths of an inch of rain, the wheat crop continues to deteriorate.

Wood believes his 1,000 acres of wheat will amount to a goose egg.

"I'm 55, and I've never seen anything like this," the Edwards County farmer says. "We've had 30 hundredths (of rain) in the Trousdale area since the middle of November."

But it's not just the dying wheat crop Wood is concerned about. He's going full throttle, planting 6,500 acres of irrigated corn and at the same time irrigating the corn ground in front of the planter.

Without pre-irrigating, Wood said, he didn't believe the corn would have enough moisture to germinate and get the start necessary to weather a dry summer. It will cost him an additional \$25,000 in fuel to apply one inch of water to his corn ground before planting.

This doesn't bode well for the upcoming irrigation season, either.

"If we're going to have to put on water like I think we are this summer," he said, "producers are going to have to over pump to keep up with the dry conditions. We've got to receive help from Mother Nature."

This isn't the first time nor will it be the last Wood and his fellow Kansas farmers are faced with drought, disease, hail and other weather conditions they cannot control.

"It's part of farming," Wood says. "You have good times and bad."

And what happens on the farms and on the fields in Kansas and across this country impacts the cost of food people buy in their neighborhood groceries.

Extremely dry weather, coupled with rising fuel prices, affect every stop in the food-production chain. It's the reality of farmers and ranchers paying more for basic inputs, including fuel, equipment and fertilizers that fosters plant growth, forcing prices up. Manufacturing and processing facilities also must account for rising fuel costs.

Eventually, food prices tend to level out and consumers can expect to pay only slight increases during the long term. As for the men and women who grow our food, they will hope and pray for rain so they can continue providing the fresh produce, grains and dairy products that stock grocery shelves.

With help from above, they try to maintain profitable and lasting businesses.

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

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

