



Free Press Viewpoint

Deer and traffic: keep both safe

State Rep. Ward Cassidy says he hopes to do something about the number of car-deer accidents in our area, noting that several bills introduced this year in the Legislature attempt to deal with the problem.

A committee substitute for House Bill 2295 would establish an early antlerless deer season, before the annual fall run, where hunters could take more does, or female deer. That could help cut the population. The bill also would allow for an antlerless or antlered deer permit and expand the use of crossbows in hunting.

The bill was introduced last year, but did not move. The Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism opposed provisions allowing out-of-state relatives of landowners to hunt on family land without a deer permit, which the department said would cost the state money.

Another provision would have established a \$2 mandatory contribution to the Kansas Hunters Fight Hunger fund. The department said this could be considered a diversion of license funds which would cost the state federal contributions.

The amended version of the bill passed out of committee and then passed the House 101-22 with two members present but not voting. The bill's future in the Senate is uncertain.

We get concerned, however, when legislators try to dictate game-management policy to the professionals at the wildlife agency. Lawmakers ought to be very careful not to undo the miracle of modern game management, which brought us a herd of deer worth hunting.

Many people remember the Kansas plains in the days when spotting a deer was Page 1 news. Hunters in the 19th century all but wiped out our deer herd. It took half a century of careful management to bring these graceful creatures back to the plains in hunttable numbers.

It's true, they cause a lot of damage and the herd could be thinned. However, most farmers probably would like to see fewer hunters, at least the irresponsible kind that open rifle hunting often brings. They don't want any more damage to buildings, crops and stock. They'd like to see better enforcement of our game laws.

Selling more deer permits without angering farm groups will take some doing. Just slaughtering deer, or looking the other way at poachers, as some have suggested, would not help. Poachers steal game, damage property and laugh at the law, not traits we want to encourage.

We wish Rep. Cassidy luck in finding a way to reduce the herd more without endangering a valuable resource and a growing impetus to tourism. Attracting more out-of-state hunters, the kind who carefully plan their hunts and respect landowners and the law, would be a great idea. Expanding the drawings for regular and antlerless licenses might do this.

Just selling more permits for open hunts tends to bring the bad hunters, the ones who drink, trespass and poach. We'd be against that. Kansas landowners won't put up with those hunters, and shouldn't have to.

As long as the health of the overall deer herd is preserved and we have deer to hunt and watch, however, then by all means, let's limit the population. — Steve Haynes

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

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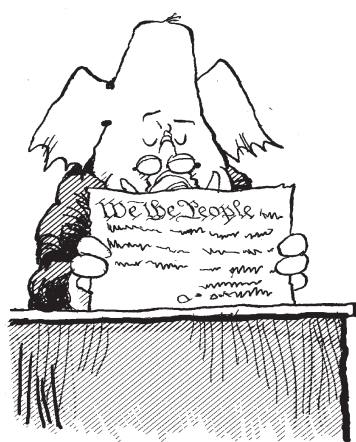
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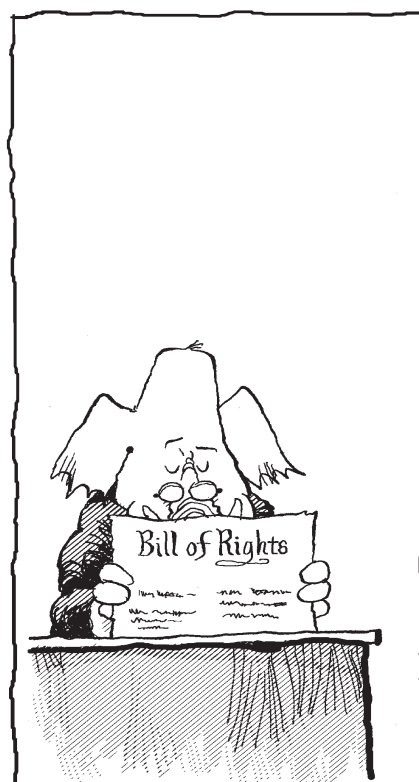
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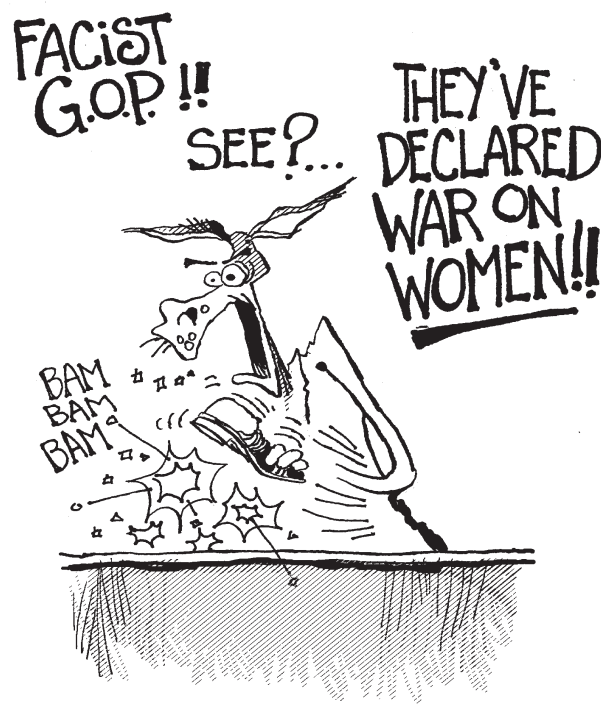
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IF YOU HAVE THE LAW ON YOUR SIDE, ARGUE THE LAW.



IF YOU HAVE THE FACTS, ARGUE THE FACTS.



IF YOU HAVE NEITHER, POUND THE TABLE.

House debates, votes on 90 bills

The Legislature reached the halfway point of the 2012 session this week. By the time we adjourned Thursday, the House had debated and voted on about 90 pieces of legislation.

Oil, Gas Valuation Depletion Trust Fund HB 2624. This bill allows counties who receive money from the State Oil and Gas Valuation Depletion Trust Fund to establish trust funds in their own counties, thus protecting the fund from state "sweeps" to fund other measures. Counties would be able to spend only 20 percent of the money unless specific conditions are met.

During last year's session there was an attempt to sweep millions of dollars from this fund. As a result, last summer, a group of western Kansas legislators began to work on this.

The fund was created for rural counties who rely on oil and gas revenues to sustain consistent economic growth when these resources deplete. Each county pays into the account based on their county's oil and gas production.

Improving Kansas Water Policy

HB 2517 makes the five-year pilot of the Water Transition Assistance Program permanent. The program is designed to permanently retire all or portions of irrigation water rights and was set to expire on June 30.

Career Technical Workforce Grant

HB 2435 creates the Career Technical Workforce Grant for students at regents' schools. Under the bill, the regents may award \$1,000 grants to full-time students, not to exceed the cost of tuition and fees. This would replace vocational education scholarships.

Improving career and technical education in Kansas has been a focus of the legislature in the past few years. We need to continue looking at better ways to educate students for jobs that exist in an increasingly complex job market. This alternative education path provides opportunities to become trained and certified in high demand, well-paying positions.

HB 2212. In its original form the bill requires any local government with the authority



Rick Billinger

• This week in Topeka

to levy property taxes to adjust the mill levy rate annually to ensure the local government collects the same amount of total property tax revenue as in the previous year. It prevents local governments from automatically increasing property taxes through continual increases in assessed valuations. They would be required to show additional revenues above existing property taxes with a resolution showing the increase in the mill levy.

This is a step forward in lowering our local tax burden. The bill provides local ad valorem tax relief for the first time since 2003. Kansas are being crushed by an ever-increasing property tax burden which suppresses economic growth and prosperity.

The House has worked to make certain tax reform is affordable and insures the statutory ending balance is met while also lowering the tax liability of Kansas.

Some legislators are wanting tax relief while others are wanting income tax relief. However, until we control spending, we will not make progress in repairing the viability of the Kansas economy. We will continue to work until we can agree on which taxes to reduce first.

Repealer Update

On Thursday the House took up 22 bills designed to do away with senseless government rules and regulations. This was another step forward in reducing government in Kansas.

Caylee's Law

One of our first caucus priorities this session was the introduction and passage of Caylee's law. **HB 2534** implements Caylee's law, named after Florida 2-year-old Caylee Anthony who

disappeared in 2008. Her mother failed to notify authorities of her daughter's disappearance for a month. In many states, current law does not view this negligence as a crime. This bill passed 124 to 0.

Interstate Health Care Compact

HB 2520 enacts the Interstate Health Care Compact in Kansas. The compact would take effect upon adoption by at least two member states and with the approval of Congress. It is to secure the right of states to regulate health care, suspend conflicting federal laws, regulation and orders within their states; and secure federal funding for Medicaid.

This bill is based on the belief the power to regulate health care lies at the state level; the compact protests the overreach of the federal government. It is an agreement among participating states to restore their authority and responsibility for health care regulation.

Safe and Fair Elections Act (HB 2437)

The House voted to amend the Safe and Fair Elections Act to require all persons registering to vote for the first time in Kansas to provide proof of their U.S. citizenship. The original bill was to go into effect Jan. 1; the amendment makes the effective date June 15.

This week I had pages from Hill City and Goodland. I would like to thank Hill City teacher Brad Eckols for bringing Katie Ingle, Lacey Radcliffe, Staci Morford and Chantelle Simon and Goodland teacher John Mercer for bringing Jeffrey House, Josh Whisnant and Drew Dautel to the capitol.

Town Meetings

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and myself will be touring the district Saturday. At 1:45 p.m. we will be at the Colby Community College Student Union Multi-Purpose Room.

Rick Billinger is the state representative from the 121st District. He currently serves on the Commerce and Economic Development, Education Funding, Insurance and Local Government committees.

Thanks for the Tootsie Rolls

To the Editor:

Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas would like to congratulate all of the area Knights of Columbus organizations for another successful Tootsie Roll Drive.

For many years, Developmental Services has benefited from the generosity and hard work of the Knights. We appreciate their kindness and support, and feel extremely fortunate to have these extraordinary men in northwest Kansas supporting our efforts.

All the money donated to our organization from the Knights of Columbus goes directly to support the people we serve who have developmental disabilities.

Steve Keil, director of development Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas

Ethanol poised to cut cost

To the Editor:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has completed the final studies required to approve E15, a blend of 15 percent ethanol and 85 percent gasoline, as safe for 2001 and newer vehicles.

This means 7 billion gallons less of foreign oil every year and cheaper fuel at the pump.



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

This means a potentially higher octane fuel, a clean-burning fuel for our environment.

The question now becomes, will we be able to buy it?

E15 is the most highly studied fuel blend ever granted a waiver under the Clean Air Act. The Department of Energy and the EPA ran tests on vehicles produced in 2001 and newer, and the fuel passed with flying colors.

E15, just like the more common E10, is a voluntary-blend motor fuel. A gas station or convenience store can choose to offer the fuel or not. Ethanol is about 70 cents per gallon less expensive than regular unleaded gasoline. E10 is already saving you 7 cents per gallon. E15 should be able to reduce your fuel price by another 3 cents per gallon.

One of the largest concerns I have heard from consumers is fuel mileage. E15 should

not harm your fuel mileage.

I have personally asked owners and drivers how E15 has performed. The feedback has been great, more horsepower and no difference in fuel mileage.

The next time you fuel your car, look at your options. Premium gasoline has an octane rating of 91. Ethanol has an octane rating of 120. The problem in terms of fuel mileage is that in order to realize the performance benefits of ethanol, cars need to change to higher compression engines. If you build the engine to run on ethanol, your engine will knock when you put gasoline into your car. Poor fuel mileage isn't caused by ethanol. It's caused by gasoline.

E15 is out there. Ask your station when you can buy it. This country can be energy independent and we can get there in this decade.

We put a man on the moon in less than 10 years. Demanding a fuel that is home grown is not rocket science. We produce enough oil, gas and ethanol within our own borders to get there. It is time to demand it.

We send over \$400 billion annually to foreign countries for oil. Demand a fuel that keeps our dollars at home.

Steven R. McNinch, Oakley chief executive officer Western Plains Energy LLC

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

