



Free Press  
Viewpoint

Legislature stopped  
with work undone

The Kansas Legislature ground to a halt Sunday, nine days overtime and leaving a couple of pieces of important business undone.

The House and Senate did manage to pass a \$14.3 billion state budget which includes tax cuts, a 3 percent cut in overall state spending for the first time in years and a \$464 million cushion, or ending balance, as required by law.

Another accomplishment was passing a plan to reform the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System, which covers state workers, teachers and educators, and many city and county employees as well. Existing pensions would be protected with new revenue sources, and new employees would go under a different, less expensive plan.

Left undone was the biggest job of the year, however, drawing new boundaries for all House, Senate and congressional districts as required by federal court rulings and the Constitution. This must be done every 10 years after the federal census so districts have roughly equal population.

The redistricting could and should have gotten done if a spirit of compromise had prevailed among conservative and “moderate” Republicans and the Democrats, but that was not about to happen.

Halfway through the session, conservative groups announced plans to file candidates against seven or eight more liberal Republican senators in a bid to break the moderate faction’s hold on Senate leadership. Many were popular incumbent House members.

Senate leaders countered by drawing a Senate map that put many challengers outside the districts they’d filed in. Conservatives, such as Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer representing northwest Kansas, were given no say in their own districts.

And the fight was on.

Another major failing was to pass a tax-cut plan that even conservative leaders admitted may have been too aggressive. Instead of phasing income-tax cuts in over a decade, the bill which passed both houses will cut everything right away.

Many project the need for big cuts in state spending down the road, though some would see that as a good thing. It’s an issue the next Legislature likely will have to revisit.

The redistricting now apparently will fall to the U.S. District Court, where a three-judge panel could wind up drawing the lines. The only other alternative would be a special session, but that might only delay the inevitable.

As it is, the August primary may have to be put off, no matter who draws the districts, since the June 15 deadline to file for state and local office is fast approaching. Secretary of State Kris Kobach says the maps must be ready by Friday, June 8.

Who will wind up in control of the Senate is anybody’s guess, but voters in some districts may not cotton to what will be seen as a power play by business – the challengers were recruited by a group tied to the state Chamber of Commerce – and allegedly, the governor.

How the new district will affect the outcome is anybody’s guess. Legislators on both sides may wish they’d gotten along better.

While the session undoubtedly produced some accomplishments, failing to handle the big issues is not a point of pride. Voters and citizens should not be pleased with either side for that. – *Steve Haynes*

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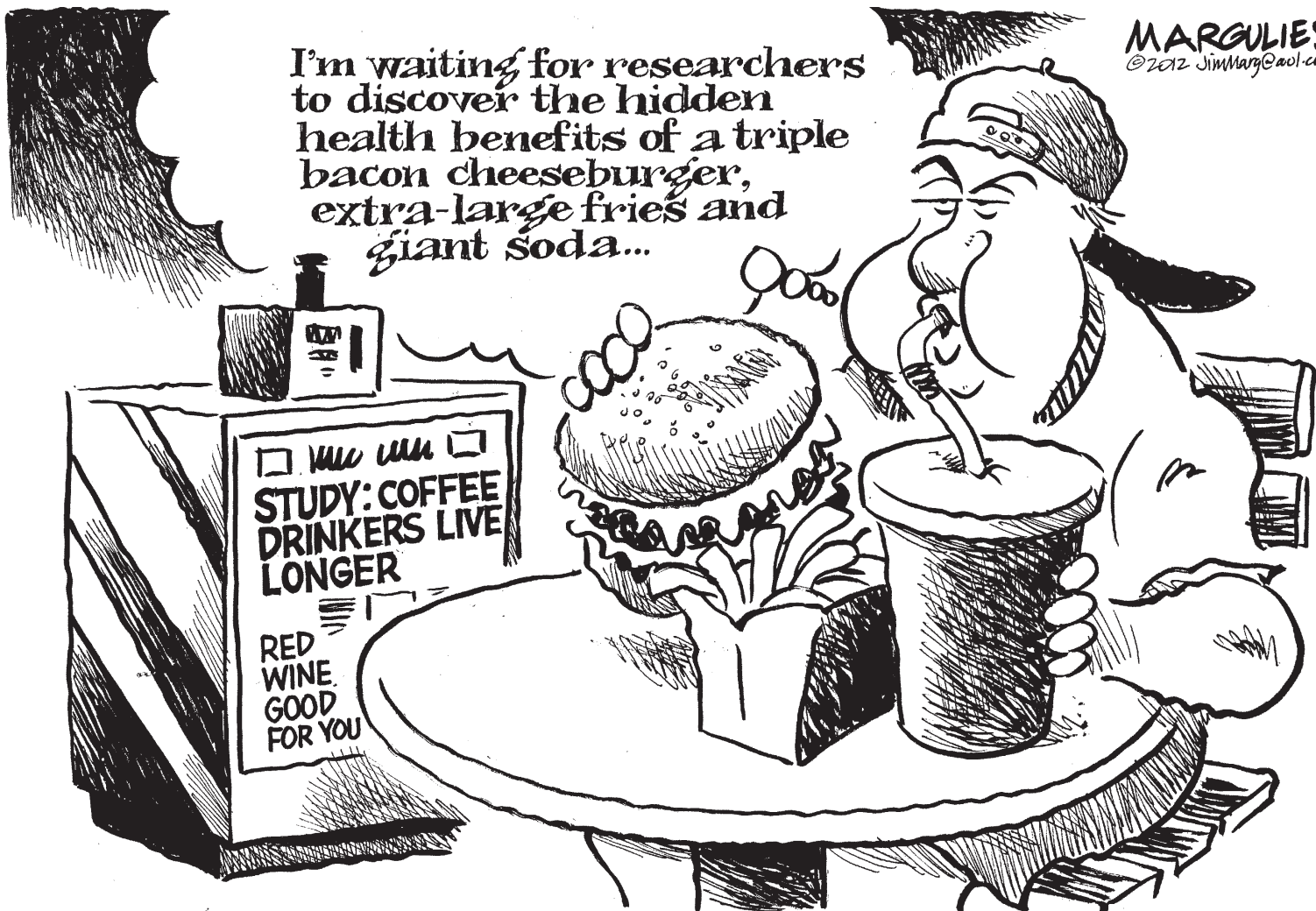
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Moving? Good luck; call when it's over

It occurred to me this morning that I’m starting into my third summer in my present home. That’s a bit of a stretch, since I moved the first of September, nearly the end of summer, but you get my drift.

I’ve been in place long enough to know what I like about it. And I’ve been in place long enough to add a few lines to my “perfect house when I win the lottery” list.

With that said, I’m gloating just a little over the fact that my boss, Sharon Friedlander, is in the middle of a discouraging and somewhat desperate house hunt.

Been there. Done that. Got friends with pickup trucks and horse trailers to pitch in on the last day of the month.

Those are the worst moves – the ones where nothing comes together until the last minute, or even later. When you walk into your new home after everyone who has pitched in to help has waved goodbye and driven off – and discover that you can just barely walk into your new home. Sideways. While holding your breath.

Oh well, that’s a problem for tomorrow. Tonight, find the bed, find a sheet and a blanket, find the suitcase with your toothbrush and a couple of changes of clothes.

Where’s the suitcase? In the trunk of the car? No, I remember bringing it in.

There it is, right where I put it – in the back of the closet with 20 boxes in front of it.

How about a snack? There’s food in the fridge.

Oh. Six boxes say you can’t open the door.



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

Moving is so much fun.

Your experience may vary. You may have enlisted the aid of professional movers, in which case you have perfect strangers to blame for the boxes parked in exactly the wrong place. You may be moving as part of a couple or with kids, in which case you have a spouse or a child to blame for the buried suitcase and fridge, along with someone to help shift boxes a few inches this way or that to get the fridge open. (Forget the suitcase; it will still be safely waiting for you when it’s time to move again.)

If you made the move with small children, of course, they will help you by incessantly whining about being tired, hungry, unable to survive another second without the stuffed kitty you remember putting at the bottom of a huge box of similar toys which you haven’t seen since yesterday. You get the idea.

They will further their efforts to help get settled in by carefully placing themselves in the way, regardless of where you have to walk, and howling indignantly when you are so rude as to carelessly step on them. Pets are great for this trick, too, but don’t confine their efforts to

moving day.

Come to think of it, children don’t have to be small to contribute whining, howling and being in the way, but their choice of missing toys they desperately need tends to evolve toward electronics as they get older.

I’m so glad to have been in the same place for going on three years.

You may be laughing and nodding your head. Or you may be one of those people whose biggest move was across the hall to a bigger bedroom when a sibling left the farm and moved to the big city. The world, in fact, is divided roughly into two groups – movers and stayers. Especially in a rural area like Colby, there are a fair number of folks who may go away to college, but wind up back on the family farm, raising kids and crops right where their parents and grandparents did.

I’ve known both worlds; the first 20 years of my life were lived in one house, in a town and a county where the family’s roots went back generations. Since then, I’ve moved an average of every three years.

Roots and familiarity are good. Seeing new places and meeting new people are good. Moving is good too – as long as it’s somebody else that has to unpack.

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

Startup act aims at new-business support

By Sens. Jerry Moran, Marco Rubio, Mark Warner and Chris Coons

Inside the Beltway, conventional wisdom says that Congress does little during an election year. But Americans are eager to see Congress address our country’s challenges – most important, the economy and job creation.

We introduced bipartisan legislation on Tuesday, Startup Act 2.0 – to help jump-start the economy through the creation and growth of new businesses. We want to prove the critics wrong: Congress can get something done in an election year when we work together to strengthen the economy and create jobs.

Companies less than five years old have created nearly all new U.S. jobs for almost three decades, according to Kauffman Foundation research, averaging roughly 3 million each year. Passing the JOBS Act in March was good news for the young companies now creating jobs. But entrepreneurs face additional challenges beyond access to capital. Startup Act 2.0 picks up where the JOBS Act left off – by helping entrepreneurs to succeed.

Vital to any new business are the talented individuals who turn ideas into reality – including foreign-born entrepreneurs. More than a quarter of technology and engineering companies created in the U.S. between 1995 and 2005 had at least one key founder who was foreign-born, according to researchers. Yet immigration policies have hurt U.S. efforts to compete for entrepreneurial talent.

Startup Act 2.0 creates an Entrepreneur’s Visa for legal immigrants, so they can remain in the U.S., where their talent and ideas can fuel growth and create American jobs. It also creates a new visa so that U.S.-educated foreign students who graduate with a master’s or

doctorate in science, technology, engineering or mathematics can receive a green card and stay, launch businesses and create jobs.

Our plan also eliminates the per-country caps for employment-based immigrant visas – which hinder U.S. employers from recruiting the top-tier talent they need to succeed.

Another significant challenge facing startups is gaining access to enough capital to get off the ground. So our plan provides incentives to encourage investment in startup companies.

Startup Act 2.0 will make permanent the exemption of capital gains taxes on the sale of certain small-business stock held for at least five years – so investors can provide financial stability at a critical juncture of firm growth.

Our plan also creates a targeted research and development tax credit for startups less than five years old and with less than \$5 million in annual receipts. This credit is designed to allow startups to offset employee taxes – freeing up resources to help these young companies expand and create jobs.

Startup Act 2.0 also seeks to move taxpayer-funded university research more quickly to the marketplace, where it can propel economic growth. U.S. universities have historically been responsible for groundbreaking discoveries – spawning new industries and jobs.

But not every institution is fully equipped to successfully mentor entrepreneurial researchers as they create new companies or work with industry to find uses for the fruits of university-based research. Our proposal will use existing federal research-and-development funding to support university initiatives to bring cutting-edge research to the marketplace quickly.

Another obstacle facing new businesses is the expense and time required to comply with government regulations. Firms with fewer

than 20 employees spend 36 percent more per employee to comply with federal regulations than larger firms, according to the Small Business Administration.

Our bill requires all government agencies to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of all proposed “major rules” with an economic impact of \$100 million or more. This will help determine the efficacy of the rule and its potential impact on the formation and growth of businesses.

Finally, Startup Act 2.0 will direct the Commerce Department to assess state and local policies that aid in the development of new businesses. Through the publication of reports on new business formation and the entrepreneurial environment, lawmakers will be better equipped to encourage entrepreneurship with the most successful policies.

In the past 16 months, six countries have implemented new policies to encourage more entrepreneurship, innovation and job creation. The U.S. cannot afford to turn a blind eye to our competitors or use the coming elections as an excuse to delay action on an issue so critical to our economic future.

Many of these bipartisan ideas are supported by President Barack Obama’s Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. We look forward to working with the president and our colleagues to prove that conventional wisdom about Washington won’t hold true this year.

Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) is on the Appropriations Committee and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) is on the Budget Committee and Commerce Committee. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) is on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) is on the Budget Committee.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

