



## Other Viewpoints

# New district lines prompt relocations

In a state in which there's supposedly no place like home, it will be fascinating to see what voters make of the half a dozen people who packed up and changed homes just to run for the Legislature. Skepticism is in order.

As Secretary of State Kris Kobach noted to a Democrat upset by the sudden move to Ottawa of one-term Rep. TerriLois Gregory, R-Baldwin City, Kansas doesn't require a minimum length of residency before running for office within a given district.

Maybe it should. Some extraordinary last-minute moves may be justifiable in this extraordinary year, in which three federal court justices had to clean up the Legislature's mess last month by quickly drawing new districts for U.S. House, state Board of Education and the Kansas House and Senate in response to 2010 census data.

The court acted June 7, variously pulling districts out from under incumbents, bunching incumbents together and creating districts with no incumbents. Would-be candidates had to act fast, before the noon June 11 filing deadline.

But Merriam-Webster defines "carpetbagger" as "a nonresident or new resident who seeks private gain from an area often by meddling in its business or politics."

And that definition may fit some of the cases, especially where incumbents felt so entitled to a legislative seat that they proved willing to cut ties and move nearly overnight.

Eight-term Rep. Clark Shultz, R-Lindsborg, relocated to the McPherson address of an apartment leased for his daughter. "I have a lot of business and personal colleagues in McPherson, so it just makes sense to stick with District 73," Shultz told the *McPherson Sentinel*.

At least two-term Rep. Melanie Meier, D-Leavenworth, and 10-term Rep. Jan Pauls, D-Hutchinson, didn't have to leave the city limits to try to hang onto their seats. But Pauls had to convince the State Objections Board that her legal residence was an old church, pews still in place, that she and her husband are renovating.

The prominent case locally is that of Gary Mason, a Wichita businessman challenging two-term Sen. Carolyn McGinn, R-Sedgwick. He had lived in the same district as McGinn for more than a dozen years when he declared his candidacy last September. After the judges' map left Mason outside McGinn's district, he moved back into it, by moving to Park City.

Mason told *The Eagle* editorial board this week that voters deserve a choice, and that his moving reflected how he and his wife are committed people.

It will be up to voters to judge whether the last-minute moves by Mason and other candidates are impressive evidence of the depth of their desire to serve the public, or something else.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*



"SEE? I TOLD YOU WE WERE GOING TO NEED HEALTH CARE."

# New 120th means losing an advocate

Rep. Ward Cassidy, looking back over his first term in the Legislature, could only shake his head at the way things wound up this year.

Despite the fact that both the House and Senate wrestled all session with the need to redraw legislative boundaries to reflect the 2010 census, known as reapportionment, in the end, nothing got done. Nothing at all, except a lot of squabbling and backbiting.

And that left a panel of three federal judges in charge. The courts would have reviewed any map the Legislature came up with, but having nothing to start with gave the judges free reign.

And that seems to have allowed them to accomplish what term-limits proponents have never come close to, a major turnover in both houses.

"We could have 50 to 60 new legislators (out of 165) next year," Mr. Cassidy said. "It could be a good thing."

However, either Rep. Cassidy or Rep. Rick Billinger of Goodland, who now has the 121st District to the south of the 120th, will be among those not coming back next year. They were thrown together into the new 120th, which now covers Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Sherman and Wallace counties and part of Thomas, including Colby.

(The rest of Thomas went to the 118th, represented by Rep. Tom Hineman of Dighton, who got a bunch of new counties but no incumbent to run against him.)

Mr. Cassidy said he thinks it's too bad that two strong advocates for western Kansas wound up opposing each other.



**Steve Haynes**

- Along the Sappa

"I won't feel bad if Rick wins," he told the Oberlin Rotary Club in a talk a couple of weeks ago, "other than I think I got more done."

Issues that affected this region brought representatives together, he said, including Sen. Ralph Ostmeier and all three House members.

"All of us from out west worked hard on the carnivals," he said of a bill to save home-owned carnivals operating at county fairs from regulation and inspection by the state Department of Labor.

He and Sen. Ostmeier worked to bring Kathleen Lippert, executive director of the state Board of Healing Arts, and three members of her staff, to Oberlin for a face-to-face visit with hospital administrators and other health officials. Since then, relations with the board, which licenses doctors and other health professionals, reportedly have improved.

Perhaps his biggest task, Rep. Cassidy said, was learning the \$11.4 billion state budget after he was moved to the Appropriations Committee at mid-term.

"In all honesty, I never studied that hard in school," he said, noting that he has a specialist certificate in education finance.

One lesson he learned, Mr. Cassidy added, was not to get too cute.

He said he realized in committee one day that a measure to cut school money was going to pass with two members he thought would vote against it missing. He decided to vote for it so he could move to reconsider the decision the next day. Only someone who was on the prevailing side can make that motion; the losing side can't.

The strategy failed when the missing members did not back him, he said, and he was stuck with his vote.

"You did get a text from a few school administrators," Oberlin Superintendent Duane Dorshorst said with a smile.

Mr. Cassidy shook his head and said he thinks he'll just stick to voting for what he believes in from now on.

He said he learned to scratch the backs of those who can help him. In the urban-dominated House, he said, he spoke in favor of a Johnson County bill. Now, he said, he has 22 friends in Johnson County who should support him when he needs help.

He said several candidates for speaker of the House have told him he could be the budget chair next year, and that would give him a strong position to represent northwest Kansas next year.

That would be a fitting reward for a remarkable and productive freshman term.

*Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.*

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.

# Tech ed comes at critical time

In the 1980s, a little over 40 percent of Kansas high school graduates went on to Kansas universities.

Since 25 to 30 percent of Kansas high school students were college-able, most eventually graduated. Kansas subsidized student tuition at the rate of \$2 for every \$1 a student paid. Both home economics and shop counted as science credits, a practice Kansas Education Commissioner Droegemueller defended because a majority of Kansas students never went to college.

Today, the percentage of Kansas high school graduates attending tertiary institutions is approaching 80 percent. Spread across more students, state funding only covers 92 cents for every dollar of student tuition. Yet the ACT and other measures of student aptitude still show only 25 to 30 percent of Kansas high school students are college-able. Capable Kansas university students are paying twice the tuition because far too many non-college-able students are attempting college in Kansas.

Therefore the governor's "tech ed" initiative — just about the only issue with some bipartisan agreement — comes at a critical time. Kansas needs auto mechanics, nursing assistants and many other skilled workers and technicians. Kansas and Kansan students are poorly served by schools where hallway banners assert that every student will succeed by going to college.

The state standardization movement of the last decade, not to mention the one-size-fits-all national common core currently being imposed, has pushed one single college-bound curriculum. The tech-ed initiative forces some



**John Richard Schrock**

- Education Frontlines

policy-makers and educators to address the needs of both Kansas and Kansas students who desire another path.

Changes in college funding make this difficult. In the 1980s, state universities were funded at a set rate as long as their enrollment stayed within a narrow corridor. There was no financial benefit to bringing in a few more students; nor was there a penalty if enrollment dropped a few students.

But a prior chancellor of the University of Kansas convinced the Board of Regents to allow regent's institutions to abandon that formula and let each school keep its tuition. That began today's chase after every warm student body. Institutional growth has taken a front seat to educational quality. Pressure to retain and graduate more students threatens to lower standards and cheapen the value of a Kansas degree.

If more high school students have the option to go to technical school, and if Kansas universities are more selective, the result will be smaller Kansas universities, less tuition cost for our genuinely college-able students and the preservation of academic rigor.

Brownback's tech ed plan is not new. The Kansas State Board of Education has developed

Career and Technical Education pathways for nearly a decade with the hope of motivating younger students to take schoolwork seriously. However one stark statistic warns against channeling students into career paths too early. Nationwide, nearly 60 percent of college students change their major at least once (one of several reasons the average college student takes five and a half years to graduate).

Technical schools across Kansas should be winners under this new initiative. It is time that they got back to their special job of training technical skills.

Recently some tech schools have hired outside faculty to teach academic general education courses. Some even advertise they can deliver a three-credit academic course in a few weekends, making a farce of academic credit.

Nearly a decade ago, Kansas community colleges and technical schools were moved from under the authority of the Kansas State Board of Education to the Kansas Board of Regents for better coordination. Unfortunately the regents have failed to exert any substantial oversight of technical schools in Kansas.

This new promotion of "tech ed" should allow tech schools to return to their mission and faculty skills and leave academics to the community colleges and regents universities.

If this does not occur, it may be time to transfer oversight back to the state Board of Education.

*John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.*

## Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

