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## Congressman loses two committees

By Kevin Bottrell  
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U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp says the House Republican leadership's decision to boot him from the Agriculture and Budget committees was punishment for not voting the way the party bosses want him to.

"You vote the way you're told, is the

message," he said, "not the way your constituents want. There may be more punishments on the way."

Huelskamp — who represents the 1st District of central and western Kansas — said in a conference call with reporters Wednesday that he was told of the decision after a closed-door meeting of the 30-member Republican Steering Committee on Monday. He said as far as he knows, he's still on the Veterans Affairs

committee.

The congressman said there are a lot of rumors circulating. He said insiders have told him the leadership has a list of key votes, and anyone who did not vote their way on those issues would be punished.

"This is the worst form of petty, vindictive politics," he said.

He isn't the only one to get the ax. Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.) was removed from the Budget committee despite

claiming that he voted with the leadership on 95 percent of the issues.

Huelskamp said he did not know what the key votes are but has asked for a list. He speculated that increasing the debt ceiling — on which he voted no — might be one of them.

"When no one on that 30-member committee tells you why they did it," he said, "that means they're embarrassed about it."

Huelskamp said he was especially outraged at his removal from the Ag committee. The 1st District is the top agriculture production district in the nation, he said, and its representative has had a seat on the committee for 151 years.

"This is a disservice to me and to the district," he said.

Huelskamp said even though he was

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## Church here holds Nativi-TEA event

First Presbyterian Church of Colby members Lucy Davis (above) and Vivian Dewees (right) spent their Sunday afternoon volunteering at the church's annual Nativi-TEA and looking at all of the nativity scenes, cards, photos, ornaments, pillows, lanterns and figurines on display in the church basement. Dewees and Joyce Gatlin said more than 300 pieces were on display, and many of the participants this year were new. One of the largest scenes was a 26-piece Thomas Kinkadee set owned by Arlene Smith. One of the smallest was a nativity scene carved inside the nut of a Tagua tree. The 1 1/2-inch piece owned by Evan Barnum originated in Ecuador.

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## Emergency director leaves county office

By Christina Beringer  
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A farewell reception Tuesday for Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan drew about 30 people to the Thomas County Office Complex, and everyone agreed it will be the county's loss to see her leave.

McMahan's last day in the office was Wednesday. February 2013 would have marked her five-year anniversary in the position.

McMahan will be moving to the Lawrence area with her husband John and their 9-year-old son. John accepted a transfer with the Kansas Highway Patrol to the Turnpike troop in Topeka, where he will begin work Friday, Dec. 14.

McMahan said she's had several first and second interviews with a few companies; she has yet to ac-

cept a job in the Lawrence area.

"It's been five years," she said of the county job, "but it's gone in a blink of an eye. I'm really going to miss my job here, but the county is in good hands with Autumn as interim director."

Her part-time assistant, Autumn Arasmith, who has been with the department for two years, was appointed to the interim position by commissioners Friday.

"It'll be difficult for her to maintain operations on her part-time schedule," McMahan said, "but she's extremely qualified, and it helps that December is normally a slow month."

"I hope the commissioners hire a director soon, though, because it'll pick up in January when the blizzards hit and roads will need to be closed. That's when the real work starts. Eighty percent of work at EM revolves around the weather."

"...I understand hiring a new director will be a lengthy pro-

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Thomas County Landfill Supervisor Larry Jumper (right) stopped by to say farewell to fellow county director Susan McMahan during a going-away reception Tuesday afternoon. He was one of

about 30 people who attended the event for the outgoing emergency management director, whose last day was Wednesday.

CHRISTINA BERINGER/Colby Free Press

## City Council tables contract on fiber optics

By Sam Dieter  
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The Colby City Council held off on allowing a telecommunications company to string fiber-optic lines in the city Tuesday at the suggestion of City Attorney John Gatz, who said the latest version had been finished just that morning.

Gatz asked the council to hold off on the reworked contract with Wildflower Telecommunications LLC. Gatz said that he had worked on a new proposal that morning with City Manager Tyson McGreer, who was out of town that night.

Daniel Friesen, president of Ideatek Systems Inc. of Buhler, parent company of Wildflower, had come to the meeting to ask questions.

The three had been working on a franchise agreement which Friesen first presented at the Nov. 19 council meeting. After suggestions from McGreer and discussion among the council at that meeting, the contract was changed to read that the city can decide whether to allow the company to place its lines on city poles.

Gatz said he had spoken with several other lawyers about the ordinance. The city came to the conclusion that it should require the lines to go underground and not make exceptions for any company, he said. He wanted the council to wait until its next meeting to approve the contract since it had just been rewritten that morning.

"Personally, I'd like an opportunity to think about this before we

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## Researcher here selected for award

Dr. Freddie Lamm of Colby, professor and research irrigation engineer at the Kansas State University Northwest Research-Extension Center, has been named Person of the Year by the Irrigation Association.

"I feel quite honored," Lamm said. "I never thought I would ever get it. There's only one person per year."

Lamm said he started doing research on irrigated water management and irrigation systems in May 1979 at the center in Colby. Today, he studies center-pivot and subsurface-drip irrigation on corn.

He has been spending much of his time adapting drip irrigation for use on the Great Plains, and has been involved in 780 drip-irrigation technology transfer activities since 1989.

He has co-authored 39 articles and 258 technical proceedings papers and press articles, and manages two websites about irrigation for Kansas State.

The association, which calls itself the leading trade organization on irrigation, claims 1,600 members.

It has been choosing a Person of the Year since 1952.