

commentary

from other pens...

Buy more machines easy step for reform

The Wichita Eagle on election reform:
Election reform can be hard. Election reform can be easy. Election reform can be hard. In Kansas, where the system generally works well, it can be as simple as throwing some money at the problem.

Butler County commissioners recently did the throwing, and they hit their target.

Last November, Butler had a major election meltdown. In the Wichita suburb of Rose Hill, many voters had to wait three to four hours to vote. There were other long delays in Andover, Augusta and El Dorado.

Part of the problem comes with the territory; Butler is not only the state's fastest-growing county, it is the largest in land area. It also is one of a handful that uses electronic voting machines. Some of those machines have been placed in distant rural areas with small numbers of voters, leaving growing areas in the western part of the county with big numbers of voters per machine.

County officials had two ways to deal with the problem:
— They could move voting machines from the county's sparsely populated eastern regions to the fast-growing areas...
— They could simply buy more voting machines for the growing areas.

County commissioners ... wisely chose Plan B. They'll spend \$100,000 to buy 40 more voting machines for the county...

Rose Hill Mayor Dan Woydziak is especially happy on behalf of his community. He said: "I can't imagine having to go through what happened in November again."

Now he won't have to. Thanks to the good work of the Butler County Commission and clerk, neither will thousands of other Butler voters.

The Hays Daily News on the lottery:

Removing an airfare subsidy for Kansas commercial airports from legislation to extend the state lottery is probably the best. However, the idea remains a good one, provided it brings real relief from high airfares. ...

The airfare subsidy has been a stumbling block for efforts to extend the lottery, which is scheduled to expire July 1, 2002, without legislative action. It was left out of the present compromise bill, which the Senate approved...

House members, however, are keen on keeping it in. ...

Better to take it out and discuss the concept separately than to cloud the lottery extension. Whether to have a lottery at all and how to spend the revenue the lottery generates can ... and ... should be ... separate issues.

... Airline service helps rural communities and surrounding towns feel less isolated, more connected and more livable. Business and industry needs the service, but so do nonbusiness travelers...

This remains a good idea but one that begs for more in-depth study. As a new compromise, legislators should extend the lottery, then commission a comparative study of airfares from all Kansas airports. Finally, they should seek the formation of a task force to study the data to see what it would take to get airfares down and to which airports that money would do the most good.

Only then can lawmakers know whether airfare subsidies would be a wise use of lottery revenue...

Letter Policy

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The Sherman County Herald

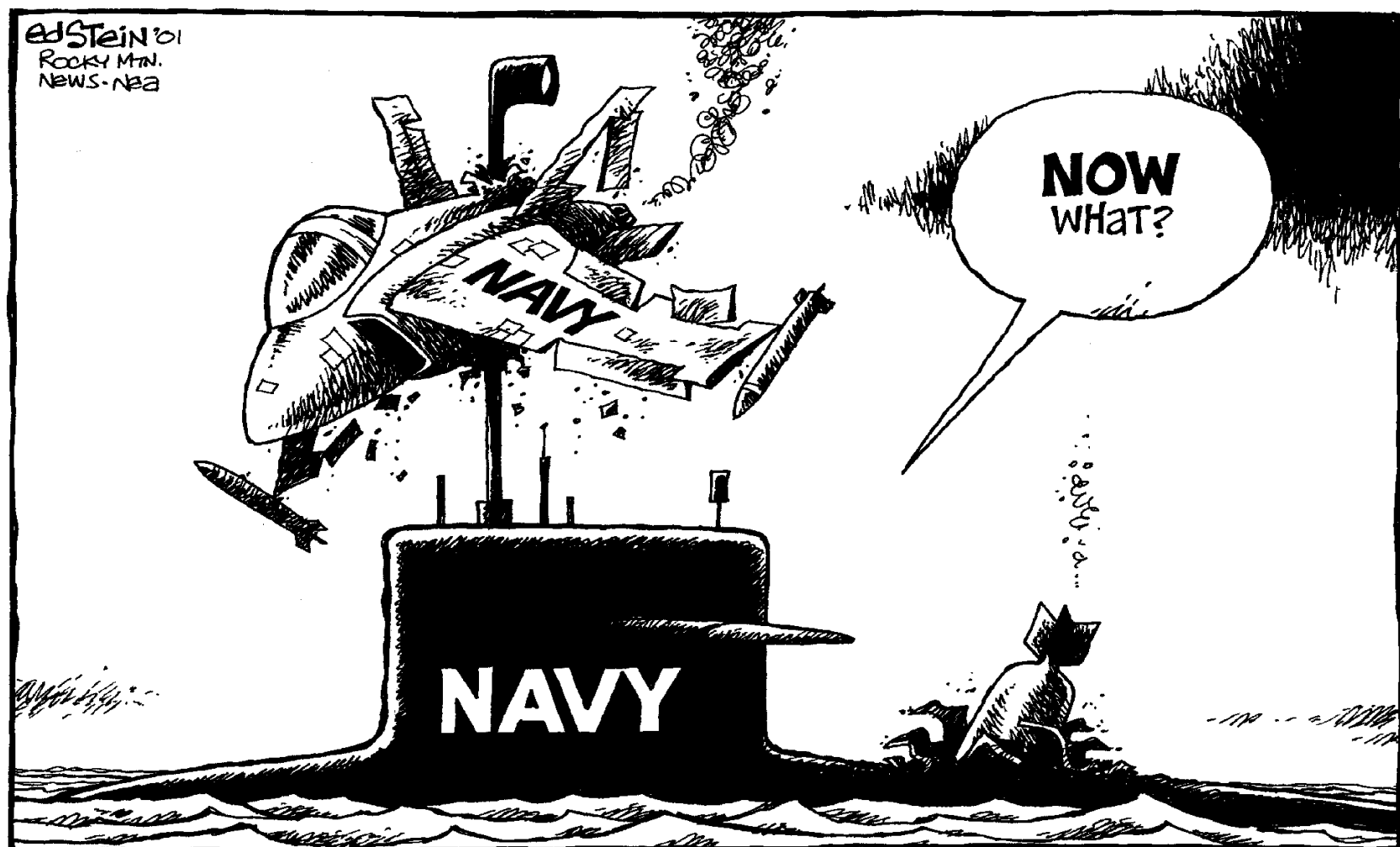
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A barrel of perfume for the city geeks

Did the Department of Agriculture steal more votes than Cook County when it set aside the pork checkoff? Sure looks like it. What people need is an anti-bribery contract with the Department of Agriculture.

Yes that was as bizarre as a lonely spinster's cat on a leash, but this Pork Promotion Research and Consumer Information Act (pork checkoff), vote was like dealing with the Mafia.

Last August the big chief at the Department of Agriculture first called the pork checkoff a dully sanctioned referendum, but when farmers voted to decommission the pork checkoff, it was the Charley Brown syndrome. Lucy jerked the ball away again.

It didn't matter that hog farmers thought it was a vote and so did the girls at the county Farm Service Agency offices where the voting took place.

What happened really put the hicks in the sticks up town, with the city geeks. It had all the trappings of an election with a government funded election committee for a yes vote. But when the referendum failed just as sure as Sri Lanka, debauches its currency, the fancy guys began to do



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the mackarena, (Mexican folk dance). But they can't make a sewer smell like a Smithfield hog farm, and a barrel of Nite In Paris perfume did not decontaminate this botched farmer's referendum.

Just as sure as the Lyndon Johnson war on poverty abolished inter-city ghettos the Department of Agriculture canceled the referendum vote. They said it actually was a discretionary vote, meaning it could be changed by the big Chiefette of the Department of Agriculture. Wonder what they would have said if it hadn't failed?

Market promotion checkoffs have always been a processors political slush fund—and the mob of IBP and Cargill is as American as the futures market.

Well that doesn't do it. The nullification of the

vote on pork checkoffs chapped hog farmers more than a bureaucrat that could not spend the people's money.

But history does repeat itself, just like pork producers. Wheat farmers back in 1964 wondered if they lived in a democratic republic or if it was the Soviet Union. A clone to the just failed wheat referendum was fast tracked through Congress, and that was the beginning of the free-food pentagon (big five food processors). They got the government subsidy and farmers got \$1.20 wheat.

Voting is a fundamental bulwark of all our rights. Some say they don't vote because that just encourages them. Others say it is a disgrace that 50 percent of the people don't vote.

Well we are not a third world nation where everyone is required to vote. There are places in this world where it doesn't matter if it is a butterfly ballot. They don't need to read the ballots, the ballots are already marked. Just the mere fact they were there they surely wanted to vote YES, they would say. So all these fancy guys need is Jim Crow!!

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Be cautious when reselling vacation time shares

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

My wife and I own a vacation timeshare in Florida. We have used it for several years, but now we would like to sell it. I have come across a company that has offered to sell it for a small fee. The company tells me that the market is "hot" for resales and practically guarantees me a quick sale. Since Florida is a long way away and all the real estate agents have wanted large commissions I am considering using this company. Attorney General Stovall, before I commit to anything, can you tell me if this is a good idea?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

My Consumer Protection division is aware that there are unscrupulous companies that offer to sell timeshares for a fee, but do not deliver what they promise. These types of companies may contact you by phone or mail. Salespeople are likely to tell you the market for resales is "hot" and that their company has a high success rate in reselling units. They may claim to have extensive lists of sales agents and potential buyers. For an advance "listing" fee, often \$300 to \$500, some salespeople promise to sell your timeshare for a price equal to or greater than your purchase price. To further entice you, they may offer a money-back guarantee or a \$1,000 government bond if they can not sell your timeshare within a year. Others offer to purchase your timeshare for 80 to 90 percent of its appraised value if they do not sell it within a specified time. To the dismay of many consumers, fre-



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

quently the company ends up with their money and the consumer is stuck with the timeshare.

If you want to resell your timeshare and are approached by a company offering to help, you should take some precautions. I discourage you from agreeing to anything over the phone until you have had a chance to check out the company. The best way to do this is to ask the salesperson to send you written materials, including the money-back guarantee and references of recent sales. If the salesperson refuses or otherwise uses high-pressure sales tactics to get you to agree over the phone, see this as a red flag and refuse to do business with this company. If the salesperson agrees to send materials in writing, take time to review the materials carefully. Find out where the company is located and does business. Contact the Better Business Bureau, Attorney General and local consumer protection agencies in the state where the company is located and inquire as to if any complaints have been made against the company. Also, ask if the company's salespeople are licensed to sell real estate in the state where your timeshare is located.

Then, verify that information with the state licensing board.

Also, remember that you have several other resale options. You may try selling your timeshare yourself by placing an ad in a newspaper or magazine or contacting a real estate agent familiar with that area. Although real estate agents do make their living from sales commissions, they do not receive a commission until the unit is sold, which means you do not run the risk of losing out on a "listing" fee that many questionable companies require. There also are programs that set up exchanges of time shares. For a fee these programs allow you to arrange trades with other resort units in different locations.

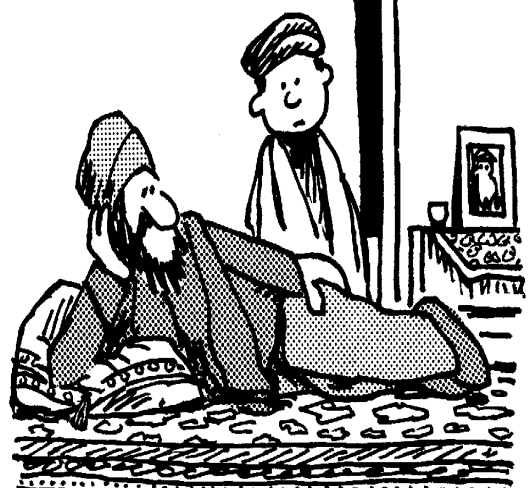
If you feel that you may have been taken by a timeshare resale company, contact my Consumer Protection division at 1-800-432-2310.

Attorney General Carla J. Stovall offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th, 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310. Leave your name, number and subject of your inquiry with the receptionist and an agent will return your call promptly.



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DON'T BOTHER DADDY NOW. HE'S HAD A HARD DAY OF DEMOLISHING ANCIENT GIANT BUDDHA STATUES - IN BAMBIAN.



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