

# commentary

from other pens...

## Government ignores problems of nepotism

**The Ottawa Herald on nepotism:**  
Most human resources professionals would advise employers to avoid even the hint of nepotism when making hiring decisions. Apparently the folks in Washington D.C. haven't learned that lesson as they continue to keep more and more government decisions in the hands of relatives.

Kansas Congressman Jim Ryun's two children, Catharine and Ned, were recently hired to work at the White House. They join another child already employed there, too. ...

The Ryuns are likely well-suited and qualified for their positions, but something smells fishy to us.

Perhaps there is a shortage of qualified candidates, but it seems odd when government officials' relatives have carte blanche on well-paid government jobs.

Of course the Ryuns aren't alone in their jobs due to well-placed connections. Secretary of State Colin Powell's son, Michael, was appointed Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. Several other White House staffers have family members as part of the work force too.

Nepotism isn't new, in fact it is probably more common in Washington than any of us know. Tradition dictates keeping appointments in the family.

We believe that government officials should go out of their way to make sure they are hiring the most qualified person for a job rather than just hiring the people with clout-heavy last names.

**The Newton Kansan on traffic fines:**  
It may rank as the most convoluted idea ever devised to raise state revenues.

But the tripling of most traffic fines in Kansas, which went into effect July 1, probably was nonetheless an idea whose time had come.

If you're on the receiving end of a traffic ticket now, you may not agree, but Kansas has been woefully behind neighboring states in this area for quite some time. Now, at least, we will be fairly comparable in most respects.

Remember, fines are supposed to punish and act as deterrents to breaking the law. Now that state speed limits are back to 70 miles an hour on the interstate highways and the Kansas Turnpike and 65 on most other two-lane roads, there is really no reason to speed.

Obviously, many drivers disagree and will continue to push the envelope, as they always have.

Fine.

The state will gladly take your money — times three.

### where to write

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1217 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 225-2715
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676
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## So far carpet shows no signs of growth

It's been so hot lately that I watered the carpet the other day.

Now, I'm hoping nothing grows.

It was really a silly mistake — actually, I think Steve might have called it a stupid mistake when he found the rug saturated at 2 a.m.

He had asked me to water the gardens during my lunch break. We have one fairly good sized garden by the back fence and a long, narrow one on the south side of the house.

The lettuce, corn, peas and squash go in the big garden and the radishes, cucumbers, tomatoes and bell peppers go in the one by the house.

Right after I ate, I set up the water so that it would catch both the narrow strip of garden and the slightly larger strip of grass between us and the neighbor's yard. One sprinkler for the big garden and two little ones for the narrow garden.

I turned the water on, and it looked a little high, so I notched it back a bit. It was hitting the house, but so what? It always seems to hit the house.

Then I headed back for work.



**cynthia haynes**  
• open season

We usually let the water go for two hours at a time. This would have to go a little longer but the garden could use the extra moisture, I figured.

Three to four hours later I came home and turned off the hoses.

I went into the dining room and realized that water had come in through the window. I hadn't even realized the window was open.

It had gotten a chair wet and some water was on the leaves of a rubber tree sitting under the window. Other than that, everything looked fine.

I wiped off the chair, closed the window and started supper.

I didn't even remember to bawl Steve out for

leaving the window open. The whole incident was forgotten.

At 2 a.m., however, Steve decided he wanted something from the 'fridge and walked downstairs in his bare feet. His tootsies immediately noted what my shod feet had missed — the rug was soaked.

It took more than a dozen bath and beach towels to soak up the water. He said we would be lucky if it didn't mildew.

I pointed out he had never liked that carpet anyway, so this might be a blessing in disguise.

He said something short and pithy.

The carpet dried out without mildewing, thank goodness. However, it has developed a huge brown stain where the water was.

We've tried shampooing it, and that lightened the brown rash, but it hasn't gone away.

I'm not sure what I'll try next. Maybe another shampooing or maybe a new rug or maybe I'll try planting grass on the bare brown spot in my dining room.

After all, it's easy to water.

## Those who helped us when we were young

I have realized that I'm at the age where people that were there in the beginning of my life start slowly slipping away.

These are the people who remember you when you were knee high and are always interested in how and what you're doing. It doesn't matter if you haven't seen them in 10 years, they still remember the first time you sat on their lap.

This week, the man who helped me plant and maintain my first garden joined all the other special people from Kanorado who went before him.

When I decided to take gardening in 4-H, I had no idea what I was in for. Jerry Rickman was to be our leader and when we showed up, he had two very long rows for each of us to plant our crops in. Now I know that when you are young, things seem bigger than maybe they really are, but I'm telling you these were the *longest* rows.

He helped us plant vegetables, fruit and some



**debra turner**  
• just beginning

things I'd never even heard of. He knew exactly what depth to plant everything and how far apart.

I had no confidence any of it would grow, but he seemed so excited and sure that I guessed maybe we'd have a chance.

Watering was the worst. I'd have to drag the heavy garden hose down each of my rows and then put it back after I was done. Did I mention those rows were really long?

I said watering was the worst, but I know I had to weed those rows, too. I don't remember doing

it, though, so it must have been so awful I blocked it from my memory.

I'm not sure what Jerry did to our plants after we went home, but I've always suspected he had to have done something. Those plants started shooting out of the ground and just never stopped. It was then that I understood why he got so excited.

Every time I found another plant with a bloom or when little watermelon started appearing on the vine, the excitement would hit me again.

Of course my mom and grandmother were tickled that I had my own garden and they didn't even complain when we had more veggies than we knew what to do with.

Jerry probably worked harder than we did and spent many hours with us that summer. He helped us see that hard work has rewards, getting dirty is OK and the miracle of a plant growing never gets boring.

## Will Bush raid the 'lockbox'?

Congressional Democrats are convinced that President Bush's outsize tax cut will force him to face a difficult political choice this fall: Raid the Medicare surplus or reduce defense or education spending.

"He's painted himself into a corner," said Rep. John Spratt, D-S.C., ranking member on the House Budget Committee, who has long maintained that Bush's \$1.35 trillion tax cut and anticipated federal spending will drain away the federal budget surplus.

"This new administration inherited the largest budget surplus in our nation's history," Spratt wrote his Democratic colleagues late last month, "yet after only five months, the record eight-year string of improving budgets is over, and the budget is headed to tap the Medicare trust fund for day-to-day operations once more."

Spratt's staff prepared an analysis showing that for the years 2003 through 2008, Bush's tax cuts, defense requests and other fiscal policies would force the government to dip into Medicare surpluses to the tune of \$192 billion. However, the tax cut's size has already begun hindering budget flexibility for the current fiscal year and for the fiscal 2002 appropriations now being processed by Congress.

In an interview, Spratt said the tax cut made it necessary for Bush to trim back his 2002 defense requests to below what the Pentagon wanted — and later will force Bush to cut either defense or education, or take from the Medicare trust fund.

Spratt predicted that Senate Democrats would schedule consideration of fiscal 2002 appropriations bills this fall to maximize Bush's pain and dramatize the cost of the tax cuts. He said they were likely to delay the appropriations for the Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education departments to the very end of the session, when it will be clear that the president can't pay for his military and education programs without raiding the Medicare "lockbox."

Bush may argue that Democratic spending is



**morton kondracke**  
• commentary

responsible for using up the surplus, but that position will be hard to maintain with the House in Republican hands.

Even the surplus for this fiscal year may evaporate because of a combination of increased spending, reduced tax revenues and a GOP budget gimmick designed to help the budget forecast for 2002.

Bush once attacked Congress and the Clinton administration for increasing spending for this year by 8 percent. But he has just submitted a supplemental appropriation that will cause spending to jump 9.7 percent above last year's levels.

In addition, Bush's chief economic adviser, Lawrence Lindsey, has said that the economic slowdown may reduce anticipated tax revenues by \$56 billion.

As for the budget gimmick — moving the deadline for a \$33 billion corporate tax collection from Sept. 15 to Oct. 1 — this tactic may cause the projected 2001 surplus to disappear.

According to budget expert Stan Collender of the public-relations firm Fleishman Hillard, Bush's tax cuts have reduced the non-Social Security, non-Medicare surplus for 2002 to just \$24 billion.

Of that amount, \$16 billion will be absorbed by increased defense outlays just requested by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, leaving around \$8 billion for new domestic spending on education, agriculture, energy, disaster relief and new tax fixes.

Almost certainly, that amount will be exceeded, Collender predicts, endangering the sacrosanct status of the Medicare surplus.

The Bush administration claims that no such surplus exists, but Congressional Republicans led the way in insisting on putting Medicare funds into a

lockbox that shouldn't be spent for other purposes.

Spratt said the Bush administration made a major error in passing a tax cut and its 2002 budget resolution before calculating what its defense needs would be.

Rumsfeld requested \$26.6 billion in new budget authority to improve military pay, health and pensions. According to Spratt, the request was about half what Rumsfeld and the military hoped to get. "The number was cut in half by OMB," Spratt said, referring to the White House Office of Management and Budget. Cuts were imposed in weapons procurement, and Army helicopter and tank training.

The tax cut's size raises long-term questions about how Bush will pay for his national missile-defense program, which might cost \$100 billion or more, and the "military revolution" that Rumsfeld is planning.

Beyond that, the bipartisan Concord Coalition projects that if Congress fails to hold annual spending increases to 5 percent over the next 10 years, already enacted and anticipated tax cuts will wipe out the \$3.1 trillion on-budget surplus, use up all Medicare reserves and force a raid on Social Security reserves.

Long-term projections are hard to politicize, but Democrats are confident they can force a crunch this fall and make Bush choose which area to cut — the military, education or Medicare.

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