

# commentary

from other pens...

## Forever unfinished, history of U.S. Capitol

On a February day in 1827, an irritated congressman from Kentucky rose on the House floor to ask why the Capitol remained unfinished after 34 years of labor and expense.

Rep. Charles Wickliffe said he knew old men living in his district who had spent their youth working on the Capitol and were now flabbergasted to learn it was still a work in progress.

The "History of the United States Capitol, A chronicle of design, construction and politics," by architectural historian William C. Allen, makes clear the Capitol is forever adjusting to the needs of changing times.

With work beginning on a new underground visitors center, the Capitol is still unfinished. It likely will remain so as long as it is home to Congress and thousands of supporting staff members.

Allen tells an epic story, ranging from the Capitol that George Washington imagined when he laid the cornerstone in 1793 to a barricaded Capitol adjusting early in the 21st century to a new age of terrorism.

The book's profusely illustrated sweep through time embraces the Capitol's long line of architects and engineers and the two centuries of legislators who have worked there.

The cast of characters includes invading armies, Civil War soldiers and a legion of clerks, policemen, journalists, lobbyists, patriots, orators, scoundrels, heroes, carpenters, electricians, plumbers and the faceless wielders of mops and brooms who cleaned up after all the rest.

Allen calls the Capitol "one of America's most intriguing buildings."

He describes the chamber on the day when the House debated improvements in the Navy, the licensing of mackerel fishing and Wickliffe's objection to approving money to continue the Capitol's construction:

"Visitors watched from the galleries located behind the chamber's magnificent Corinthian colonnade. Tall shafts of stone and Italian marble capitals gave an impression of grandeur and monumentality that was exceedingly rare in American architecture of the period.

"On the floor below, 212 representatives sat in armchairs covered with horsehair upholstery, their hats stowed on small shelves held between the chair legs. ... Clusters of congressmen congregated behind the rail to smoke cigars, discuss politics or the evening's entertainment. ..."

Rising a half-dozen years later, Rep. Rufus Choate of Massachusetts raised no complaint about the endless construction project, but he linked the building to the country it was beginning to symbolize.

"We have built no national temples but the Capitol," he thundered. "We consult no common oracle but the Constitution."

By the opening of the Civil War the charred ruin left by the British after they burned the Capitol in 1814 had been rebuilt. But dramatic change was coming. The building was not large enough to accommodate members added to the congressional roster as new states joined the Union. New wings made the old dome, designed by Charles Bulfinch, look like an upended teacup on a long and narrow table.

A new cast-iron dome, a larger one that would itself become a national symbol, was designed by architect Thomas U. Walter.

The dome was unfinished when Union soldiers were quartered in the new House and Senate wings. They used the chambers and committee rooms as barracks, the rotunda as a hospital and the basement as a bakery.

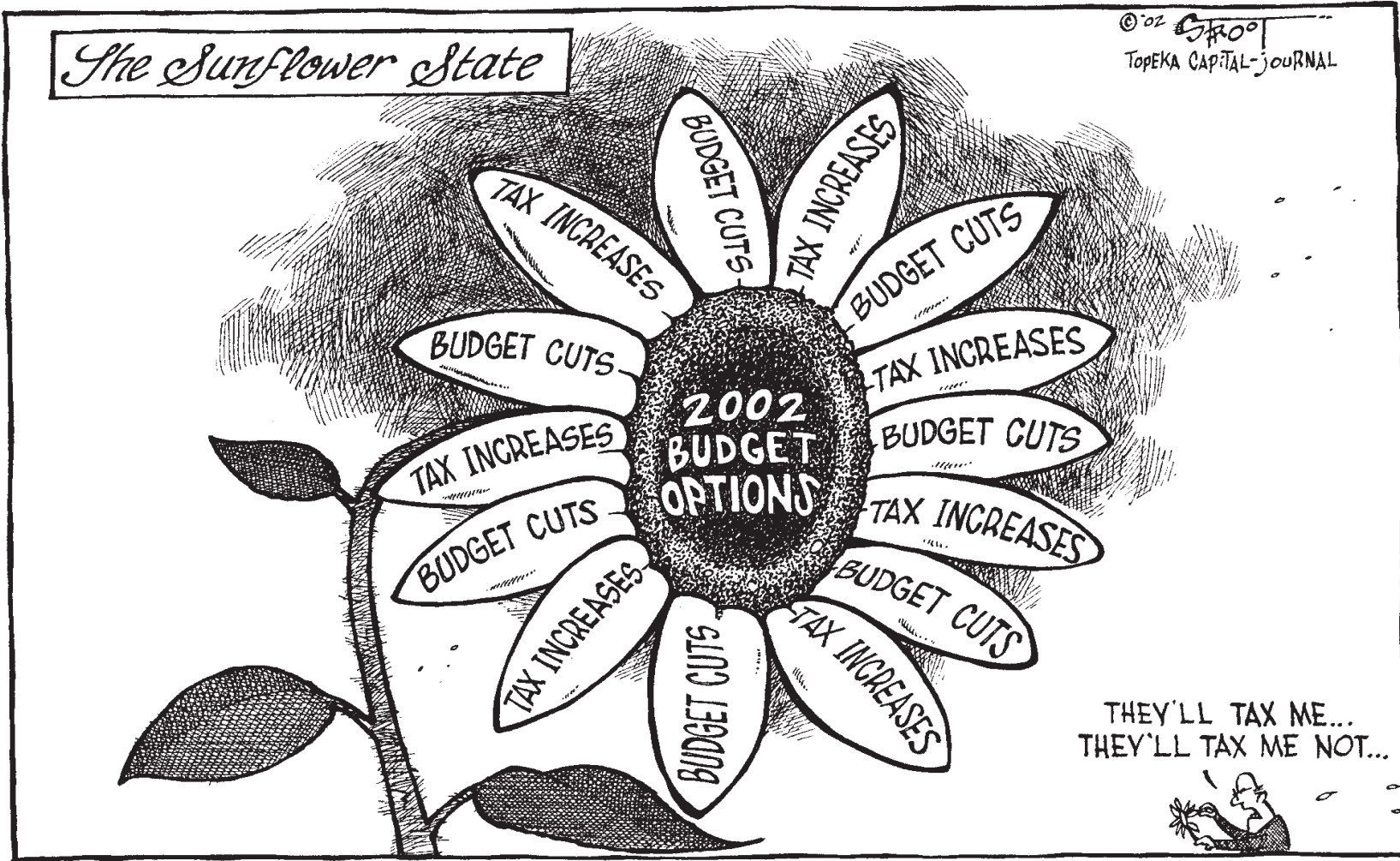
After the filth left behind was scrubbed away, platoons of lawmakers met under stained glass skylights framed with gilt moldings and stars.

The skylights disappeared in 1949 when the chambers were rebuilt. The East Front was extended in marble, replacing the original sandstone.

Over two centuries, Allen writes, "Countless senators and representative wielded political influence over the Capitol's destiny, bringing to it all the wisdom and foolishness at their disposal.

"Art, history and politics permeates the building's every fiber," he writes. "Few buildings have begun under such unfavorable circumstances, and fewer still enjoy greater architectural success than does the United States Capitol.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**—Lawrence L. Knutson, Associated Press writer, has covered Washington's history for 34 years.



## Consumers should be aware of identity theft

Consumer Protection Week, Feb. 4-8

Dear Kansas consumers:

Occurrences of identity theft have risen over the last several years. The information age has brought about significant changes that have helped improve the way we live and work, but it has also allowed others easier access to our personal information. If your personal information falls into the wrong hands, it can wreak havoc on your credit rating and your life. Personal information may be stolen for economic benefit, such as obtaining a credit card in your name. Identity theft is a felony in Kansas as well as a federal crime, and there are ways of protecting your identity.

Be extremely cautious when giving out personal information. Some entities do have a right to this information, such as a prospective lender or landlord. Others may only want the information for marketing purposes. Make sure that you understand why the entity is requesting your personal information. Remember that it is your choice whether to give out personal information to those not entitled to it. Also, remember that personal information can be obtained by other means as well.

Everyone receives credit card solicitations, bank statements and bills in the mail. These items contain personal information. Before throwing these items in the trash, shred or destroy all documents that contain any personal information or account numbers. Identity thieves don't mind "dumpster diving," going through garbage cans and dumpsters in order to obtain information about you that



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

they can use. Thieves may also "shoulder surf," which consists of obtaining information while watching you enter your account and PIN number while using a calling card, credit card, or ATM machine. Responding to spam e-mail messages with personal information may also provide the information an identity thief is looking for.

The best way to detect identity theft is to obtain and review a copy of your credit report once a year. Credit reports can be obtained by contacting your local credit bureau or by contacting the following three national credit bureaus individually to request copies: Equifax at 800-685-1111, Experian at 888-397-3742, and TransUnion at 800-916-8800. Each credit bureau has the right to charge you up to \$8.50 for each report, unless you have recently been denied credit or have been the victim of fraud. If you have been denied credit, you may obtain your report free within 30 days of the denial.

If you find that you have been a victim of identity theft, there are steps that you can take:

• Contact the fraud department of each of the three major credit bureaus listed above and let them know that you are a victim of identity theft. They

can place a "fraud alert" and a victim's statement in your file asking that creditors call you before opening any new account or changing your existing accounts.

• If any accounts have been fraudulently accessed or opened, contact the security departments of the appropriate creditors or financial institutions. Close the tampered accounts and use new passwords and Personal Information Numbers (PIN) when opening any new accounts.

• File a report with your local police or the police where the identity theft took place. Get a copy of the report in case the bank, credit card company, or other entities need proof of the crime at a later date. Also, remember that you may contact my Consumer Protection Division, 1-800-432-2310, and the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Identity Theft Clearinghouse, 1-877-ID-THEFT. You also may contact the FTC Clearinghouse at [www.consumer.gov](http://www.consumer.gov).

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 your call will be returned promptly.

## God forgives us, but is it for everything?

Friday in the office, Rachel Miscall's story about William Schlicher's parole decision triggered a mention of Charles Manson's parole having been denied so many times. A co-worker commented that Manson is really no worse than a lot of preachers these days.

What a sad truth!

But that reminded me of a number of religious beliefs that have always made me wonder what some people must think of God to believe the things they do.

For example, many people believe God forgives everyone for everything they do, no matter what. To my mind, anyone who believes that must think God is a colossal time-waster. He took the time to have 40 men record 66 books over a period of more than 1600 years to tell all of mankind for centuries to know what is right and wrong in His eyes.

But, according to that belief, it doesn't matter. God will forgive you no matter what, so the Bible is useless. This line of reasoning is dealt with in the Bible. Mark 7:13 quotes Jesus as saying, "and thus you make the word of God invalid by your tradition which you handed down. And many things similar to this you do."

No matter what people believe, it never changes the truth of what is recorded in God's word. Which



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

is definitely a good thing.

Many people believe all good people go to heaven. And most people who believe that also believe all people are good, thus everyone goes to heaven when they die. If that were true, heaven would be as big a mess as the earth by now.

And nobody can tell me it makes sense to believe that God the Father and Jesus his son are the same person. If anyone said a human father and his son were the same person, people would quickly dismiss him as out of his mind. But when it comes to religion, some people will not dispute even the most ridiculous beliefs.

No matter what anyone believes, nobody can dispute that belief, for how can anyone be sure he is wrong. That again goes back to the Bible. If there is a basis for determining which religious beliefs are right and which are wrong, then we can all find out what is true.

But in order to do that, we must see for ourselves that the Bible is reliable. And we must have the courage to accept the teachings God recorded in the Bible even when doing so requires making changes in our thinking, attitudes and actions.

And many people are not willing to do that. Believing God forgives everyone no matter what they do allows one to do whatever he feels like doing, with no consequences.

Believing everyone goes to heaven no matter what they do allows one to kick back and put absolutely no effort into their religion.

And that's exactly what people often do. In fact some people give absolutely no thought to what they believe, why they believe it or where that particular belief came from.

Steve Haynes said one day he would like to know who anointed the "King James Version" the official Bible. Indeed! I encountered a woman once who told me the "King James Version" is the original Bible.

I told a friend what the woman said, and she said, "So Jesus spoke old English?!"

Apparently, as did Moses.

### berry's world



## Cigarette tax reduces health costs

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and volunteers for the American Lung Association of Kansas, I offer our deep appreciation to Governor Bill Graves for his courageous commitment to a 65 cents per pack increase in the cigarette excise tax in Kansas.

If passed by the Legislature, not only will this "sin tax" increase help Kansas retain and improve many very necessary human services for our state's citizens, it also will reduce the damage caused to health by tobacco use.

We know through the repeated experience of other states and countries that when tobacco prices go up it helps many adults find the reason they need to quit, and it stops youngsters from making those initial purchases that can lead to tobacco addiction.

Thank you Gov. Graves for taking the lead. We now encourage every member of the Kansas Legislature to take the same stand for the fiscal and physical health of Kansas today and into the future.

Jim Pelch  
President  
American Lung Association of Kansas



from our readers

• to the editor

### Letter Policy

The Goodland Daily News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with phone numbers, by e-mail to: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com).

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