

commentary

from other pens...

Office keeps records of Senate's doings

In a city that looks to the future while keeping an eye cocked on the past, the Senate stands out as an institution that guards its history.

The Senate Historical Office keeps watch over the record, putting yesterday's roll calls in the context of their times.

August has always been a slow month on Capitol Hill, but history rarely takes a vacation.

Here is a sampling of August events compiled by the Senate's historians:

—Aug. 1, 1876: The Senate narrowly acquits Secretary of War William Belknap on impeachment charges stemming from accusations he took bribes for making an appointment. Belknap had hurriedly resigned in March and a majority believes that put him beyond the Senate's reach.

—Aug. 5, 1789: Testing its powers, the Senate for the first time refuses to confirm a presidential appointee. The post was that of naval officer for the Port of Savannah, Ga. President Washington had not cleared his choice with Georgia's two senators, who had their own candidate. It was an early example of "senatorial courtesy," whereby senators claim a voice over appointments in their home states.

—Aug. 6, 1971: In a bow to family life, the Senate and House take their first mandatory 30-day summer recess as required by the 1970 Legislative Reorganization Act.

—Aug. 10, 1902: Sen. James McMillan, R-Mich., dies at age 77. McMillan is remembered for sponsoring the redesign of the capital's monumental core. The McMillan Plan spurred the removal of the unsightly railroad tracks that crossed the National Mall and helped create a city worthy of an emerging world power.

—Aug. 12, 1790: The Senate meets for the last time in New York City. Congress would meet in Philadelphia for a decade, then relocate permanently to a new capital being built on the Potomac River on land ceded by Maryland and Virginia.

—Aug. 18, 1856: A new law provides that members of Congress receive an annual \$3,000 salary instead of the \$8 daily payment they had been receiving. Congressional pay has remained a hot issue ever since.

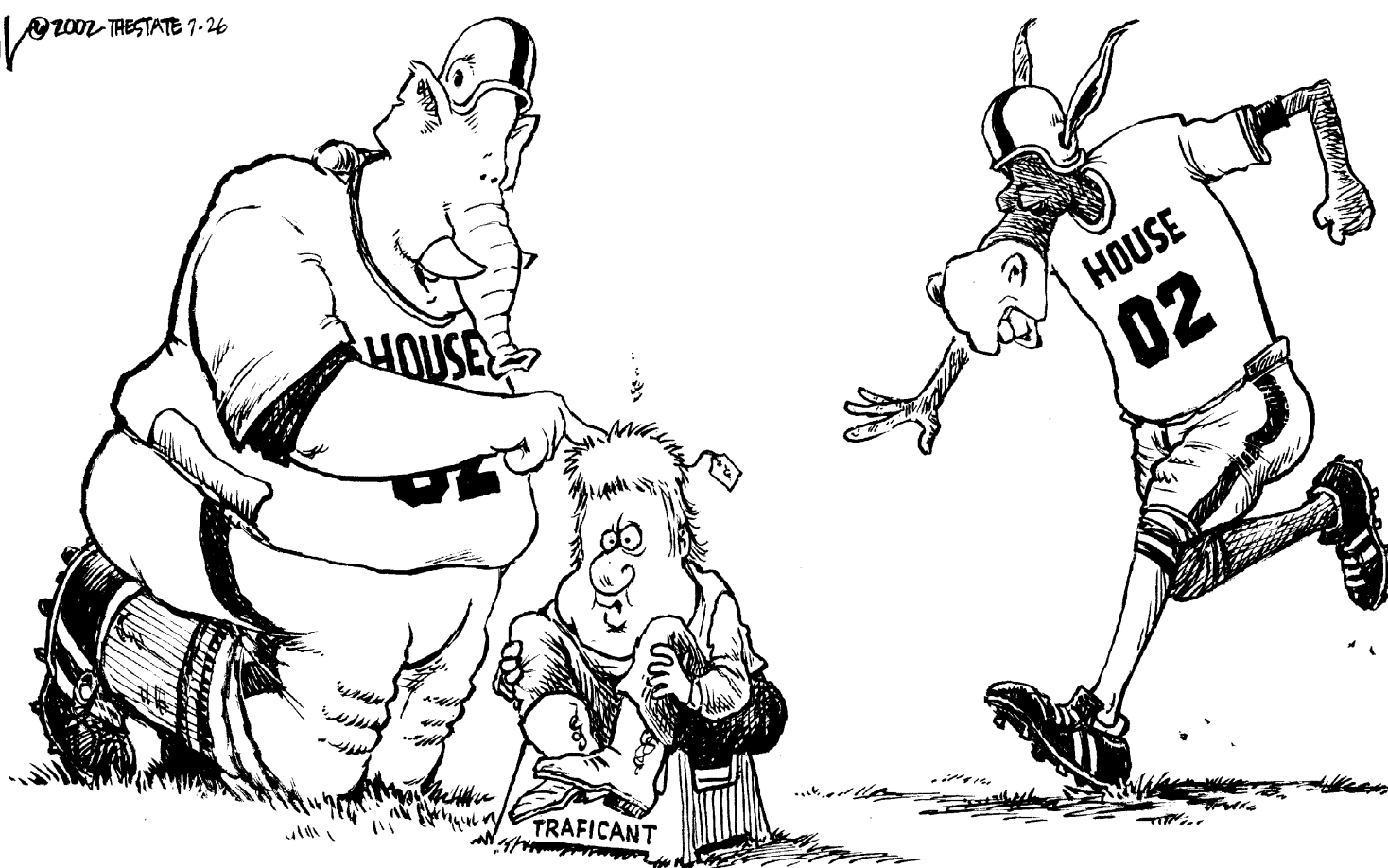
—Aug. 22, 1789: Following the new Constitution, President Washington visits the Senate to receive its "advice and consent" on an Indian treaty. But the Senate, intimidated by the presence of the great man, finds it hard to focus on the details. Members ask for more time for consideration. "This defeats every purpose of my being here," an irritated president snaps. He conducted all future treaty business in writing, setting a precedent all future presidents would observe.

—Aug. 24, 1814: An invading British Army occupies Washington, burning the Capitol, the White House and other public buildings. Hours earlier, an alert Senate clerk commandeers a wagon, hurriedly loads boxes of irreplaceable records and heads to safety in Virginia. Within hours the British throw the remaining documents into the flames. Burned out of its home, Congress met elsewhere in Washington before returning to the rebuilt Capitol in 1819.

—Aug. 28-29, 1957: Sen. Strom Thurmond, D-S.C., sets the all-time record for a Senate filibuster. Speaking against the 1957 Senate civil rights bill, he holds the floor for 24 hours and 18 minutes. Thurmond, who later became a Republican, has set other records for endurance. In his 47th year, he is the Senate's longest-serving member. At 99, he also is the oldest person ever to hold a Senate seat. Thurmond cast his 15,000th vote in 1998.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 34 years.

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JUST THINK OF IT AS A "KICKBACK!"

Demistfying those work-at-home schemes

Dear Kansas Consumer:

Although the following work-at-home schemes have been around for a few years, my office continues to receive complaints from consumers who have participated in them. Usually a business that operates this type of scheme will disappear, but a new one will be right there to take its place. Be mindful of the following work-at-home schemes so that you don't become a victim too.

The most well-known scheme is the envelope stuffing plan. A consumer may see an ad in a newspaper or magazine that promises earnings of \$200 to \$500 per week for stuffing or addressing envelopes in the comfort of his or her home. After responding to the ad, the consumer usually receives a letter asking for a "small fee" of usually \$10 or \$20 for an explanation of how the envelope stuffing plan works. After sending in the fee, the consumer receives a plan that basically tells how to place a newspaper or magazine ad, at an additional cost, identical to the one to which the consumer responded. The promoter who placed the ad is not offering actual employment, even though that is what the ad implies. The only way a consumer will "earn" money is if other people respond to the ad. A more updated version of this scheme involves a promoter who actually mails solicitations for this plan to consumers' homes.

Another work-at-home plan to be wary of is assembly or craft work. These programs may require the home worker to invest a substantial amount of money in equipment, supplies and deposits. A consumer will be asked to assemble dolls, clowns, puppets, stuffed animals or other products which



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

the promoting company promises to buy back. The company provides the materials, for a refundable deposit, and assembly instructions. Sometimes the company may require the consumer to purchase equipment from it, such as a sewing machine, to assemble the items. Unfortunately, most of the assembled products are subsequently rejected by the promoting company because they do not meet "quality standards." The home worker realizes that a lot of time and money has been invested in an unmarketable product, and the worker must find other customers in order to sell the goods.

Medical billing is a work-at-home scheme that suppliers have used to entice those with personal computers. A consumer reads ads in newspapers or signs on street corners saying "Work Out of Your Own Home and Make \$3000-\$5000 a month." When the toll-free number is called, a representative explains that there is a need in the consumer's area for medical billing specialists. In order for the consumer to be set up, a software package which costs at least \$299 must be purchased. The consumer believes actual billing work will be provided by the company, but when the software arrives, a list of doctors in the consumer's area is included. It is the consumer's responsibility to then contact

these doctors and offer the billing services, which is often unsuccessful. Additionally, the billing software received by the consumer is often out-of-date.

Before you invest in a work-at-home operation, check with my office, as well as your local Better Business Bureau, to see if there have been complaints filed against the program you are considering. The following are questions you might ask a potential work-at-home business:

- What tasks will I be required to perform?
- Will I be paid a salary or will my pay be based on commission?
- Who will pay me and when will I receive my first paycheck?
- What is the total cost of the work-at-home program, including supplies, equipment and membership fees? What will I get for my money? Then ask yourself: Am I willing to risk this amount if the program doesn't generate the income promised?

If you wish to file a complaint against a work-at-home business, please contact my Consumer Protection Division at 785-296-3751 or 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 your call will be returned promptly.

Many programs help students pay for college

During the past several years, I have become aware that a lot of the public does not realize that technical colleges have federal financial assistance programs, established to assist students with costs just like those programs found at large universities.

The Technical College's assistance program is larger than many colleges and provides tremendous assistance to students.

These programs are typically composed of grants, loans and work-study. The most popular federal grant program is called Pell. For a student to qualify for this program, they must have graduated from high school or have acquired a General Equivalency Degree. They or their parents, if dependent, must meet certain income requirements. Once a student is qualified, they receive this grant and have no obligation to repay as long as they complete their program of study. Last year, 300 students at the technical college qualified for a Pell grant.

Another grant program available at the technical college is the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant. This program does not require



kenneth clouse

• college notes

repayment, but does require a 25 percent local match towards the federal dollars. Seventy-two students qualified for this program this year at our college.

A popular form of aid used by many students and their parents is the Stafford Loan program. These loans are secured through a bank and at low interest (3.46 percent) and are exempt from interest charges and repayment until six months after a student finishes his or her education. More than 500 students took advantage of this aid during the last academic year.

Another form of federal assistance is the College Work-Study program. Students eligible for work study must meet financial requirements and be willing to work. They receive hourly wages. Sixty-

nine students qualified for this program last year.

Work-study jobs available at the technical college include custodial, secretarial, fitness center, refereeing and working at the Goodland Activities Center. The activity center job funded by work study is a community service position provided by the college. The program requires the college to put up 25 percent for each position and the other 75 percent is provided by federal funds.

A few other federal programs available at the technical college are the Workforce Investment Act, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Veterans benefits. Almost every financial assistance program found at a larger college can be found at Northwest Kansas Technical College.

In excess of \$2.6 million was awarded by our technical college in federal assistance during the last year.

Want to know more? Call Jackie Schmidt, financial aid coordinator, at the college, 785-899-3641.

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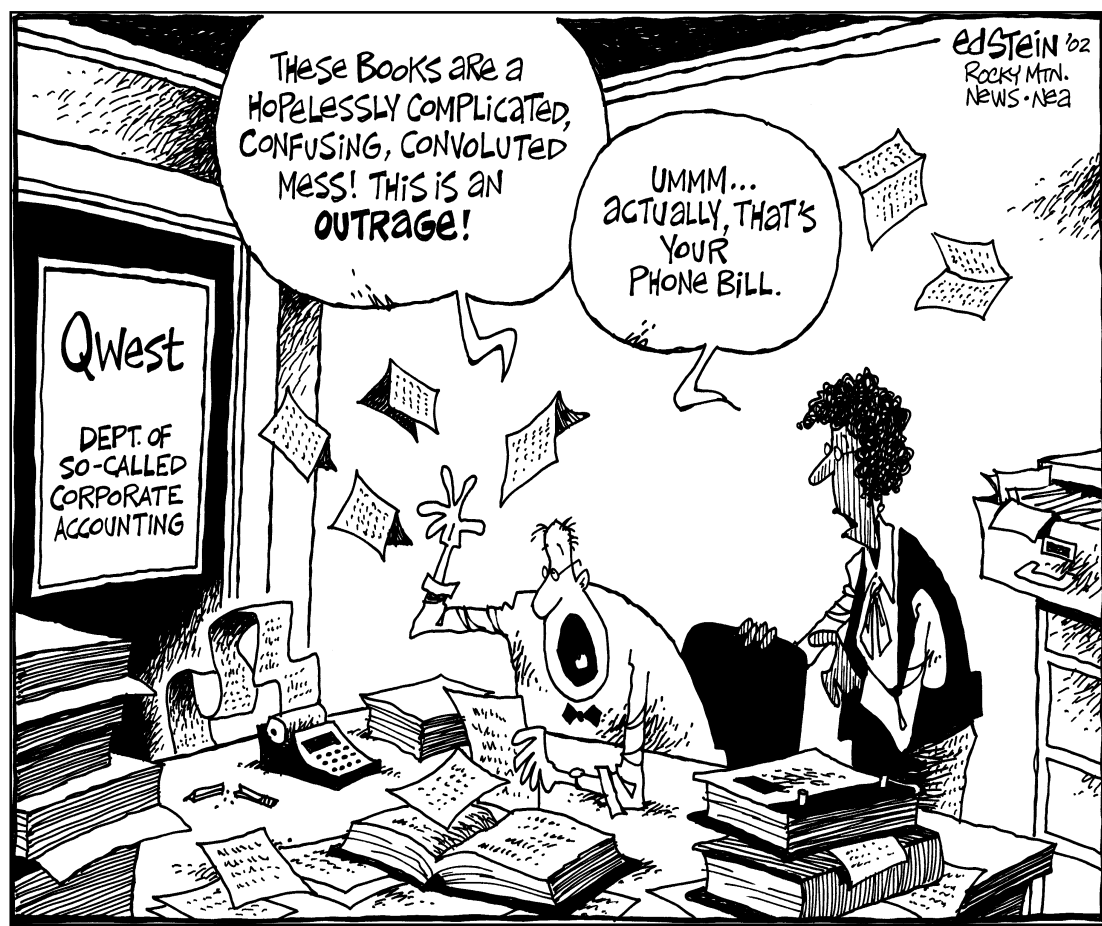
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