

# commentary

from other pens...

## Redistricting in 2012; start planning now

### The Hutchinson News on redistricting:

Kansas won't go through redistricting again until 2012. That may not be enough time for the Legislature to prepare.

Not if it intends to repeat the pain and humiliation of 2002. ...

House Republicans bullied minority Democrats, cutting into their already meager numbers by pitting one incumbent against another. Democrats and conservative Republicans cut a deal in the Senate to torpedo a map fashioned by moderate GOP leaders.

Caught up in petty squabbles over redistricting, lawmakers couldn't turn their full attention to the budget, where it was needed. By the time they adjourned, following the longest session in state history, Kansas faced a massive budget crisis.

Gov. Bill Graves approved the final maps May 31, but Attorney General Carla Stovall filed a challenge of the congressional map on behalf of Junction City residents. Federal judges upheld the map's validity July 3, barely leaving enough time for filings in the Aug. 6 primary.

Kansans can't afford to go through the same process again. Fortunately there is an alternative.

Sens. Derek Schmidt, an Independence Republican, and Christine Downey, a Newton Democrat, sponsored a proposed constitutional amendment this month to create an independent commission on redistricting. ...

Thirteen states use similar commissions for redistricting, including Missouri and Iowa. Schmidt and Downey hope to see the amendment on the 2004 general election ballot.

Kansans should demand it. The state cannot afford another redistricting fight like this year's, when politics prevailed over public good.

### The Wichita Eagle on Sherrer:

It had to happen, given that his boss, Gov. Bill Graves, is term-limited out of a job come January. Still, it will be regrettable to see Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer leave the public sector Oct. 1 to take a job not in Wichita ... but rather to become an executive vice president at Gold Banc Corp. in Leawood.

The longest-serving lieutenant governor in the state's history (six years), Sherrer will remain in that post long-distance until the next governor takes over in January; he will step down, though, from his dual job as commerce secretary.

Sherrer, formerly a longtime executive at Wichita's Fourth Financial Corp., guided the reorganization of higher education and led the important exercise in forward thinking that was the governor's Vision 21st Century Task Force, whose important conclusions and recommendations unfortunately have been mostly shelved by the state's revenue problems. ...

... In the wake of Wichita Mayor Bob Knight's stinging loss of Sedgwick County in the GOP gubernatorial primary, Sherrer's resignation is yet another reminder of how little clout Wichita and Sedgwick County could have in state government next year. Two key GOP lawmakers and committee chairmen from Wichita, Reps. Tony Powell and Carlos Mayans are retiring, as are three Democratic House veterans from Wichita: Reps. Jonathan Wells, Gwen Welshimer and Melany Barnes. With Wichitan John Moore on the ticket with Democratic gubernatorial nominee Kathleen Sebelius, the state's largest city still stands a good chance of being represented in Kansas' front office next year. But the leadership changes will turn up the pressure on the remaining Wichita-area legislators. They will need to better serve not just their ideology but also what's best for the community they call home.

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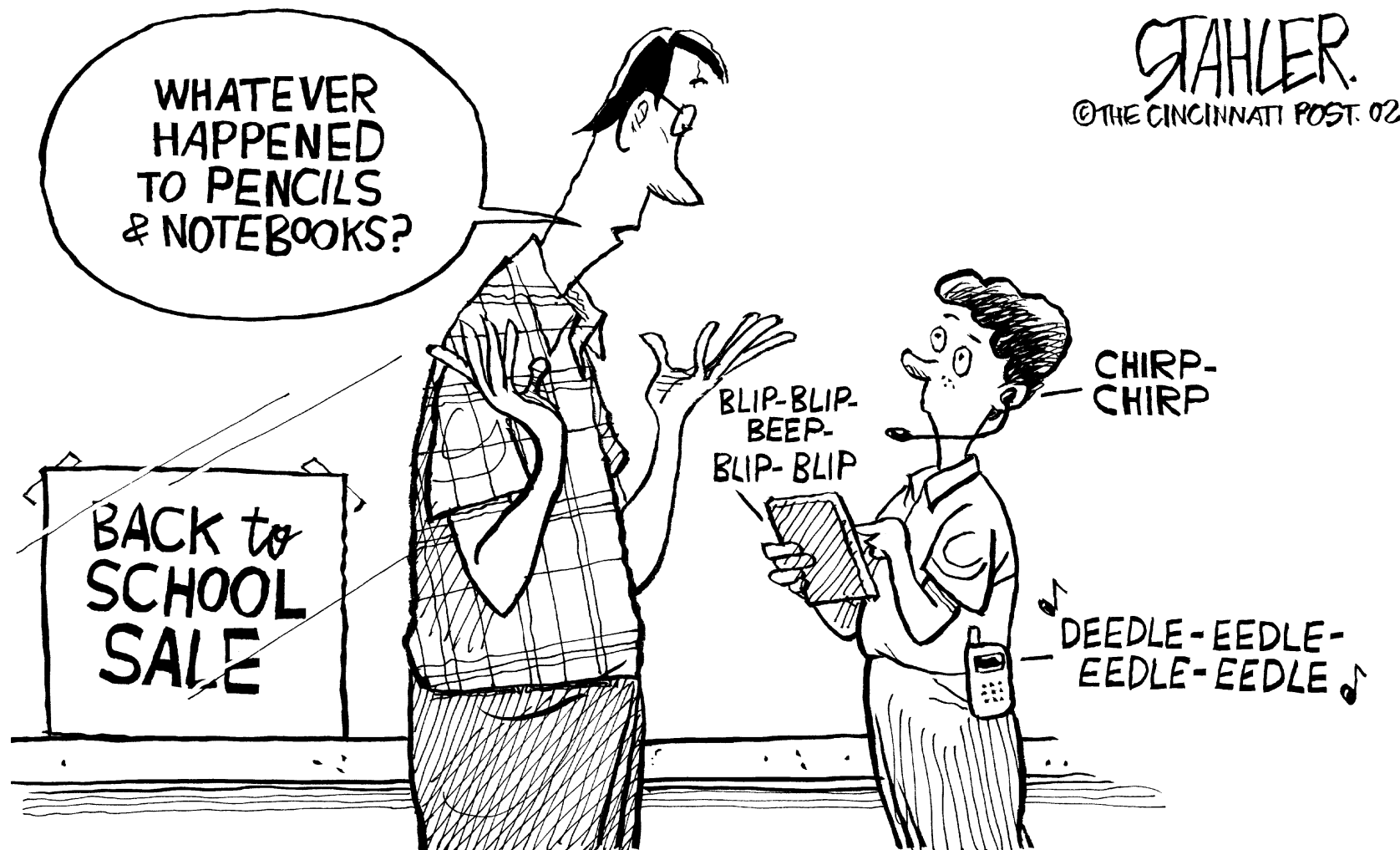
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## I have questions about the word contest

To the Editor:

I sent in an entry for the sunflower word game contest you sponsored in connection with the Sunflower Celebration.

I found 82 works in "observance," and thought I had found every possible word.

I can hardly believe anyone found 526 as reported in your paper.

I was wondering if Lonnie Kerr's list could be printed in The Goodland Daily News, as I'm sure others would like to see the words the other contestants couldn't find.

If you can't publish it, could you run off a copy and send to me. I can't imagine I could have missed finding 444 words.

I even checked the dictionary when I thought of some of the words to make sure of the spelling.

Oh my, 526 words from observance — its almost unbelievable.

I'm wonder how many other contestants are also finding 526 words unbelievable. I hope someone checked that word list to make sure they were correct and in the dictionary.

Wonder how many will enter next year?

Nadine Kammer  
Brewster

**Editor's note:** We had several calls about this, and other unsigned letters, and we want to thank Mrs. Kammer for signing hers.

We can tell you that each word on the list was checked, and a few were crossed out either as duplicates or for using a letter that was not in the word or used a second time.

Of the 97 entries, we had 30 people who found over 200 words, and there were several in the 450-plus range.

We start early each year checking for the number of words that can be made from the selected word, and we do not restrict the words. so a person can use a number of dictionaries and even international or foreign words as long as they can be verified and use the proper letters.

The person on our staff who as the first to check the lists submitted by every entrant found 464 words during the months before the contest.

We cannot print the list, but anyone is welcome to come to the office and see it.

This is our sixth year of doing this contest, and we have yet to use a word that our readers have not been able to find over 200 words, and one was well over 1,000.

We thank you for your letter, and for entering the

## from our readers

to the editor



contest which we hope will encourage people of all ages to try next year. This year, we had entries from people as old as 92 and a young as 9. One youngster age 10, submitted a list of over 400 words. I am sure he had some help, but it was wonderful to see him taking this kind of effort at his age, and we hope he enters again next year. — Tom Betz

To the Editor:

With the current water restrictions imposed on us by the city, it makes me very upset and disappointed that the Sherman County Stock Car Racing Association went ahead and held its race on Saturday, Aug. 17. As a past president of the racing association, I know that the racing is a benefit and a source of family entertainment to the community. Considering the current water crisis the city is facing, I feel they should have either canceled or rescheduled the race for a later date.

I talked with City Manager Ron Pickman on Aug. 13, and he agreed that they shouldn't have the races due to the amount of water that would be used. He said he had talked to one of the Sherman County commissioners and he said since it helped to bring people to Goodland, they should go ahead and have the races. Neither he nor the county commissioner took any further action.

Pickman said that all the city's bulk water stations had been closed down, but they had forgot about the one at the fairgrounds. It makes you wonder who else and how much water was used from that bulk station.

It takes thousands upon thousands of gallons of water over a three-day period to prepare the track for each race. The racing association may say they are cutting back on water usage to prepare the track, but with the ground being as dry as it will take more water to prepare the track now than it would in a year of normal rainfall. The water they used in these three days could have gone a long way in keeping the lawns and gardens of the people who are following the restrictions a little greener and healthier.

If you are caught watering at the wrong time or the wrong day, the city police are immediately on your doorstep giving out warnings or tickets, but using thousands of gallons of water strictly for the enter-

tainment of a few at a time when the majority of the city's residents are doing their best to save water goes by unpunished. I guess the racing association doesn't fall into the same category as every other resident, business, school or organization in Goodland.

There was plenty of time for the racing association to notify drivers of the water situation and plan accordingly. There are several races over the summer; canceling or rescheduling one race is not going to change anything except save a lot of water.

Evidently the few dollars gained in sales tax by the city and county on a few hamburgers and a few gallons of gas sold when everyone was leaving town is more important to them than the water that the rest of us are desperately trying to conserve.

It is my opinion that not only did the racing association use extremely bad judgment, but so did the county commissioners for not stepping in, and the city commissioners and manager for not enforcing the restrictions.

I thought that saving water was the whole idea behind the restrictions.

Lonnie Kerr  
Goodland

**Editor's note:** We called County Commissioner Kevin Rasure, who talked with the city manager. Rasure said the concern about the use of water was discussed and that Pickman was going to talk to the racing association about what could be done. Neal Normandin of the racing association said he had met with Pickman and that they had talked about ways to reduce the amount of water needed for the races.

"We usually water on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday," Normandin said in a telephone interview. "We cut back to two days and it takes 30,000 gallons a night. The city let us pump and haul water from the sewage pond on Thursday, and we used city water on Friday and Saturday.

"That is the least amount of water we have ever used to get the track ready," Normandin said. "We plan to do this again for the next races, but we will need to have a better arrangement for pumping the water out of the sewage ponds."

Commissioner Rasure said he felt there were more people who would be affected by not having the races, and that with the arrangements it would be better to go ahead.

"I think the racing association was aware of the water concern and made a good effort to cut their needs in order to hold the races which bring people to Goodland and help fill our motels and restaurants," Rasure said. — Tom Betz

## What a dump!

I took a load out to the town dump this morning. I had to get rid of two old TV sets. Other than the fact that they don't work and can't be fixed, there was absolutely nothing wrong with them. But Sue is afraid to throw anything out now, because she sees the most common knickknacks appraised for a small fortune on the "Antiques Roadshow" and thinks, "What if I throw this out and someday it's worth \$250,000 like that ugly vase they had on last night?"

It's bad enough that she's afraid to throw out half of our garbage now. She won't throw out the boxes, either. "Antiques Roadshow" is always going on about how much more this crap is worth if it still has the box it came in. And, taking their standard advice not to try to spruce things up, she's stopped cleaning things altogether. "Are you crazy?" I expect her to yell at me some night, "Don't wash the dishes, that could cut their value in half!"

Somehow, I can't see our broken TV sets ever fetching \$250,000. Even if they were appropriately filthy and in their original boxes. They're not even cable-ready. Maybe, someday, years from now, they may acquire some kitsch value, but not if every one saves them. Someone has to have the courage to throw their garbage away so the rest of ours will become a fraction of a penny more valuable. I have that kind of courage.

I am not alone. Down at the dump I met a small band of like-thinking brothers, the Toss It and Forget It Support Group. This morning I arrived just in time. Big Al, a founding member, was having second thoughts about throwing away a computer printer he bought in 1988. It was the size of a washing machine. It won't work with any computer



jim mullen

the village idiot

made after 1993, yet he was having a hard time shoving it into the waiting dumpster.

"You don't understand," he pleaded, "I paid \$1,200 for this! Maybe the less fortunate can use it," he said.

"The less fortunate have laptops with DVD players, AI, not printers that don't work. Let it go," I said.

Slowly, slowly it toppled into the giant recycling bin, joining a pile of old-fashioned giant car phones, five-year-old answering machines, as-seen-only-on-TV exercise equipment (I dare the guys on "Antiques Roadshow" a hundred years from now to figure out what a ThighMaster was used for), plastic duck lamps, glow sticks, Big Mouth Billy Bass plaques, Betamaxes and the tapes that go with them.

Then Big Al walked to my car to help me with the TV sets. As we walked to the dumpster, we saw a scavenger wearing an "Antiques Roadshow" baseball cap pull out Al's printer and load it on his truck. He gave us a funny look and said, "You don't still have the box, do you?"

Jim Mullen is the author of "It Takes A Village Idiot: A Memoir of Life After the City" (Simon and Schuster, 2001). He also contributes regularly to Entertainment Weekly.

## berry's world



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