

commentary

from other pens...

Judge unimpressed by fair's access efforts

The Hutchinson News on state fair access:

A federal judge gave little credence to the Kansas State Fair's efforts to comply with the physical access requirements set out in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Members of the state board and top employees of the state-funded operation should accept the judge's ruling and begin working, in earnest, to comply with the 1993 law.

In a ruling issued earlier this month, U.S. District Judge J. Thomas Marten gave the fair until Jan. 1 to craft a plan to meet access guidelines.

Marten took fair officials to task for attempting to cob together various proposals and studies done over the last 10 years into a self-evaluation and transition plan required under ADA.

The attempt left the judge unimpressed. He described it as "an after-the-fact, eleventh-hour attempt to repack a hodgepodge of earlier, isolated proposals."

The state fair hopes to buy more time. The attorney general's staff plans to appeal Marten's ruling and request a stay of his order.

The fair has carried on its ADA battle long enough. It should drop the appeal and instead focus its energies on creating a specific plan designed to comply with the law.

Hays Daily News on Sebelius review of state government:

Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius and her much-anticipated "top-to-bottom" review of state finances got off to a rocky start with her insistence that many of the discussions take place behind closed doors.

This also seemed out of character for Sebelius, who was known for her integrity in reforming the state insurance commission. As insurance commissioner, she refused to take campaign contributions from the insurance industry, which the office regulates.

A different subject, we know, but still, open government, like campaign finance, is about public appearances. Making the process secret is not a good way to do it. ...

The Kansas attorney general's office has said this approach appears to be legal. Had it been a sitting governor, the meetings of the teams would be required by law to be open to the public. The state's "sunshine" laws, however, do not apply to private citizens whom a governor-elect appoints.

That seems to be a technicality. ...

Eliminating waste from government always is a worthy exercise. Sebelius, however, would do well to signal that she respects the worthiness of open government and keep these meetings open to the public.

Topeka Capital-Journal on Sebelius review:

As a candidate, Kathleen Sebelius promised a "top-to-bottom audit" of state government. Barely a week after her election, it has started. ...

It's a formidable task, and the pressure is on to have some recommendations in time for inclusion in the 2004 budget that Sebelius will have to present to the Legislature in January. ...

Sebelius has done a good job of grouping areas that each team will evaluate and selecting team leaders uniquely qualified in those areas. ...

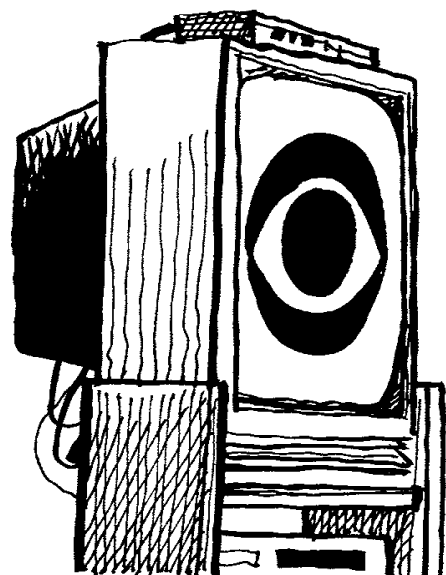
Although the initial focus will be on immediate savings, these teams won't stop there. They are charged with looking at long-term efficiencies, which could include complete makeovers and even shutting down some agencies or programs. ...

Even without the budget crisis, the state was overdue for a performance audit. The budget problems have just made it more urgent.

Sebelius and the team leaders have a daunting task ahead, but none of them is shying away from it. In fact, the team leaders volunteered for it. In essence, so did Sebelius by deciding to run for governor.

More power to them.

STAHLER.
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Long distance access codes can be high cost

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

My daughter was recently given an access code by a friend to use at home when she dialed long-distance. Her friend said if she dialed 10-10 plus the access code before dialing the number she was calling, the charges would be \$.03 a minute. Our normal rate is \$.10, so she used the access code often over a four week period. When we received our phone bill we found the charges were almost \$.75 a minute and our bill was for over \$1,000.00! Attorney General Stovall, can anything be done about these exorbitant charges?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

Your daughter's use of the access code (also known as a "dial-around" or 10-10 number) bypassed the normal long distance plan you had with your long distance carrier. Since the access code belonged to another company, the rate was billed at a different amount than what you have through your carrier. Sometimes using a dial-around can



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

save you money. However, in your case, your daughter received some misinformation from her friend, and the dial-around rate was a high non-discounted rate with a per-call surcharge.

As an act of mediation, my office forwarded your complaint to the phone company that billed you for using their access code. While under no obligation to refund your money, the company reduced the bill by 50% as a courtesy.

All members of a household should be aware of the charges that can be incurred by using an unfamiliar dial-around. Choose a plan or dial-around

number that meets the calling needs of everyone in the household, then make sure to educate them on the rate, fees, surcharges and details of the plan. If there are any restrictions on calling times or limits, communicate that as well. This will help protect your residence from receiving bills such as the one mentioned above.

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.

College plan looks to building for the future

If you have started a new business lately or you have sought financing to start a business you have either been told by a consultant or your friendly banker that you must create a "business plan" before a loan can be made to your business venture.

This is a common requirement in the business world. This business plan will need to include your business idea, who your customers will be, how you intend to market your service, and how your profit/loss statement will be managed.

Similarly the technical college needs to have a business plan, which we will call the College's Strategic Plan. The college's strategic plan is currently under development.

Within this plan the college will identify goals and set a road map for the next several years (2002-2007). The college administration has been drafting this plan for the past 8-10 months. Each goal will be supported by strategies and a plan of action to accomplish the goal and strategies. Upon full development of the strategic plan the document



kenneth clouse

• college notes

will be taken to the College Board to ratify the goals of the plan.

The current goals of the college strategic plan are:

Secure our position as a respected and innovative technical college committed to insuring that instructional programs are effectively meeting workforce needs of Kansas, the high plains region and beyond.

Provide high-quality facilities, technology, equipment, and staffing sufficient to support the technical college's programs and services.

Provide on-going staff and faculty development. Further develop Northwest Kansas Technical College as a college community committed to car-

rying out the mission and purposes of the college. Develop a plan to significantly increase enrollment in current programs and support for future growth.

Create an improved student-centered campus by strengthening and developing student services and support systems for enhancing student success, satisfaction, and retention.

Seek additional resources and organize initiatives to raise funds to support the further development of the college.

Strengthen and develop mutually beneficial alliances with educational institutions and business and industry.

Increase community relationships and support in both the local area and the high plains region.

It is the college administration's hope that the strategic plan will guide the further development of the college over the next several years. Unlike a business plan, a loan will not be our objective, but instead a well thought out plan for the future.

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Something to contemplate this Ramadan

Part of me wanted to let Ramadan, Islam's month-long holiday of contemplative fasting and Thanksgiving, slide. Sure, there has been a mini-surge in published musings by American Muslims on the cruel and unusual punishment of airport security, but, some things, as they say, never change. More intriguing is a scheduled flurry of administration-sponsored Ramadan dinners. Even this inspires only minor head scratching over the specifically Islamic whirl of events to be hosted by the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department — unmatched, of course, by any conscientiously Christian, Jewish or even Druid soirees. No point wondering what makes Islam so special. I haven't understood the Bush push to console and placate Muslims over 9/11 since 9/12. This round of Ramadan outreach looks like more of the same.

Yet, maybe things are a little different now. The president's rhetoric on Islam (see www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/ramadan/islam.html) hasn't changed much since his "Islam is peace" line of last year, and his "Islam is a peace-loving faith" line of this month, but in the repetition over the long haul, some almost-Orwellian echoes may be heard. "Islam is a faith that brings comfort to people," Mr. Bush said last month, one day before the world shook from a blast in Bali set by Islamic jihadists (one of whom was nabbed when his motorcycle was spotted outside a local mosque).

October was also a month, the New Republic reports, in which American law professor Khaled Abou El Fadl, an outspoken liberal Muslim who's received death threats since 9/11 and required 24-hour security to attend a debate in Qatar where he contested the morality of suicide bombing. None of which is to say, of course, that Islam doesn't bring comfort to people, but maybe that's not all it brings.

"It's a faith based upon love, not hate," Mr. Bush said in September, a month in which a Palestinian Muslim suicide bomber took the lives of 19 Jewish Israelis on a bus in a by-now common act of premeditated mass murder sanctioned — indeed,



diana west

• commentary

encouraged — by some of Islam's most senior religious authorities. "Islam is a peaceful religion, a religion that respects others," Mr. Bush said last week as headlines told us a man in Iran and a woman in Nigeria stood condemned to death under sharia (Islamic) law, he for "apostasy" (renouncing his faith), she for the capital crime of adultery.

While our president surely doesn't see himself as defender of the faith, his inexplicable tendency toward the slogans of boosterism have caused him to gloss over crucial pieces of the big picture. Which hasn't gone unnoticed, by the way, in the deeper reaches of the Islamic world. As reported by the Washington Post last year, Abu Qatada, a British-based imam with links to Al Qaeda, put it this way: "I am astonished by President Bush when he claims there is nothing in the Quran that justifies jihad violence in the name of Islam. ... Is he some kind of Islamic scholar? Has he ever actually read the Quran?"

Thanks to, among other things, the separation of church and state, it's not in the president's job description to be an Islamic scholar; but neither is it incumbent upon him to take up the pom-pom for old Islam. This seems particularly clear now that Mr. Bush has decided to weigh in on the blunt critiques of Islam offered by several conservative Christian leaders who have voiced their reactions (negative) to the violence at the core of Islam's unreconstructed traditions of jihad. Islam is violent, said one. Islam is evil, said another; and besides, said another, Mohammed was a pedophile. Historic truths or baseless slanders? If the president has his way, we'll never know. Such remarks "do not reflect the sentiments of my government or the sen-

timents of most Americans," Mr. Bush noted pointedly last week. "Ours is a country based upon tolerance ... and we welcome people of all faiths in America. And we're not going to let the war on terror or terrorists cause us to change our values."

But what if terrorists believe in terror — for the sake of Islam? Not only does a willful official blindness to the militant Islamic-ness of the terrorist foe undermine our war effort, a point columnist Daniel Pipes has most recently made, it is also a detriment to any peace that follows. Just think: If the President of the United States — the Great Satan's great Satan — believes, as this one has variously and repetitively stated, that unreformed Islam is already the ultimate in peace, comfort, charity, compassion, honesty, inspiration, love, mercy and justice, then you have to wonder what on earth would possess Islam's liberals to undertake the arduous and even dangerous work of forcing the religion out of the Middle Ages and into the 21st century. Something to contemplate this Ramadan season.

Diana West is a columnist for The Washington Times. She can be contacted via dianaww@att-global.net.

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