

# commentary

from other pens...

## GOP shifting blame for budget problems

### The Newton Kansan on placing blame for the budget:

Some Republicans are suggesting that Kathleen Sebelius' election as governor of Kansas is the best thing that could have happened to the party.

Who would want to be "in charge" in Topeka the next few years as the state tackles a budget crisis of mammoth proportions?

Apparently not the Republicans. They want someone to blame the mess on when this is all over.

Of course, voters know who is to blame now. Kansas had a Republican governor and a GOP-dominated House and Senate from 1994 to 2002 when all this took place. You can sugarcoat it all you want, but the blame must be laid at the GOP's door.

The Republicans, of course, are hoping for some voter amnesia by the time the 2004 and 2006 elections roll around. With a Democrat at the top, they'll try their darnedest to pin the blame on Sebelius and her party. You'll probably hear often about the "tax and spend liberals" in the coming months.

... Graves has all but blown his opportunity to leave office with a legacy of "fiscal fitness." He governed well when revenues were overflowing and tax-cutting was in vogue, but he didn't exhibit the kind of leadership necessary when those same revenues headed south.

... Sebelius has an opportunity to show some real leadership here by putting together a budget cutting plan that asks everyone — schools, social service agencies, transportation and executive departments as well — to share in the pain.

And it will be mighty painful.

### The Salina Journal on Phill Kline:

Voters goofed on this one.

Republican Phill Kline ... was declared the winner of the attorney general's race.

His victory over Democrat Chris Biggs was razor-thin, so thin that a winner couldn't be determined until after provisional ballots were counted ... The final count showed Kline with 412,686 votes to 408,390 for Biggs. That's a margin of victory of just 0.523 percent.

... With Kline's victory, voters have succeeded in awarding one of Kansas' most powerful elected offices to someone who simply is not qualified to hold the position.

... Kline wants to be the state's top attorney, yet he has never argued a case before a jury. He allowed his law license to lapse three times. And what he lists as prosecutorial experience was nothing more than a brief stint as a law-school intern.

His most recent occupation? Producing a radio show.

Evidently, Kline's best skills are as a campaigner, and the most convincing item on his resume is party affiliation. Those are the only ways to explain how he could win this election.

... We have a couple of cynical suggestions ...

For one, Kline should include some experienced lawyers on his staff to make up for serious shortcomings in his own background.

For another, Kline should wake up every day and remind himself of these election results. He has a lot to prove to the more than 400,000 registered voters who don't believe he is right for the job — no matter what the results prove to be.

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## More burger recipe ideas

One way to add variation to burgers is in the toppings. The following ideas and recipes are provided by Kansas Beef Council.

**Pepperoni Pizza Burger** - Pepperoni, mozzarella cheese and pizza sauce

**Hickory Burger** - Cheddar cheese, bacon and hickory barbecue sauce

**Cowboy Burger** - Grilled mushrooms, grilled onions, bacon and Monterey Jack cheese

**Blue Moon Burger** - Bleu cheese, sautéed mushrooms, lettuce and tomato served on an onion bun

**The Islander Burger** - Thousand Island dressing, with lettuce, tomato and pickle

**Sticky Burger** - Peanut butter, bacon and Monterey Jack cheese

**Greek Burger** - Herbed feta cheese, black olives and onions

**Chicago Burger** - Sweet relish, chopped onion, ketchup, mustard and hot peppers

**Rowdy Reuben Burger** - Melted Swiss cheese, Thousand Island dressing and zesty coleslaw, served on marble rye

**Stroganoff Burger** - Sour cream, grilled onions, Swiss cheese, lettuce and tomato, served on a fresh wheat bun

**Fajita Beef Burger** - Patty mixed with fajita seasoning, and wrapped in a flour tortilla with guacamole, sour cream, shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes and salsa.

**Texas Red Burger** - Served open-faced with



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chili, Cheddar and Monterey Jack cheeses and grilled onions.

### Popper Burgers

1 pound ground beef  
1/4 cup prepared thick and chunky salsa  
4 frozen cream cheese or Cheddar cheese stuffed jalapeno peppers  
4 hamburger buns, split

1/4 cup prepared salsa con queso  
1/4 cup chopped fresh plum tomato  
2 tablespoons sliced pitted ripe olives

Combine ground beef and 1/4 cup salsa in large bowl, mixing thoroughly but lightly. Lightly shape into four thin patties. Place one stuffed pepper in center of each patty. Wrap beef around pepper to enclose, sealing seams and forming ball. Flatten balls into patties. Patties will be about 4 to 5 inches across and 1 inch thick.

Place patties on grid over medium, ash covered coals. Grill, uncovered, 15 to 16 minutes (160 degrees) doneness. Beef should not be pink in center and juices show no pink color, turning occasionally.

Serve in buns. Top burgers with 1 tablespoon salsa con queso. Sprinkle evenly with tomato and olives. Makes 4 servings.

### Caesar Burger on Garlic Crostini

1 1/2 pounds ground beef  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
4 romaine lettuce leaves  
1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

### Garlic Crostini

8 slices sourdough (about 4 x 3 x 1/2 inch)  
Olive oil  
2 large cloves garlic, cut lengthwise into quarters  
Combine ground beef, minced garlic, salt and pepper in large bowl, mixing lightly but thoroughly. Lightly shape into four 3/4 inch thick patties, shaping to fit the bread slices.

Place patties on grid over medium, ash covered coals. Grill, uncovered, 13 to 15 minutes to medium (160 degrees) doneness. Beef should not be pink in center and juices should show no pink color, turning occasionally.

Meanwhile brush both sides of bread slices lightly with oil. Place bread around outer edge of grid. Grill until lightly toasted, turning once. Remove bread from grid and rub both sides of each slice with a garlic quarter.

Place one lettuce leaf on four of the crostini and top with a burger. Sprinkle evenly with cheese, cover with remaining crostini. Makes 4 servings.

## Elementary thoughts about Thanksgiving

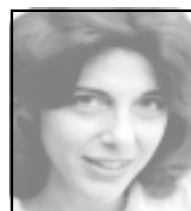
It should be elementary — literally — but my grade-schooler's teacher got it wrong: "Thanksgiving," the teacher wrote by way of introducing a book report assignment pegged to the national holiday, "is a time when families get together to celebrate their traditions and their heritage."

They do? It was the "their"-ness of the formulation that gave pause. Defining Thanksgiving as an occasion for families to celebrate "their" traditions and "their" heritage, as the teacher styled it, imparted an international-night-at-the-community-center-flavor to a day of national thanksgiving.

Could this spell the end of Turkey Day as we know it? Probably not. After all, families and friends across the country still gather to give thanks, feast on native cuisine, and perpetuate this picturesque, American (and spontaneously multicultural) tradition first cooked up back in 1621 by the Pilgrims and their Indian guests, later institutionalized in 1863 by President Lincoln, and finally iconized in 1943 by Norman Rockwell. Our collective enthusiasm for that perfect founding moment lives. Thanksgiving is here to stay — at least for now.

But what if families did gather, say, next Thanksgiving Day to celebrate "their" traditions and "their" heritage? Given that Squanto was said to be the last member of the Patuxet tribe, it would follow that only Americans descended from Mayflower passengers would be entitled to "their" turkey dinner with all "their" trimmings — leaving other Americans to "their" haggis, "their" brisket and "their" Peking duck. Luckily for the Mayflower-nots (not to mention the turkey growers of America), Thanksgiving has never been a day to mark our many separate traditions, but rather one to commemorate, very specifically — right down to the sweet potatoes and cranberry sauce — a shared heritage nearly 400 years old.

But this shared heritage is something American kids don't hear nearly enough about in school. Indeed, having presented a thoroughly botched holi-



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day definition, my grade-schooler's book report instructions culminated in the following "Thanksgiving" reading assignment: "In an effort to understand the world better, we will read multicultural stories of family and immigration."

The world? What happened to our country? Then again, why is it that the student novel-reader has to draw anything but a burgeoning appreciation for words and stories from a book-report assignment? Maybe it's just me, but if there's one thing worse than politically corrected history — sorry, social studies — it's politically selected reading — sorry, language arts. Teaching a kid to see the big, hairy political hand hiding within the text of a history book is an education in itself; but riding herd on a child saddled with novels selected for ethnicity's sake — and not literature's — is a toilsome burden. You feel for the politically manipulated child, and if that same child has also extracted a promise from you not to you say anything this time, you feel party to the child's political manipulation.

And then there's the fact that the pickings are what you call mighty slim. For Hispanic book month, for example, a children's librarian — in all probability, a quite liberal one — could find me paltry few identifiably "Hispanic" choices to recommend besides the uninspired and uninspiring American Doll book series that is built around "Josephina," the doll from New Mexico. So what to pick for a Thanksgiving-inspired reading assignment about "multicultural" families migrating hither and yon? When my youngster's choice, "Little House on the Prairie," was approved, I had to support it (especially since I just might have

suggested it). Thankfully, the "cultural" in her assignment was "multi" to the point of including even Laura Ingalls Wilder's covered-wagon trek across the prairie.

Having escaped political manipulation this time, I was still bothered by the assignment. Young American kids, newcomers to the country or not, shouldn't be pushed "to understand the world better" before they understand their own country even a little bit — and particularly not around Thanksgiving.

Besides, they want to learn about their land. It's in the nature of children to reflect on what is immediately at hand — despite adult attempts to graft onto them a false worldly wisdom. A youngster I know recently brought home a small clay sculpture of some figures grouped around a table. Her mother looked at it, inquiring, "Are they tribal women making bread?" And the girl answered, "No, they're little girls at a birthday party." (Me, I said nothing.) One wonders — not too hard — which of the two has the deeper grounding in reality. Guess it's not always just the kids who could use a little extra guidance.

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### berry's world

