

# commentary

from other pens...

## All budget cuts hurt, but some hurt more

**The Topeka Capital-Journal on budget cuts:**  
Recently, Gov. Bill Graves ordered \$78 million in emergency budget cuts, which came on top of \$41 million in reductions he made in August. He also eliminated \$48 million in payments to cities and counties across the state ...

In making his cuts, Graves managed to spare public schools, which account for an enormous chunk — about 52 percent — of the budget, but not higher education. The regents schools will have to deal with \$22 million less than expected.

All cuts hurt, but none more than the ones that affect the state's most vulnerable citizens — children, the disabled, poor and elderly.

Social and Rehabilitation Services Secretary Donna Schalansky couldn't avoid cutting some of the services in trimming \$26.6 million.

Although she managed to make about a third of the cuts in administrative expenses, she couldn't leave services untouched — services that keep many people in their homes rather than in nursing homes, child-care services, mental health and disability services.

For his part, Graves, who leaves office in January, has said he is through making cuts. He will leave the rest to the new administration and the Legislature.

Kansans have to get past the point of complaining and trying to assign blame for the deficits. Instead, they need to offer some clear solutions. They need to let Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius and their legislators know what their priorities are.

**Iola Register on government review teams' meetings:**

Fourteen news organizations, including the Associated Press, which has most Kansas daily newspapers, radio and television stations as members, filed a lawsuit charging that Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius is violating the open meetings law.

Gov.-elect Sebelius has created several committees to look into various aspects of state government and recommend ways the state can save money. She believes those committees should work behind closed doors until they are ready to report. She says she won't come under the open meetings law until she is sworn in as governor.

The news organizations disagree ...

... It is true that she isn't governor yet. But it is also true that the work is being paid for with tax funds and that its purpose is clearly governmental ...

That said, it is easy to understand why Sebelius thought she would get a better product if the teams she has assembled to give her advice on state priorities could weigh alternatives out of the hearing of special interest groups and their lobbyists ...

... There is also no doubt that holding such discussions in public would keep some of the committee members from expressing themselves frankly ...

The open meetings law, it should be remembered, allows executive sessions of governmental bodies in specified circumstances ... Sebelius makes a reasonable case for adding her "top to bottom review" of state government to that list of exemptions ...

It should be agreed by all that Sebelius and the news organizations that report on state government have identical goals. Both want to serve the people of Kansas efficiently and effectively in their different roles.



## Use caution purchasing services online

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

I recently took a trip out of state and used the services of an online provider that offers discounts for services such as airline tickets, hotels, vacations, etc.

I typed in the day I wanted to arrive, the day I needed to return, and the price I wanted to pay.

When I received my itinerary, I was scheduled to arrive at my destination at 10:30 p.m.

Unfortunately, I had a dinner meeting at 7:00 p.m. that same evening.

The provider said the ticket was non-refundable and non-transferable.

I did not want to spend money on another ticket, so I kept my ticket and missed the dinner meeting.

Attorney General Stovall, is this right?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

Online providers can give wonderful discounts for the types of services you listed. However, these providers are often limited in location, time, and



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

dates for the services they can give at a reduced price.

The provider you used supplied my office with copies of its website. It clearly discloses the range of hours during which customers may depart or arrive, and your scheduled arrival time was within the allotted time period.

Consumers should read all information posted on a provider's website before proceeding with purchasing services. This site, as with many websites of this type, required a consumer to click on a section "initialing" that they have read the

terms and conditions listed before proceeding with the purchase.

You should remember that you are entering into a contract when you make such purchases and it is important to read all of the terms and conditions before agreeing. If you don't, and the terms were disclosed in a reasonable manner, you will likely be bound by these terms.

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.

## Homeland security — too much, yet not enough

To the Editor:

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 proved that this nation has serious shortcomings in its defenses and that change is needed in the way we handle and process terrorist-related information. An agency is needed to coordinate the protection of our citizens and to prevent such attacks in the future. While the recently-passed Homeland Security bill will make sweeping changes in the way many of our government agencies operate, it does not address the agencies that needed change most of all.

After the attacks, FBI agents testified to Congress about terrorist information that was not being analyzed, and the CIA admitted to seeing signs of increased terrorist activity. All the while, the Department of Defense continued its routine work on the next year's budget and procurement schedule. The lack of communication between these agencies, which are primarily responsible for defending this country, may have cost thousands of American lives.

Unfortunately, in an effort to address the challenge of homeland security, Congress decided to reorganize every agency it could find, except the FBI, the CIA, and the Department of Defense. We have fallen short, leaving out the three agencies whose operations we should be addressing.



from our readers

• to the editor

I did not go to Washington, D.C. to create a bigger government. The size of this new agency will be daunting, with close to 200,000 employees and a budget of over \$35 billion. But an enormous agency does not mean that our safety will be improved. This new agency will take years to set up and no doubt will be overflowing with miscommunication and inefficiencies. Regrettably, inefficiencies and errors are often permitted in a government bureaucracy, but when dealing with issues of the safety of our country, our borders and our citizens, another bureaucracy prone to error and too big to communicate cannot be tolerated.

The legislation to create this department was one of the final acts of the 107th Congress. The debate on this bill was limited in the interest of getting things done quickly. Input from the public was nonexistent, and no traditional conference committee met to work out differences between the Senate and House versions. As a result, a number of question-

able provisions were thrown in, while some basic personal freedoms may have been thrown out. Congress must be exceptionally careful not to impair our Constitutional rights in the rush to claim greater safety.

There is no doubt that changes are needed in the way we protect our country. However, hastily creating the largest bureaucracy in U.S. history, while failing to address problems in communication among law enforcement, intelligence and defense agencies, is not enough. With these concerns, I decided to vote in opposition to forming a new department of Homeland Security. However, now that this new bureaucracy is a reality, I am committed to doing all I can to help it become an effective means of securing and protecting our country. In a democracy, the right to vote against legislation is followed by the duty to work to improve and support the law or, in this case, the agency that has been created. The challenge that now faces us is to make certain this agency — and any other measures put into place for the purpose of homeland security — protect the personal freedoms we enjoy while shielding us from physical harm. This is a challenge I am anxious to meet.

U.S. Congressman Jerry Moran  
Hays

## The pre-emptive war goes Hollywood

Now we see the downside to the pre-emptive war strategy: the anti-pre-emptive-war movement. But that downside is more than just the obvious reasons. While the antis may well be spearheaded by the likes of the Workers World Party — a cadre of bona fide communists with "a fancy for North Korea's Kim Jong-Il," as the leftist weekly, The Nation, put it — that's hardly the worst of it. So what if these retro-revolutionaries oppose everything from U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq to private property everywhere? WWP members don't go one-on-one with Wolf Blitzer. They don't draw flash-popping paparazzi. And no one reads their manifestos, except, let's hope, the FBI.

In other words, the very worst thing about the strategy of pre-emptive war as articulated by the Bush administration is the anti-pre-emptive-war movement, as articulated (barely) by Hollywood. This week, 100 Hollywood celebrities put their spangled heads together to write a letter to President Bush about his Iraq policy. Rather than mail their missive to the White House, though, the celebs held a press conference. And why not? Janeane Garofalo reminded us in a subsequent interview: "Just because somebody's an actor doesn't make them an unimportant person. And, you know, actors are just a small part of people. It's just irrelevant what people do for a living as pertains to this." Quite. More to the point is the reality of the Celebrity Age. As former "M\*A\*S\*H" actor Mike Farrell put it to CNN, "The media tends to pay attention to our community."

And so they do. The unveiling (opening?) of the letter turned out to be an occasion: the world premiere of Artists United to Win Without War, or AUWWW (that's an acronym, not a yawn). According to The Nation, this self-described "main-



diana west

• commentary

stream" anti-war group represents "an attempt to recast and reshape the anti-war opposition." How you recast or reshape your Mike Farrells, your Susan Sarandons, and, not least, your Barbra Streisands remains to be seen. Sure, AUWWW wrote that Saddam Hussein shouldn't have weapons of mass destruction after all, but neither, it said, should George W. Bush contemplate disarming him by force — the main point — lest terrorism, human suffering, anti-Americanism, economic misery, a loss in America's "moral standing," and maybe even low Nielsen ratings come to pass.

No word on the potential consequences of a nuclear-enhanced Saddam Hussein.

That may explain why AUWWW can't comprehend why Bush is contemplating military action against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. This very question is pulling La-La-landers in over their carefully coifed, if sometimes grizzled, heads. Erstwhile "Lou Grant" star Ed Asner, for example, has answered it by explaining that Bush administration officials "have keyed and geared the war machine ... (to the point) that they've got to unload it someplace," he told United Press International. "Iraq is the likeliest place."

Translation: "It (meaning the Pentagon) is alive! The Pentagon has to go to war — or else!" This cartoonish scenario may well be next summer's blockbuster, but as geopolitical strategy the approach lacks a little dimension. Call the thinking "Asnerian." This is a guy, after all, who, accord-

ing to newsmen Sam Donaldson, admitted that he decided convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal was innocent — not after examining court transcripts and other evidence, but because pal Mike Farrell told him so.

Mr. Farrell is another one who tends to see the world in made-for-television terms. To him, American pressure on Iraq comes down to a matter of personal pride — the president's. "George Bush simply cannot turn back without losing face," he says as though discussing character motivation in front of an acting class. "This is of great concern. This is a nation that ought not be concerned about its leader losing face." In the world according to Farrell, personal vanity is driving a foreign policy that is being supported, as poll numbers indicate, by Americans ("sheep," Ed Asner says) worried the president might suffer a blow to his pride.

"I don't know if we'll ever get the whole truth from this administration — about anything," Martin Sheen said when asked why the president might consider war in Iraq. When pressed, the "television president" waxed freshman-year-Freudian: "I think he'd like to hand his father Saddam Hussein's head and win his approval for what happened after the 1991 Gulf War." No doubt the same goes for Dick Cheney, Condi Rice, Donald Rumsfeld and anyone else who supports the president's Iraq policy — all to "win approval" from Bush's father.

Couldn't these Hollywood types go and sell a few pre-emptive war bonds, or maybe embark on a pre-emptive USO tour? Or maybe just plop down under a Los Angeles palm and read Vanity Fair? Make it this month's issue with the story about CIA reports of Iraqi-Al Qaeda cooperation going back 10 years. They might learn something.

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

### Letter Policy

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