

commentary

from other pens...

Sebelius inauguration to be unlike any seen

The Topeka Capital-Journal on inauguration:

The inauguration of Kathleen Sebelius as the state's next governor will be unlike any Kansans have ever seen, with something for just about everyone.

While it will have the traditional swearing-in ceremony on the Statehouse steps — an event shared with other statewide officeholders — and the inaugural ball that evening, the festivities this time won't be limited to Topeka — or to just one day.

Leading up to the Jan. 13 inauguration, regional receptions will be held in Garden City, Hays and Wichita on Jan. 10 and Salina, Pittsburg and Kansas City, Kan., on Jan. 11.

Then, from 1 to 4 p.m. on Jan. 12, the Kansas Family Festival ... will take over the Kansas Expocentre.

Planners are still busy finalizing all of the details for the festival, which will be free to the public. ...

It's good to see the new governor's effort to include everyone in the celebration, from the far western border to the eastern state line, from adults to children.

Kansas is facing some tough times ahead, with revenue collections continuing to decline. It will take everyone pulling together to address the difficult issues. ... The inaugural events can help bring people together. ...

Sebelius also is trying to hold the line on spending on the inaugural festivities, even though the events will be paid for from private donations, not state funds.

Still, inaugurations come around only once every four years, and it's been eight years since the governorship has changed hands. Such an occasion merits a celebration. One for all the people.

The Salina Journal on consolidation:

Consolidation.

Folks in government view the word with so much anxiety they often won't use it. Instead, they refer to it as the "c-word."

But consolidation is getting more attention these days as Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius and the Kansas Legislature search for ways to cut spending. ...

Current law allows city and county governments to consolidate some services, but anything beyond the basics must be approved by the Legislature. A bill seeking to free up those statutory barriers was submitted a few years ago, where it was met with hardy resistance.

The Legislature should take another shot at the concept.

It is an orchard ripe for picking.

Kansas has more units of local government than nearly any other state, and certainly more than any state of similar population. But whenever two or more of these local units want to fully integrate, they must first get approval from the Legislature.

That is a daunting proposition. If one doesn't know the ropes, the Statehouse can be a good place to get hung out to dry.

Certainly, there must be some sort of review when local governments try to consolidate. At times governing bodies consist of temporary officeholders of uneven quality and expertise. The rest of us need and deserve some protection from the worst of our elected officials.

However, it is plain the consolidation process can be improved and streamlined. ...

where to write

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Getting the most from your rice cooker

In the book "The Ultimate Rice Cooker Cookbook" by Beth Hensperger and Julie Kaufman the different rices are discussed as well as getting the most out of a rice cooker. The rice cooker was invented in postwar Japan and is used by millions throughout the world where rice is the staple food.

There is far less known about the beginnings of rice than of any of the other cereal grains. Much spiritualism, mythology and romanticism is connected to rice. Rice has been cultivated according to archaeological discoveries dating back to 4530 B.C. In most Eastern cultures rice is considered feminine. Japan did not have rice until the second century B.C. The rice deity in Japan is male.

Rice is available in an amazing array. The varieties range from the basic long grain American white and brown and short grain Asian and European varieties to the exotic types including Bhutanese red, Indian Kalijira and Chinese black Forbidden Rice. The aromatic varieties include basmati, kalijira, jasmine, jasmati and kasmati.

Rice cookers can prepare everyday dishes, ethnic specialties, one pot meals, finger foods, porridges, cereals, custards, puddings and fruit.

Orange rice pilaf

This dish is good with turkey, capon, partridge, duck or goose. Citrus tends to harden the rice grain during cooking so keep the amounts small.



pat schiefen

• postscript

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 2 tablespoons unsalted butter or rendered duck fat
 - 2 tablespoons minced shallots
 - 1/4 cup minced celery, with some leaves
 - 1 cup long grain white rice
 - 1 1/4 cups chicken stock
 - 1/2 cup orange juice
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - pinch of dried thyme
 - grated zest of 1 orange
- Set the rice cooker for regular cycle or quick cook. Place oil and butter in the rice bowl and melt. Add shallots and celery. Cook until softened about 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add rice and cook, stirring a few times, until all rice is evenly coated and hot, about 10 minutes. Add stock, orange juice, salt, thyme and zest and stir. Close cover and reset for regular cycle or let regular cycle complete. When machine switches to the Keep Warm cycle,

let rice steam for 10 minutes. Fluff with rice paddle or wooden spoon. On this setting pilaf will hold for up to 1 hour. Serve hot. Serves 4.

Wild rice with fennel and dried cranberries

- This would go well with turkey.
 - 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons wild rice
 - 2 cups plus 2 tablespoons chicken stock
 - 2/3 cup reduced sugar or unsweetened cranberry juice cocktail or unsweetened cranberry juice
 - 3 tablespoons dried cranberries
 - 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
 - 1 shallot, chopped
 - 1 small bulb fennel, stalks and greens discarded, bulb chopped (about 1 1/4 cups)
 - salt
 - freshly ground black pepper
- Place rice in rice cooker bowl. Add stock and cranberry juice and stir a few times to mix. Close cover and set for regular cycle. When machine switches to Keep Warm cycle add cranberries and reclose. Let steam for 15 minutes.

While rice is steaming melt butter in sauté pan over medium heat. Add shallot and fennel and cook until tender about 5 to 8 minutes. Stir occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

When rice is done steaming, stir fennel mixture into the rice. Adjust seasonings to taste and serve hot. Serves 4.

Will Edwards, Daschle follow Gore out of race?

There should be a rule of thumb — call it Mario Cuomo/Al Gore Syndrome — that if there's a whiff of doubt whether a candidate will run or won't, he or she probably won't.

After former Vice President Al Gore's pullout from the 2004 presidential race, we'll see if the rule is valid in the cases of Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.) and incoming Senate Minority Leader Thomas Daschle (D-S.D.).

Both of them, while apparently leaning toward entering the race, are being urged by some fellow Democrats not to — Edwards on grounds that he'd be risking his entire promising political career on a long shot, and Daschle because fellow Senate Democrats need him.

Edwards has been acting all year like a man determined to run. He's made himself highly visible on all the important issues, cutting a moderate-liberal profile. He's visited the important primary states and helped other Democrats in the 2002 midterms.

Edwards has begun assembling a strong team of campaign advisers. And, to the dismay of his rivals, he's locked up the financial resources of a mighty Democratic base: his fellow trial lawyers.

His staff and closest advisers reportedly want him to run. The group includes the manager of his political action committee, Steve Jarding; Raleigh lawyer Ed Turlington; and three former Clinton-Gore aides, Nick Baldick, Rebecca Waldorf and Jonathan Prince.

Doubts about whether he'll run arise from his North Carolina situation. In just his first term in the Senate, he's up for re-election in 2004. Practically speaking, if he runs for president and loses, he could be finished politically at the age of 50.

Legally, he could run both for president and for Senator. But North Carolina is not Connecticut, where Sen. Joe Lieberman (D) ran for both vice president and Senator in 2000 and carried his state in both races.

President Bush carried North Carolina with 56 percent of the vote and head-to-head poll tests suggest that Bush would clobber Edwards, indicating weakness in Edwards' home state political situation.

Polls indicate that if he ran for re-election, he could beat such potential GOP challengers as Reps. Richard Burr, Sue Myrick (who says she's not running) and Walter Jones Jr., but not by overwhelming margins.

Doubts also arise from the Democratic primary calendar. Iowa is next door to the home states of Daschle and outgoing House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (Mo.), who won the caucuses in 1988. And it's ideologically open to a liberal antiwar candidate like Vermont's outgoing governor, Howard Dean.

Then, New Hampshire is fertile ground for both Dean and Sen. John Kerry (Mass.). Edwards might



morton kondracke

• commentary

find himself in deep also-ran territory before the primary schedule turned to South Carolina, where he was born.

Edwards is being assured that he's already positioned himself to be a vice presidential contender in what's likely to be a tough contest to unseat Bush — putting him in prime shape to make a presidential run in 2008, when he'd be in his second term in the Senate.

Edwards is no Cuomo, who as New York governor waited until the last moment to decide whether to file in the New Hampshire primary in 1991 — indeed, he kept a plane standing by in Albany with its engines running — before deciding not to.

Edwards has promised he'll announce a decision on his future soon. But will the Cuomo/Gore rule apply? I haven't the slightest idea.

Nor is it clear what Daschle will do, although past signs have been that he was not going to run for president and might well step out of politics completely after serving as Democratic leader for 10 years, the past two as Majority Leader.

After being bashed by Republicans and conservative radio talk-show hosts, Daschle is said to have his dander up against Bush, many of whose domestic policies he abhors. Advisers say he's "leaning" toward running. One of them put the chances at 60-40.

But, as The Washington Post reported, he's being urged — especially by fellow Senators, I'm told — to run for re-election in South Dakota instead.

The arguments are that Daschle's presidential fundraising would diminish the hard money available for Senate candidates and that, if he does not run for re-election, his Senate seat will surely be taken by a Republican.

Also, his friends argue, it will be all but impossible to both campaign for president and be Senate Minority Leader. On a water-testing trip to Iowa last weekend, he seemed to agree that he'd have to do one or the other.

Letter Policy

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One of the factors inclining Daschle toward a presidential run reportedly is his doubt that he'd be Majority Leader again anytime soon.

Democrats are one seat down at the moment, and the 2004 prospects are dicey. Only Daschle could hold South Dakota, and it will be difficult to keep Democrats in such states as South Carolina — especially if incumbent Sen. Fritz Hollings retires — North Dakota and Arkansas.

Daschle may be waiting to see whether incoming Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) survives. If Lott resigns from the Senate in January, a Democrat is likely to be appointed to his seat at least through 2003, restoring the Senate balance to 50-50.

Republicans still would control the chamber on the strength of Vice President Cheney's tie-breaking vote, but Democrats might persuade Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-R.I.) to switch parties, giving the Democrats control again.

And, even if the split remained 50-50, Democrats could insist on an equal balance on committees, including the Budget Committee, potentially preventing Bush from getting his way on tax cuts.

So, what's the bottom line here? If Edwards and Daschle both demur, we have a new rule of politics.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

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"NEED HELP WITH THE CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS?"

The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: gdnadv@nwkansas.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$25; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$79. Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. By mail daily in Kansas, Colorado: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

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