

commentary

from the statehouse...

Turn around week marks passage of first third of session

Last week in the Capitol was what we call “turn around week,” the end of the first of three parts of the legislative year.

The House finishes House bills and the Senate finishes its bills. The House begins hearings on bills that passed the Senate and the Senate does the same with House bills. The only exceptions are Appropriations, Tax, and Federal and State Affairs, which are exempt committees.

Monday, the House Agriculture Committee held hearings on a bill banning packer ownership of livestock. Proponents included the Kansas Cattlemen’s Association and three other groups. Opponents included the Kansas Livestock Association, Farm Bureau (had no policy as of yet) and Tyson Foods (which owns IBP).

This bill had a hearing so late in the session that it won’t have time to be worked by the committee. Another bill that is dead in Agriculture is one that would codify the federal Packers and Stockyards Act into state statutes. It to will be dead until next year.

The prairie dog bill passed out of the committee last week and is scheduled for debate on the House floor. I opposed this bill, as did most of the western Kansas legislators. The vote was a tie with Chairman Dan Johnson casting the deciding vote. We will now fight it on the House floor. By the time you read this, we will know the outcome.

Federal and State Affairs passed a bill that would set standards for abortion clinics. Currently, there are no medical standards; in fact veterinary clinics have more standards.

The Education Committee has not been able to get a school consolidation bill out this year but, as of this writing, has one more day.

I can be contacted at jfaber@ink.org or by calling my office at 785-296-7500

—Rep. John Faber, Brewster

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Legislature on treadmill going nowhere

Many times, I feel like the legislative session is like a treadmill, lots of activity and very little accomplishment.

We don’t spend near enough time with the big issues of the day and too much time trying to anticipate all the follies of human nature and trying to prescribe a remedy for each.

Thursday, we passed legislation that would let fire departments seek reimbursements from arsonists for the costs of responding to fires; we decided on a method on how the Kansas commemorative quarter design will be selected; and we extended the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Act for six years.

The day before, we decided to allow cities to send the first notice to clean up property or mow tall weeds by regular mail instead of certified mail; we decided that if a person resigns from office and has switched parties since they were elected at the last election, that the party of which they were a member at the time of election would select the replacement to fill that vacancy; we changed the name of the Kansas Law Enforcement Telecommunications Committee to the Kansas Law Enforcement Information Technology Committee; and we



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• newsletter

passed legislation that will allow local meat lockers to accept buffalo taken in a buffalo hunt to be inspected ante-mortem instead of post-mortem as current law required.

The day before that, we decided that “a Canadian citizen with prior law enforcement experience who resides in Stevens County shall be allowed to apply for admission to the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center.” Current law requires that all applicants be United States citizens.

These bills might be well and good but they fail to address the real issues of the day and serve as an example of the treadmill I think the Legislature is on too often.

One idea that failed in the Senate this week was Senate Bill 128, which proposed to make it illegal for school counselors or school psychologists to disclose to any other person (in-

cluding parents) any information or communication given to the counselor or psychologist unless (1) the pupil waives the privilege in writing; (2) the information was given for the purpose of being made public; (3) there is reason to suspect child abuse or the pupil’s health may be in jeopardy; or (4) there is reason to suspect that the pupil either has committed or intends to commit a felony.

The bill failed on a vote of 18-22. Schools are a partnership between teachers, students and parents.

Many of us in the Senate felt that this proposal drove an intentional wedge to separate parents from the partnership. In any relationship, trust is crucial for its success. Without trust, suspicion creeps into the partnership and the relationship deteriorates. I am thankful that my colleagues saw the wisdom of rejecting this legislation.

Please feel free to contact me on any issue. I can be reached by writing to Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol-Room 449-N., Topeka, KS 66612; by calling 1-800-432-3924 or 785-296-7399; by fax at 801-457-9064; or by e-mail at sclark@ink.org.

We need to investigate time zone change

To the Editor:

I recently read the article in the Goodland Star titled “Changing Time Zone an economic development goal,” about a proposal to change from Mountain to Central time zone for Sherman County. Before our Sherman County commissioners begin to seriously consider this option, I believe it is important to investigate the disadvantages of such a move.

Mr. McClure and Mr. Keirns eloquently conveyed some of their concerns pertaining to the economic benefit of this change. However, I believe they failed to see the potentially devastating results to the economy.

One of the largest employers for citizens of Goodland is in Burlington, Colo. The Kit Carson Correctional Center employs 50 people from Goodland and another 10 from Kanorado. A time change would certainly affect the quality of life for these families.

Fathers and mothers would be arriving home an hour later each evening, resulting in a reduced amount of family time, not to mention the cost of child care for that extra hour. True, they would leave an hour later in the morning, but for the most part the kids will already be in school.

There is also the realization that our children, during certain times of the year, will be attending school while it is still dark outside.

One of the key reasons Colorado workers choose to live in Kansas is affordable housing. Goodland is well below the curve when compared to our 1-70 neighbors of Burlington and Colby for home values. Do we really want to give those families reason to leave yet another dwelling unoccupied in our city? The housing market in Goodland is already saturated.

When we talk about economic impact, maybe we should also examine factors other than those tourists who stop at the 1-70 Welcome Station, as mentioned in the article, that continue to travel to Colby for lodging. One of



from our
readers

• to the editor

Goodland’s draws is its retail anchor locations such as Wal-Mart and J.C. Penney. Traveling east, the next closest store, such as Wal-Mart, is in Colby. However, traveling west there is not another city for nearly 200 plus miles with a large retail outlet. This is a main part of Goodland’s market base.

Why should we inconvenience and penalize these consumers of eastern Colorado? Should we increase the number of reasons for people of Eastern Colorado not cross the state line and add to Goodland’s economy?

Certainly, it is less likely that the residents of Colby are going to travel to Goodland to do their shopping., than it is for the citizens of Burlington, Bethune, Stratton, and Flagler to come shop in Goodland. When the consumers come to Goodland to Wal-Mart or J.C. Penney, they also buy gas, go out to eat, and they shop other stores located in Goodland.

Finally, I do agree that there is a limited amount of confusion pertaining to the differing time zones in the state, but this only affects a small amount of people on a limited basis. Eleven states are dissected by a time zone boundary: Idaho, Oregon, Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee and Indiana. Thirteen other states choose to allow a time zone run their border. There does not seem to be an overwhelming sentiment that a time zone should not split state.

I suppose that when these borders were drawn there was some amount of thought put into these imaginary lines. I do understand these arguments change over time, but I have

yet to hear a good argument.

Do we really believe that moving the time zone will influence the economic well-being of Goodland for the better? If so, I will be the first in line to adjust my watch. However, I believe that this move is half-thought at best.

I, for one, like the new direction that Goodland is moving towards in economic growth, but I do not encourage change for change’s sake. I would rather see Sherman County spend our resources attracting real growth, not feel-good measures that give the appearance of the pursuit of economic growth.

Finally, I feel that Mr. McClure and Mr. Keirns, despite good intentions, are adopting a position before completely investigating the resulting impact of that decision. I realize that the voters of Sherman County have entrusted governmental decisions to our commissioners, but unlike Mr. Keirns, I think that the people of Sherman County do have the right to have their voice heard through their vote. This decision simply affects the lives of too many people to pass without significant public debate.

Brigham F. Sloan

Goodland

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