

from our viewpoint...

Voting machines another mandate?

It's another one of those federal mandates, the kind that come with big money and lots of strings. The kind that states ought to fight, but seldom have the fortitude for.

This time, Kansas is worried about losing \$27 million in federal money for voting machines and other election improvements. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius vetoed a bill that would have required every Kansas voter to show identification at the polls.

The governor rightly figured that Kansans, used to being recognized by election judges, might be insulted by the rule.

The federal money sounds great until you find out that the feds think one set of machines for each county is plenty. That means that in Decatur County, for instance, voters from Jennings, Dresden and Norcatour would have to drive into Oberlin to vote in their own city elections.

Sometimes it's hard enough to get people interested in city elections when the polls are right down the street. But in Washington, they neither know nor care about places like Jennings. Never mind that out there, paper ballots produce a count just as fast as machines.

This is no laughing matter. Sherman County already has converted to the new machines and adopted the one-polling-place solution. Voters in Kanorado, the only city outside of Goodland, have gone through two elections now, driving 18 miles into the county seat to vote.

At least they have a freeway to make the trip on. Jennings people had better hope it doesn't rain, or they'll have to drive miles out of their way to avoid muddy county roads.

What a mixed up country this is, where people in Washington think they have to make every decision.

This law came out of the voting-machine fiasco in Florida three years ago. The idea is to give states money to replace outmoded systems that cause voting problems. Like many federal laws, it sounds almost sensible at first.

But one thing about the feds: they want to apply the same rules to everyone. That means urban counties, rural counties, East Coast counties, Alaskan counties. Just because it makes no sense is no reason not to be consistent.

Then there are the strings. It's not just the money. It's the fact that if a state or county doesn't update its systems, the law allows people to sue. So eventually, all the states may have to surrender.

Another proposal was to have only new voters show identification. Maybe that will fly, but what we really need is for states to start saying "no" to these things and get Washington off their back.

You'd think that integrity, common sense and the freedom to make their own decisions would be important, but up to now, it hasn't happened.

Too bad. — *Steve Haynes*

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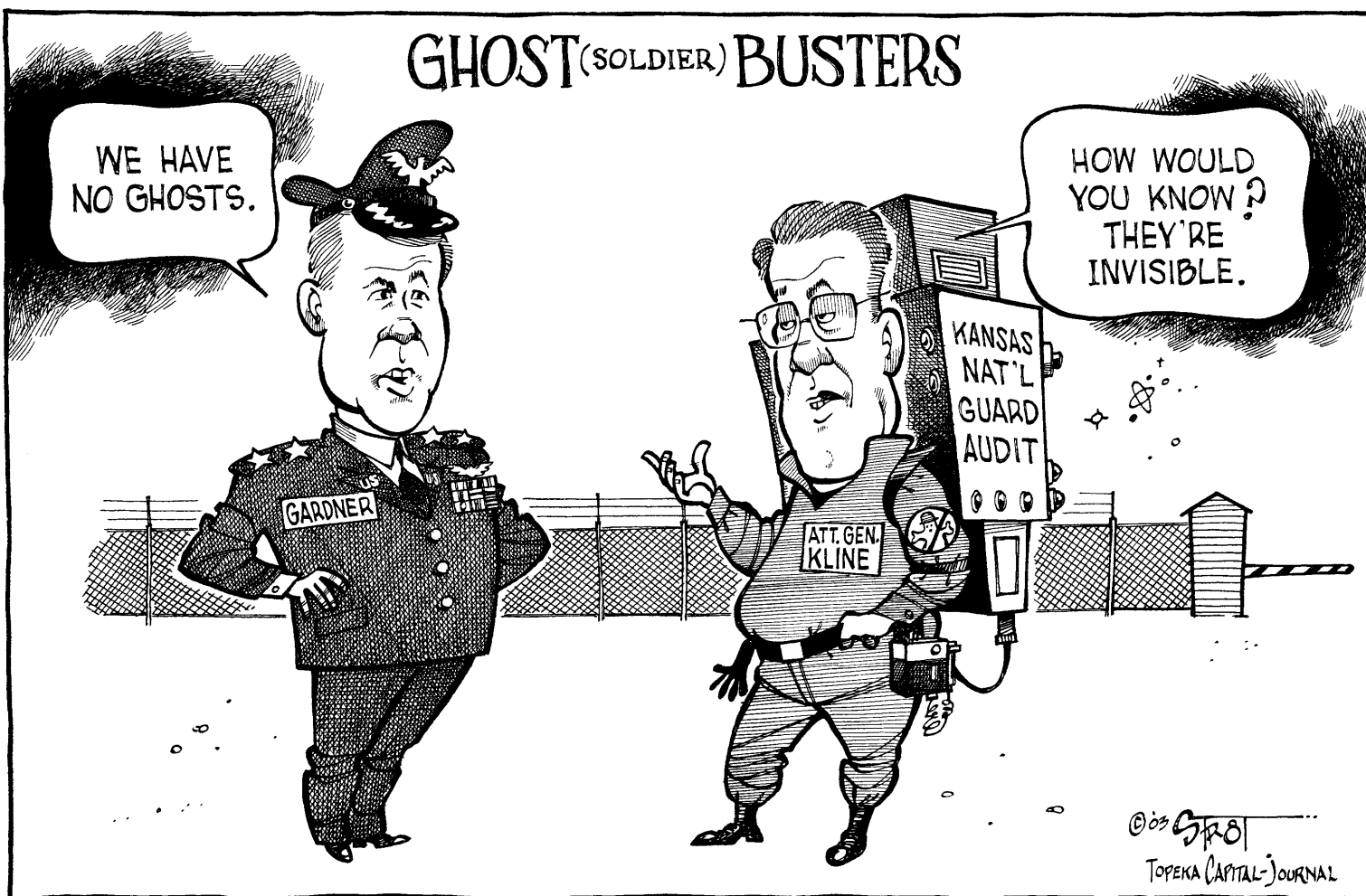
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Thinking about our ever changing language

I don't know about you, but I'm once again thinking about our ever-changing language.

I keep lists of strange words and phrases that I run across in my reading, TV viewing, etc.

Most of the time I can, often with the help of a dictionary, figure out their meanings; sometimes I can't.

One word I've had on my list for quite awhile is "Jonesing." I don't know if that has to do with "keeping up with the Jones" or what.

Recently I saw it supposedly defined in a Tom Jones performance commercial, but it still didn't make any sense to me. That one's still a mystery.

Then there's the one that came out quite frequently before the war to liberate Iraq: "Just war Christians." That's one that probably needs a hyphen: "just-war Christians," people who believe in a war that is just, but then so few really are.

Or maybe they meant "just (as in only) war-Christians." But then Christians are supposed to believe in peace, so "war" is suspect in the phrase too. Well, I guess you decide that one.

One phrase I liked in a book was a person described as "in a mental lather." That's descriptive and also cute.

Now the person described with a "hirsute



**lorna
gt**
• commentary

chin" allows for no cute at all. The word "hirsute" itself is ugly.

I looked that one up, and I was right. It is "roughly hairy" as in "pubescent with coarse stiff hairs." It also might describe those annoying stray chin hairs people get as they age.

A new word on me was "unicameral" in a sentence about government. The dictionary says it is having "a single legislative chamber," as in the state of Nebraska.

Then there's "gravid," "jism," "funerary exception," "impecunious," "malapropisms," "otiose," and "equipoise."

I'm tired. YOU look them up.

A couple of phrases that I thought were interesting: the "funeral was made" and a person who exhibited "abject optimism."

And then there's the one I pictured pioneers doing: "hollahing horses," but I don't know why, because I haven't a clue as to what "hollahing" means. I'm assuming it's

"hollering" to the horses, but I'm probably wrong.

Then there was a book about New York that kept mentioning and "Auto-chef." What is an "AUTO-CHEF?" I never did get an explanation.

A new one on me was "Word salad" which the author was kind enough to define: "gibberish spoken by a patient after a stroke." It's a term doctors use, I guess. When the electricity goes off, one author called it "output failure." Another author called a bay window a "bump-out window."

In The Myth of Laziness (Simon & Schuster) by Mel Levine, children aren't lazy. They "more likely are victims of a poorly understood brain-based malady," usually most clearly revealed in writing and spelling. That's a new concept to me.

In the same book, people who spell well on a spelling test and poorly in an essay have "weak simultaneous recall." Isn't that the same as poor memory?

Well, I guess I've fallen victim to the world's propensity to elucidate in an arrant manner with verbosity and non-conciseness.

You got it right! Like most people, I talk too much! And often, don't know what I'm saying!

Nurse thanks hospital for caring for her father

To the Editor:

I tell people, "in my previous life I was a registered nurse," because it's been many years since I practiced in a hospital. However, I believe my past nursing experience gave me a good base to evaluate the quality of care my Dad, James M. Smith, received while he was in the Goodland Regional Medical Center from May 8-13.

I was so impressed and grateful for all the staff in the hospital. Every one of them was considerate, professional, caring and treated him as if he were part of their family. I was so thankful that during his last days he really did not suffer, which was partly due to the fact the staff allowed him to carry on as "Smitty," joking with the nurses and generally being ornery.

Not only was the food good in the cafeteria, but the staff would always ask, "How's Smitty?"

This is the kind of treatment a family just doesn't find in a city hospital. Goodland Regional Medical Center may have fewer specialized providers and staff than are found in a city, but when it comes to genuine caring for the patients with a home town feel it is worth more than I can express with words.

As I said, all the staff was wonderful, but I must mention a few, and please forgive me for not remembering everything.

Dr. Mohedine Shafei was most considerate, compassionate and helpful. Anjelina Adamson, a registered nurse on the day shift, took the time to sit down and talk with us to make sure all was being done that could be.



**from our
readers**
• to the editor

Connie Jo Johnson helped keep my Dad laughing and teased him as much as he teased her.

Lisa Varney had the insight and thoughtfulness to get Dad to a bigger room, making things more comfortable for all of us those last few days. The (St. Francis) gentleman from respiratory therapy, Jason Johnson, took special time with Dad to make sure he was comfortable as possible. Ana Johnson and Martha Alfaro added that special care during times it

was needed most.

And finally, on May 12, there were day shift professional nurses Vicki Baker and Erica Arntt, who were Dad's main nurses his last day. They took the time several times during the day to sit down with my Dad to make sure he was comfortable and had what he needed. If they couldn't figure out what he needed, they would sit with him until they did know.

Again, my family and I are most grateful for all the staff at Goodland Regional Medical Center and the quality of care provided to "Smitty."

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