

from our viewpoint...

Another push ready on casino gambling

There'll be another big push for more casino gambling in the Kansas Legislature this year.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who appointed a special commission to study the issue, likely will get behind the drive. She'll say the state could use the revenue and the jobs, but that's an open question.

Lots of interests are willing to spend big money pushing gambling, and most of them stand to make money. Race track owners have lost most of their profits to casinos; they want slots to boost their fortunes. Suppliers want to open up our state. Others want to start new gambling operations.

There's no denying the appeal of casino games. A glance at state traffic statistics shows that U.S. 75 averages 10,000 cars per day north of Topeka, and just 5,000 north of Holton, meaning that a lot of people exit at the Indian casinos up there.

If casinos out in the middle of nowhere draw like that, imagine what they could do in or near major Kansas cities.

There's money to be made in the casino business.

But the question remains, do we really want or need more gambling in Kansas?

Time was when the state looked on gambling, liquor and prostitution as vices to be suppressed. All of those can be destructive and addictive, especially liquor and gaming.

But we found it next to impossible to get rid of Demon Rum, and there's always been a horse book or a card game going on in this state, legal or not.

Then the state latched onto gambling as a money-making scheme and got into the business itself. The state lottery opened the door for Indian casinos and the Legislature gave us gambling at dog and horse tracks.

The tracks made money for a while, but big "riverboat" casinos over in Missouri have siphoned much of the profit, and the Indian casinos have taken the rest.

But gambling as a business depends on the immutable fact that people lose money. Otherwise, there'd be no profit for the house. Someone has to be paying the casino's bills.

Legalizing gambling puts the state in the position of encouraging vice, not suppressing it. The state's Lotto game is pretty much the same as the mob's old numbers racket, though the mob used to give better odds.

Is that what we want for Kansas?

Now that we're making money off of liquor and gambling, should we also consider taxing marijuana and prostitution? Or maybe state-run brothels?

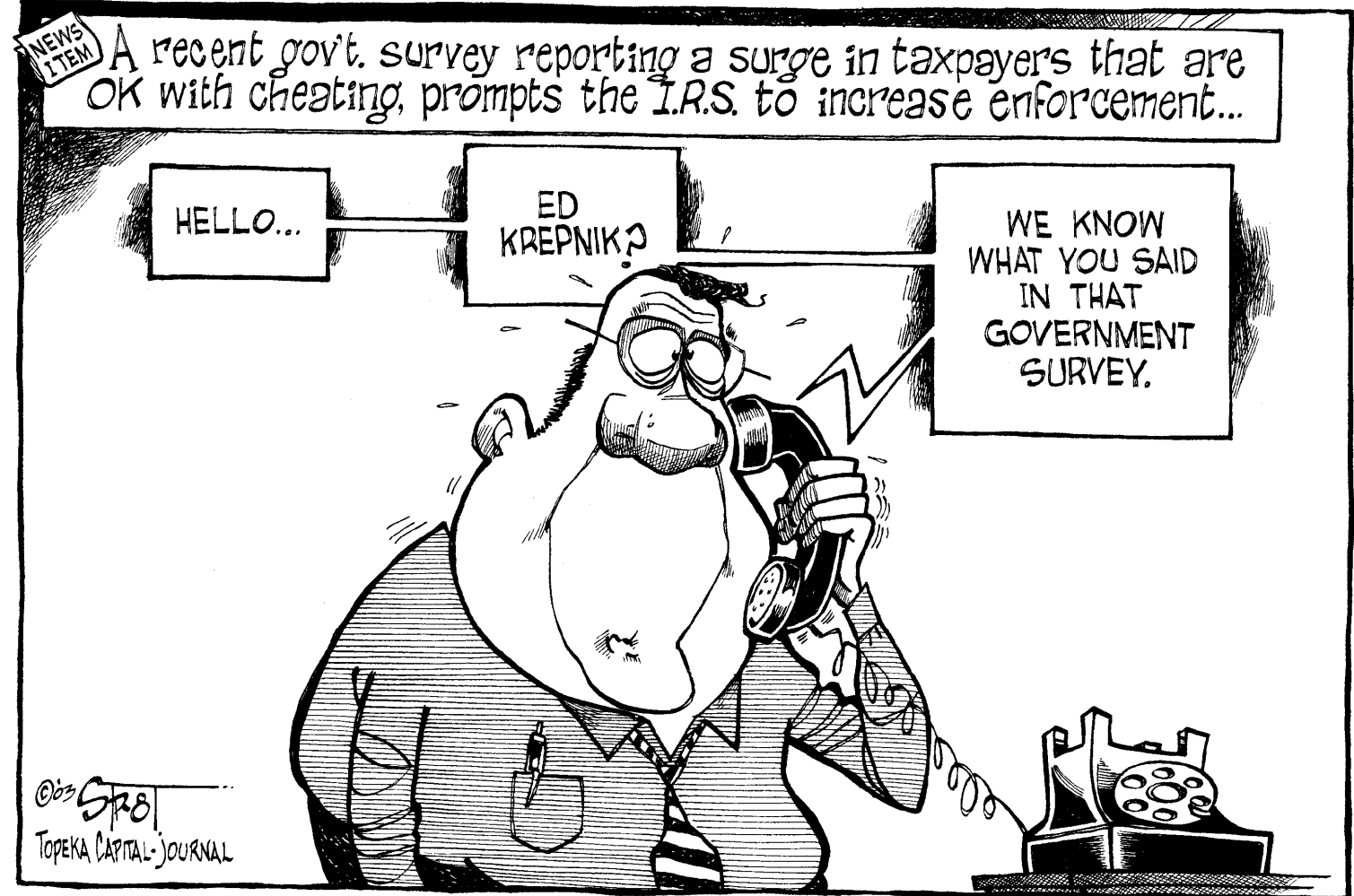
It's almost impossible to win the battle against vice by passing laws, or we'd have made it work during Prohibition. It's another thing altogether to have the state promoting a vice, but with gambling, that's what we're doing.

More casinos?

The \$50 million the state stands to make would be a drop in the budget. We've no obligation to bail out track owners or make big casino firms rich.

From this point, there's plenty of gambling opportunities in our state already, maybe more than enough. The social costs are great.

Let's just say no. — Steve Haynes



I like Thanksgiving holiday

I don't know about you, but I like Thanksgiving.

It's quickly becoming my favorite holiday.

There's just too much commercialism wrapped around too many of the others. I'm feeling sad that Thanksgiving is sandwiched so tightly between two other holidays that it's being slowly squeezed into non-existence.

What can I say about Thanksgiving?

Even written without a capital letter (i.e., thanksgiving) it is a good word — and a good idea.

Gratitude is a great spirit; it leads to contentment and peace. I wonder how it's being taught in public schools these days when God can't be mentioned.

What's the point of thanks; who receives the gratitude?

A "not-so-comic, all-too-true" cartoon I read



lorna g t

• commentary

one year showed a picture of a young man standing in front of a classroom blackboard (another antique, I'm sure) on which is written: "The pilgrims came here seeking freedom of you know what. When they landed, they gave thanks to you know who. Because of them, we can worship each Sunday you know where."

Too bad freedom of speech is only being censored in religious matters, isn't it?

A much better essay on Thanksgiving (in my opinion) are these words from Dale A. Matthews in The Faith Factor: "It is easy to

confuse adoration and thanksgiving, but they are different, though certainly related to one another. Adoration might be likened to the feeling lovers have for one another as they gaze into each other's eyes, or the emotion that overcomes a parent when a newborn is placed in his or her arms. Thanksgiving is a conscious recounting of the blessings God has given us, and a deliberate act of recognizing (God's) his work in our lives. I think of thanksgiving simply as giving credit where credit is due — to the God who gives us life and breath. In the process of giving thanks, we remind ourselves that God is trustworthy, that (God) cares about us, and that we do not struggle through this life alone."

May you purposely, consciously and deliberately celebrate a spirit of thanksgiving, and may you hold tightly to it throughout each and every new day.

There is 'service after the sale' in Goodland

To the Editor:

This note is intended for those of you who, like me, thought "service after the sale" was only wishful thinking.

Last Friday evening at 5:00 p.m., my wife left Central School and tried to start her vehicle. It wouldn't!

She called Finley Motors's service department and was told that help was on its way.



from our readers

• to the editor

Rick McElwee, service manager, and Danny Archer, owner, arrived in a pickup with tow

rope in hand. The vehicle was repaired later that evening.

I thought the citizens of Goodland and surrounding area would like to know.

Thanks to Rick, Danny, and the service personnel of Finley Motors.

Cliff and Marcia Smith
Goodland

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THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR
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Study to be made of Kansas health insurance

Each year, the Kansas Insurance Department receives thousands of phone calls from consumers asking for answers to their insurance questions.

More than half of those calls are related to a single topic: health insurance. While many of these questions are related to specific issues with single health insurance policies, we also hear many questions about the cost, availability and status of health insurance in general.

A recent statewide survey of Kansans indicates about 10.5 percent of our state's population is living without any health insurance. The survey was funded by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration and administered by the Kansas Insurance Department and the University of Kansas Medical Center. Now the federal government has awarded the Kansas Insurance Department an additional grant of \$185,000 for research into ways to make health insurance more affordable and available to Kansans.

We already know that uninsured people tend to avoid the doctor except for serious injuries or illness. This is inefficient and expensive.

Many of these same people tell us they cannot afford the existing health insurance products offered.

Small employers say they are finding it harder



sandy praeger

• insurance comm.

to offer health benefits to their employees. Larger employers are facing rising costs and often pass more of those insurance costs to their workers. Individual insurance policies have seen the greatest percentage of cost increases in the past decade. And the cost of healthcare and health insurance are projected to increase at similar rates for the next several years.

There are no simple answers. But with good information and effective research, we can get a better idea of who is uninsured, and how we

might be able to fill the gaps. We will talk to employers, employees and Kansans from all walks of life. And, as always, the Kansas Insurance Department welcomes input from anyone with ideas, questions or concerns.

My thanks go out to the University of Kansas Medical Center and the Health Resources and Services Administration for helping us with this important research. I look forward to working closely with these partners as we develop a strategic plan to improve health insurance coverage in Kansas.

If you have a question or concern about an insurance-related issue, please call our Consumer Assistance Hotline at 1-800-432-2484 or visit the Department's web site at www.knsinsurance.org. Assistance is also available at our Wichita office (316-337-6010).

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