

from our viewpoint...

## Congress goes home; neither side satisfied

Congress called it quits for the year, and while the members take more than a month for holiday vacation, the pundits will try to decide if it was a good session or not.

As the session drew to a close, there were several issues that did not find their way through the process. One of those was the much-touted energy bill that would boost wind energy, alcohol fuel production and find ways to end the energy crunch that has plagued the West Coast, and parts of the East.

This is a disappointment to those in Kansas who were looking to provisions in the bill by Congressman Jerry Moran that would have aided the ethanol industry and fledgling wind-farm efforts. Moran told supporters in August he felt the energy bill was one of the important issues the Bush administration would support. End-of-session squabbling among Republicans left the bill without the required majority.

A new energy bill is certain to be introduced in January, and maybe many of the provisions that Moran had supported can be included.

The Medicare Reform package passed last week, though there are many who say it is not the real answer to helping the elderly with their health and drug costs over the next several years.

While the Republicans were celebrating with the insurance and drug companies, many senior citizens were less than happy.

As with many "reform" efforts by Congress, when it is finally approved, there are parts of the final law that neither side really likes. Congress approaches programs with the best of intentions, but the plans are picked apart by the special interests on both sides. Democracy sometimes means accepting the best deal that can be reached with the hopes that the built-in problems can be solved later.

A perfect example is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. The original idea was to give people a way to move their health insurance from job to job without losing benefits. Sounds simple, and in fact, that part of the bill remained pretty simple. It works as it was planned.

However, the accountability portion was designed to keep insurance and drug companies from taking advantage of those who find themselves needing medical services. The idea was that the patient information should not be available to these people.

That plan has gone so far out of the mainstream that no one is sure what is private information and what can be released. In that case, the simple answer is not to release anything, even if the patient wants it released. This law has some tough fines, and no one wants to be the first to take the volumes of regulations to court.

For most of us, it doesn't matter whether Congress is in session or not. Their actions do not usually affect our daily life right away, but we all have to deal with the messes they create in the name of reform and improving our lives.

The best test of whether a session was good or bad is that Congress did not do much to make our lives worse. We won't know about the grade on this session for at least two years, when the prescription drug provision are supposed to kick in to aid seniors with their medication costs.

By that time we will have forgotten about what else happened — or did not happen — this year. — *Tom Betz*



## Are you looking for a pair of cute cats?

Steve says our youngest daughter is an enabler. Saturday night she called to tell me that she had access to a wonderful calico kitten that needed a home. Further conversation brought out the fact that there were actually two calico kittens in need of a home.

I was tempted by the first kitten, but knew two was not in the cards.

My personal cat limit is three. We have had more in the house, but only because we were cat sitting — sometimes for a year or two — or one of the cats had had kittens.

Since Kubla Khan disappeared a month or so ago, we have been down to a pair of felines.

Miss Molly and April Alice are like sisters. They fight all the time.

On the other hand, two cats are kinda nice.

There's just Steve and I now, so two laps and two cats work out just right. Two cats, however, do not work out to one on his side and one on hers on the bed at night.

Two cats in the bed equals one cat fight with us as the mat.

I have to admit, however, that I have been



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

dreaming of a third cat. My preference would be for a young male — not a kitten, but not over 3 years old and preferably Siamese or part Siamese.

My preference does not usually mean a ding dang thing when it comes to cats, however. They find us — not the other way around.

We were after a young tom for my son when April Alice purred her way into my arms and heart.

She was the reason we had eight cats that spring. We knew she was pregnant when we took her home, but since we couldn't catch the young tom, my son said he'd take one of the kittens. He got two.

Actually, I know the two calicos youngest daughter is trying to pawn off on me. They lived

at our place in Colorado last summer. Rachel spent the summer in Colorado at our house with youngest daughter. She brought her cat and three kittens.

Looks like its one down and two to go for Rachel. I thought she had them all given away. Well, that's not the first time I was wrong about a cat.

Actually, I suppose I'm somewhat responsible for at least one of the kittens. I saved its life.

I was reading when I noticed that the kitten had become tangled in a drapery cord and was in the process of hanging itself.

Still, I don't think I could take one and not the other. They'd be about 7 or 8 months old now and probably very attached to each other. It wouldn't be right to take one and not the other.

And, as I've already said, three cats is my personal limit.

However, if anyone out there is interested in a pair of really cute, playful cats, I know where to find them. Just call the paper and leave your name and number.

I'll find you, because you know something? I'm an enabler, too.

## We're ready for the first winter storm

The lawn is clean, the hoses rolled up, the sprinklers put away, and just in time, too.

We spent Saturday making the final preparations for winter. We'd already put down the winter fertilizer and planted new grass in the bare spots left over from the city water project.

Flower beds were cleaned out and the garden plots had been mulched for the winter.

With the first big storm of the winter coming, it was time to put the hoses away and disconnect the spigots before they froze and cracked.

Besides, you can run water through a dry, empty hose if you need to. That's not possible with one that's been on the ground, frozen full of water.

I cut the grass one last time, sucking up a few green blades amidst a sea of crackly dry leaves. More mulch for the gardens. You can't get too much, or so it seems.

There are green shoots of spinach poking up through the mulch, ready to sprout and grow a salad early in the spring, before the rest of the garden is turned. It'll be time then to turn the



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

mulch under and enrich the soil. We've been doing that for 10 years now, and the plot is a lot easier to work today.

We're lucky the weather has been so nice. Some years, the first big snow comes before Halloween. This year, we've had an extra month of good weather. That translates to two extra mowings, mostly leaves in the bag, but work all the same.

When I got done Saturday, though, I hosed the mower off and got it ready for winter. It won't be needed until March now.

Who's to say it will rain or snow? Nature can be so fickle. But unless it's really hot and dry, there'll be no need to water the lawn for the next couple of months.

## Thanks for the great concert where to write

To the Editor:  
A big thank you to Tina Goodwin and the Carnegie Arts Center for bringing the band Glen Road to Goodland a few weeks ago.

Although the crowd was few in number, everyone seemed to really enjoy the traditional Irish music. It was a special cultural experience for Goodland.

I hope in the future, more people will take advantage of such an event so that people like Tina will be willing to put in the effort to bring



**from our readers**

• to the editor

events to our community.  
Laurie Klemm  
North of Goodland

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### garfield



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