

from our viewpoint...

Committe chair bottles up water bill

Rep. John Faber saved western Kansas from an economic body blow when, as chair of the House Agriculture Committee, he bottled up a bill designed to curb water use along the mostly dry Arkansas River.

The problem as Faber sees it — and we agree — is that the proposal would use federal Conservation Reserve money to pay farmers to idle land so the state could take well rights out of service.

We don't argue with the push to reduce pumping underground water. Rampant production of irrigated corn, while lucrative, is running the state dry in many areas. Some wells can stand that type of pumping. Many cannot.

Despite a lawsuit forcing Colorado to use less water and deliver more to the Kansas border, the Ark is dry west of Hutchinson most years. Overpumping is a major problem in the basin, as it is in many parts of the state.

How we approach this problem is critical, though. Taking huge chunks of land out of production would have a snowball effect, harming co-ops, ag suppliers, schools, businesses, whole towns.

A more reasonable approach is to buy back well rights and let farmers either graze the land or grow dryland crops on it. The blow to our economy will be far less, and for the foreseeable future, the nation will have the corn it needs and demands.

That's what Mr. Faber is standing for against pressure from the Senate and many in the House. The problem is, the bill relies on a federal program that prohibits any productive use of land covered by its payments. Rep. Jerry Moran says he'd like to change that, but it hasn't happened so far.

Make no mistake: we need to face the water problem.

Where wells are overpumped, where aquifers are dropping, where streams dry up, we need to cut back to a sustainable level. Water is not just a private property right, but a shared resource that everyone depends on.

And we have to make it last.

The state realizes it has to pay farmers for giving up their wells. The Legislature needs to recognize that our economy depends on keeping this land in production.

Rural Kansas has suffered enough, God knows. Taking more land out of production when grain supplies are tight and prices high makes no sense.

We applaud Rep. Faber for standing up to this awful bill.

With improvements in dryland seed varieties, the land can be productive for decades without irrigation. This is important to all of us out West, because whatever solution applies to the Arkansas eventually will be spread to the rest of the state.

We will have to face the irrigation issue some day, and we hope the state will have a reasonable program to help us — not the one in this bill.

Stand firm, John. — *Steve Haynes*

Letter Policy

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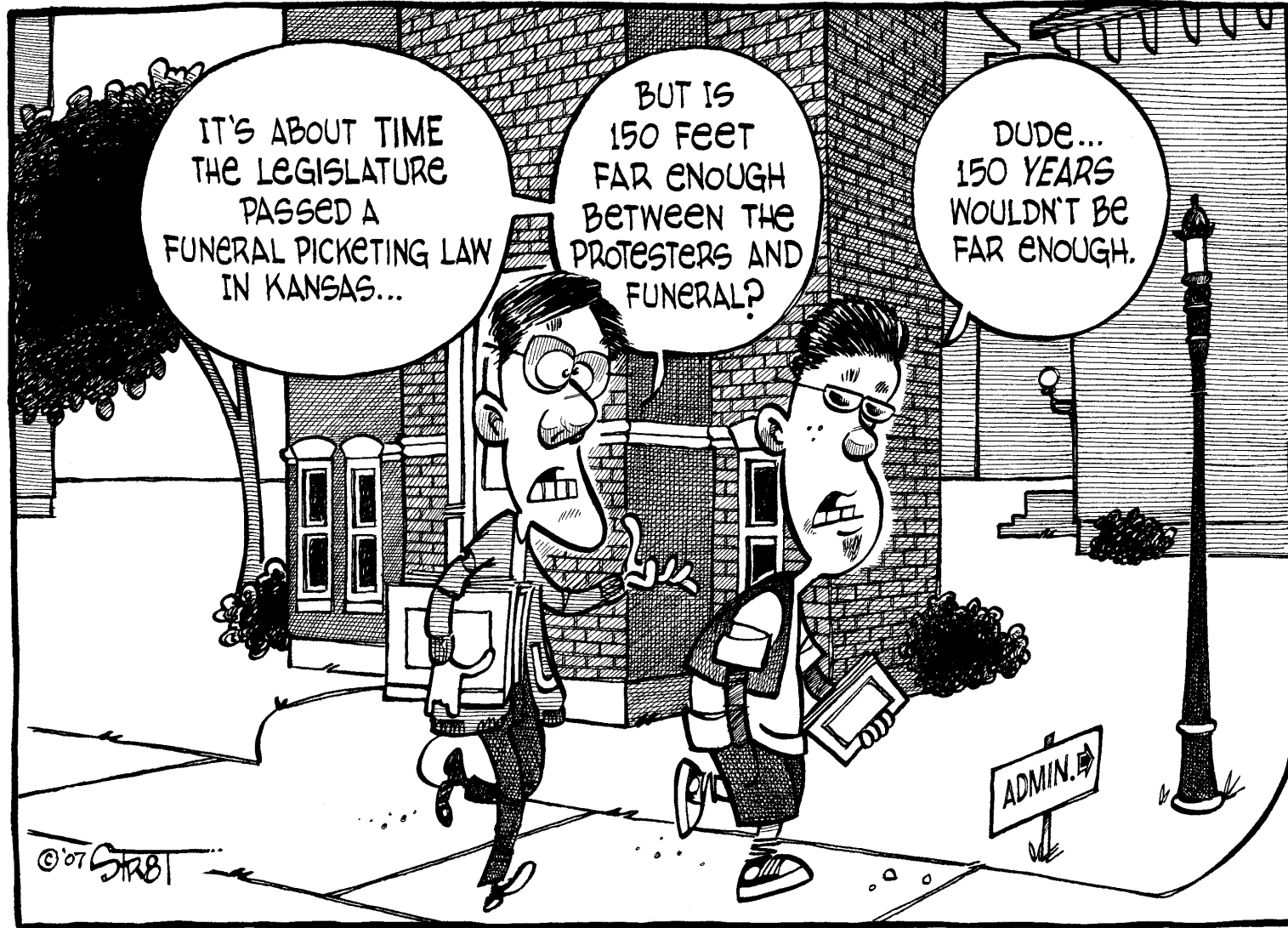
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Easter's good news

To the Editor:

As my wife and I traveled, we drove into a truck stop for gas. I went in to pay and got in the line of a busy cashier. There were three men ahead of me. One was telling the other two of a disagreement he had with another man. He ended his story by saying, "Boy, did I put him in this place."

I wondered who is going to put you in your place? And then, who is going to put me in my place?

The answer came almost immediately, Jesus Christ is going to put all of us in our place! That is why he returned to life on that first Easter.

He arose to show us that in this earthly life we have a justified place with the Father. The Father raised Christ to prove that he was his Son, and to vindicate his birth, life, death and perfect life as a means to justify members of his human family.

It is through faith in Christ that the individual can occupy a justified space. Justification is a court term. It pictures God as a judge who imputes Christ's righteousness to individuals and clothes his Son with their transgressions.

The story is told of explorers who sailed the South Pacific in search of inhabited islands. They went ashore on an uncharted island and had a peaceful visit with the natives. They observed a social custom: A long black coat trimmed in gold hung near the king's throne.



from our readers

- to the editor

Any adult that wanted an audience with the king had to put the coat on, which covered his or her sometimes soiled native dress. The coat made them acceptable to the king.

That is a picture of justification. The individual clothed in Christ's righteous dress, makes him or her acceptable to God the King.

The individual part is faith. In ancient times Abraham believed God and was justified by his faith. God has not departed from the faith relationship. By faith in Christ our place before God is justified, redeemed with the promise of a shining future.

Christ is alive and shows us we have a place in the eternal realm.

In Walter de La Mare's poem "The Listeners" there is the ultimate question.

"Is there anybody there," said the Traveler, knocking on the moonlit door:

"And as his horse in the silence chomped the grasses of the forests ferney floor."

We are all travelers through life knocking on the universe door asking, "Is anybody there?"

"Yes," declares the risen Christ!

The power there is not just somebody, but the Father, Creator of the heavens and earth. Rooms are waiting for those justified by faith.

In medieval art there are two pictures of Christ: One pictures him as the divine conquering Savior whose gaze covers the earth. The second is the human Christ who sees people. This is the Jesus who encountered Mary on the first Easter morning. He saw her as a person created in the image of God.

God is Spirit! Jesus sees all humans as spiritual images of God. He sees beyond the outer trappings and decorations to the person underneath who is of eternal worth to the Father. He also views those justified by faith as his brother and sisters and sons and daughters of God.

One of the characters in the novel "The Harbor" is quoted as saying, "History is just news from a graveyard." That is the view of people who believe that history began last Saturday night. "...news from the graveyard," is the truth of Easter.

Recently I saw little green leaves that blossom into purple flowers springing out of the grave. That is the good news about the flower. Out of Christ's empty tomb comes the good news that we have a place with the Father in his eternal kingdom.

Earl Martell
Retired Lutheran pastor
Goodland

What's happened in Topeka this year?

Here's a quick review of action in the Kansas Legislature:

Senate Bill 66 — Expanded Gaming and Lottery Extension: Following a historic 12-hour filibuster, the Senate voted 21-19 to concur with the House and send to the governor a bill that will allow construction of up to four casinos in Kansas and installation of slot machines at the state's three horse- and dog-racing tracks. The bill would impose a 25-year moratorium on any further expansion of gaming. The possible casino locations, each subject to local voter approval, are Wyandotte, Sedgwick or Sumner, Ford and Crawford or Cherokee counties.

Senate Bill 244 — Funeral Picketing: 123 Representatives and 40 senators agreed sending to the governor a bill creating the Kansas Privacy Act. Once in force, this act will prohibit persons from engaging in picketing or a directed protest within 150 feet of any entrance to any cemetery, church, mortuary or other location where a funeral is held or conducted. The prohibition would be effective within one hour prior to, during, and two hours following the commencement of a funeral.

Public demonstration will be prohibited from blocking entries or exits from a funeral or impeding vehicles which are part of a funeral procession. The bill will not go into effect until after the Kansas Supreme Court or a federal court upholds the constitutionality of its provisions. The attorney general will be required to go to court on the constitutionality of the bill. This eliminates the chance of a group or individual suing the state claiming their right to free speech has been impeded and creating the opportunity for them to be awarded attorney's fees at the state's expense.

House Bill 2062 — Alexa's Law: On a vote of 26 to 14, the Senate approved amending Alexa's Law into another criminal bill. Alexa's Law would define an "unborn child" as a "person" against whom certain crimes could be committed. The effect would be to allow prosecutors to bring separate criminal charges against people who commit crimes against a pregnant woman, one charge for the crime against the pregnant woman, and another for the crime against her child. The bill contains a provision making clear that it does not apply



ralph ostmeyer

- state senator

in cases of abortion or other medical procedures.

HB 2437 — Big Game Permits: Culminating two years worth of work by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks deer task force, the Senate voted 36-4 to allow the secretary more flexibility in issuing big game and wild turkey hunting permits to Kansas residents and family members of landowners and tenants.

