

from our viewpoint...

## Good highways come from planning

Kansas highways are in far better shape than they were 20 years ago, thanks to the far-sighted administration of Gov. Mike Hayden, who saw how bad our roads had become and set out to do something about it.

The result was two long-range road plans, an eight-year plan put together by Gov. Hayden and a 10-year package built under Gov. Bill Graves. They made Kansas highways among the best in the nation, and certainly better than any state in this region.

While the Department of Transportation actually rates Kansas highways as a little rougher than they were two years ago, they're topnotch today because a man from Atwood saw how bad they had become in the early 1980s.

The two highway plans helped Kansas craft a road system that's simple, lean and smooth. It's mostly two-lane, but adequate to serve the traffic, and the pavement is kept up.

Just look around. In our back yard, the Transportation Department has a dozen or more of sections this summer.

U.S. 36 between Norcatur and Norton has been completely rebuilt, with new pavement and grading. South of Oberlin, eight miles of U.S. 83 got a new surface this year. K-383 from Jennings to U.S. 83, and U.S. 83 from there to Rexford were repaved. U.S. 83 south of the U.S. 24 junction — the infamous "Nine-Mile" intersection — also got an overlay.

West on 36, the section from Atwood to the county line and the part from Wheeler to Rawlins County was sealed. The final stretch to the state line west of St. Francis got new asphalt.

K-25 south of Atwood got a new surface, as did K-117 near Herndon. Out south of Goodland, K-27 has been rebuilt all the way to the county line. And on I-70, the stretch west of Colby got a new driving surface.

There's more, but you get the idea. Good, wide, smooth roads kept in great shape. That wasn't always the case, though, and it might not last.

The 10-year Comprehensive Transportation Plan is about done, with final contracts to be let next year. All the bond money has been spent. After that, the state won't have much money for rebuilding roads, let alone building new ones.

Just preserving the pavement and keeping the surface smooth will be a challenge without a new plan.

While the department is trying to put together a package for the next 10 to 20 years, it won't be as easy as the last two

For one thing, the state is out of money. After heavy increases in school budgets, Kansas will be living on its carryover the next two years, sort of like dipping into the family savings account.

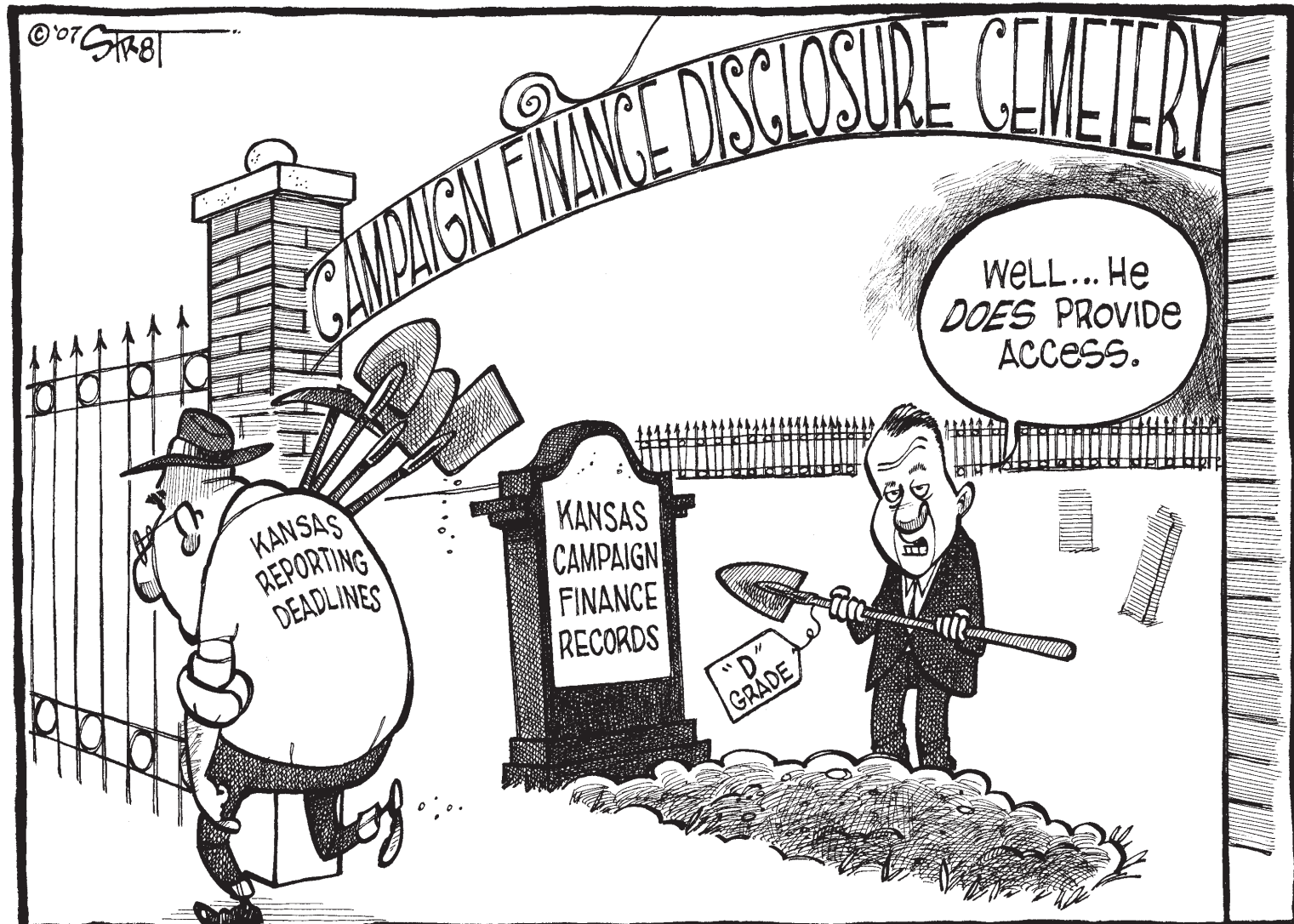
Tax sources which pay for road work are declining as the price of fuel goes up. State projections show a decline in real dollars over the next few years, and the federal highway fund looks the same.

Smaller, more efficient cars mean more miles driven but less fuel bought. Heavy truck traffic could double in 20 years, tearing up the roads that much faster.

Both the state and the federal government have to revamp their highway funds, changing the tax structure not to bring in more money, but just to keep up. Fuel taxes must be indexed to inflation somehow, and there has to be a way to tax vehicles that run on something other than scarce petroleum.

None of this will be easy, but if we want to keep our good roads — and improve them — in a new era, it's got to be done. — *Steve Haynes*

*Steve Haynes, publisher of The Goodland Star-News and president of the U.S. Highway 36 Association, served on working groups for the Kansas Department of Transportation looking at a new Long-Range Transportation Plan.*



## God's only party



will durst

• raging moderate

Earlier this week, a clandestine cadre of controlling conservative Christian captains (bunch of right-wing religious nut jobs is what I'm getting at) threatened to run from the GOP like ducks from an alligator the size of a Buick if any infidel they don't anoint is nominated for president. And yes, specific former New York City mayors were mentioned. Funny you should ask.

At a meeting in Salt Lake City, (where else -- you thought Vegas, maybe?) heaven's soldiers collectively decided they would rather support a burned-beyond-recognition, duck-billed-platypus with wire-coat-hanger hands than a certain Mr. Rudolph Giuliani. Apparently the mayor of 9/11 is not the answer to their prayers.

Oh, they have their reasons. Mr. Giuliani's serial inclination to appear at fundraisers in drag, resulting in his being photographed wearing a dress more often than Hillary Clinton, could be one. His brazen courting of the pro-choice, pro-gay-rights, pro-gun-control wing of the Republican Party might be another. The fact that the Rudy clan, including both ex-wives (two too many), are campaigning for other people doesn't help much either. A bit of a sticky wicket, that: trying to swing Independents with your family value bonafides when your own

family hates you. With megaphones.

The zealot heads went so far as to talk out loud about forming their very own party if Giuliani does weasel his way to the top of the ticket. And since white protestant evangelicals make up a third of the electorate in the early-primary states of Iowa and South Carolina, they believe the threat of mass defection is too big of a bluff for the GOP leadership to call. Because, as we all know, a Republican Party without Christian conservatives is like a snake handler with no snake. A scorpion minus the stinger. Hell without dental surgery.

You might think this is one of those cut off your nose to spite your face kind of deals, because, well, it is. But evangelicals are sick and tired of being taken for granted, and count on party bigwigs to remember how Ross Perot threw the '92 & '96 elections to Bill Clinton. Which in those kinds of Kool-Aid circle jerks is like handing the keys of your children's soul to Satan for a bucket of deep-fried Twinkies.

But let's leave Bush's fiscal policy out of this.

Not only are some dogmatic noses severely out of joint from having the door of implemented policy change slammed in their apostolic faces, but they also have a few canonistic bones to pick with some of their recent higher profile disciples like Mark Foley, David Vitter, Larry Craig and the Creator's own personal mouth-piece, Ted Haggard. Guys whose newsreels feature more extracurricular sexual footage than you'd run into at the Moonlight Bunny Ranch during an after-hours party for the Adult Video Awards.

Of course, if they do form a third party, the big question is what to call it? "The Holier Than Thou Party" is a bit put-offish. "God's Only Party" would be confusing, especially if the media tried to acronym it. "The Everyone Has to Live Like We Think They Should Live Party" is probably too long. I did come up with the perfect name, but unfortunately "The Taliban" is already taken.

Former oyster shucker Will Durst wonders which part of "separation of church and state" these orthodox oxen do not understand.

*Will Durst is a political comedian who has performed around the world. E-mail Will at durst@caglecartoons.com.*

## The Goodland Star-News

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e-mail: [star-news@nwkansan.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansan.com)

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N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

([ntbetz@nwkansan.com](mailto:ntbetz@nwkansan.com))

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. ([support@nwkansan.com](mailto:support@nwkansan.com))

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## Thanks to students for cleaning yards

To the Editor:

We would like to commend the high school for having a clean-up day for the community on Wednesday, Oct. 24.

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to have our yard cleaned this year. We had faculty sponsors Richard Schwasinger and Marsha Sieck and students T.J. Freeman, Dylan Hagerman, T.J. Hawkins, Jon McClung, Allen Normandin, Linsey Owens, Dustin Pennington, Nick Smith and Spencer Windell in the group that helped us.

I have never seen a group of young adults be so polite and be so willing to work. It was such a pleasure to have them here and work with them.

When we were almost finished and I was sure they would never want to come back here again to work, Linsey asked if they could rake the front yard. I asked her if she wasn't tired and she said that they would really like to rake it, so I told her to go ahead. Four bags of leaves later they were finally ready to call it a day, except for helping the city load up all the trash.

This is a community service and they request no pay but we wanted to do something to show our appreciation (as it would have taken us a month or two of weekends to do the work they did in a few hours), so we gave a donation to the DECA Club, as most of the students who worked at our place were out of that organization.

My mother, Coletta Soellner, had her yard cleaned and commented on what a good job the students and sponsors had done, and how quick they were. The facility sponsors for her job were Sharon Hall and Travis Witman and students Nelson Bergemann, Adam Duell,



from our readers

• to the editor

Greg Farris, Brandon Rome, Chelsie Gausman, Patrick Heiter, Vance Johnson, Brooke Lennington, Shayla Matthews, Taylor McLemore, Dallas Price, Whitney Schields and Kade Sheldon.

We are sure all the groups who worked did a good job but we can only speak for these two groups and they did a fantastic job!

You will never know how much we appreciate all that each of you did.

Tom and Mary Butler  
Goodland

To the Editor:

The Brick Top Cruisers Inc. car club would like to Thank You for your generous support to our car club for the 2007 Rod Run. Without your help and generosity, the event would not have been possible.

With approximately two months for the new car club to prepare for this year's show, we felt fortunate to accomplish what we did in that short amount of time.

### Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: [star-news@nwkansan.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansan.com).

