

from our viewpoint...

People needed to carry message

Earlier in the summer Northwest Technical College faced a challenge with a proposal to cut about \$300,000 in state money to be transferred to technical colleges in Manhattan and Wichita.

That effort was squashed by the Board of Regents, and the Technical Education Authority reversed the attempted cut before it went to the Board of Regents.

The effort to stop the cuts brought a group of people together in Goodland to see what could be done and who to call to stop the cuts.

Efforts to stop the cuts and hold the state funding at the same level for next year were successful, but one thing was clear to the group of people working on the issue was northwest Kansas does not have much clout in Topeka.

Over the years people in Goodland and other cities in the northwest region have felt ignored by Topeka, and in some cases glad the state capital ignored the western half of the state.

However, over the years the feeling of being ignored has become a self fulfilling prophecy, and suddenly when the technical college needed help in Topeka there were few contacts to be influential on the many state boards or commissions.

This situation was highlighted in July when Gov. Mark Parkinson announced creation of a special committee to help bring broadband Internet to rural Kansas. Of the 24 people named to the advisory board none were from western Kansas.

When the e-mail announcing the advisory board came across our desk we wrote back asking why no one from western Kansas was included in an effort to bring broadband to rural Kansas.

Unlike what usually happens we got a quick call from a representative from the state Department of Commerce asking if I understood what was the purpose of the advisory board.

We reassured him we understood exactly what was happening, but again pointed out not a single person from the western half of the state had been included in the advisory group being appointed.

His answer was the people appointed were the best in their fields to help with the broadband efforts.

We suggested there might be good people in that field in western Kansas as well, but let him know we were not making a big issue out of the appointments.

We were trying to make a point, and it was not we were upset with the advisory appointments, but the lack of western Kansas representation was another indication western portions of the state and specifically northwest Kansas had not done enough to let people in Topeka know we have the experts and are willing to be part of the effort.

When Dr. Ed Mills was looking for help for the Northwest Technical College we were able to muster enough help to win the first round, but there is no doubt the coming rounds will be more difficult given a lack of lobbying influence in Topeka.

Next time you start to tell someone Topeka “doesn’t care about northwest Kansas,” hold your tongue. We need to work on changing our tune to make sure our message of the importance of our region is heard in Topeka.

We cannot ignore what goes on in Topeka, and must find people willing to commit to carrying our message about the importance of our area and institutions such as Northwest Tech into the halls of state government to fight to preserve the great life we have here. — Tom Betz

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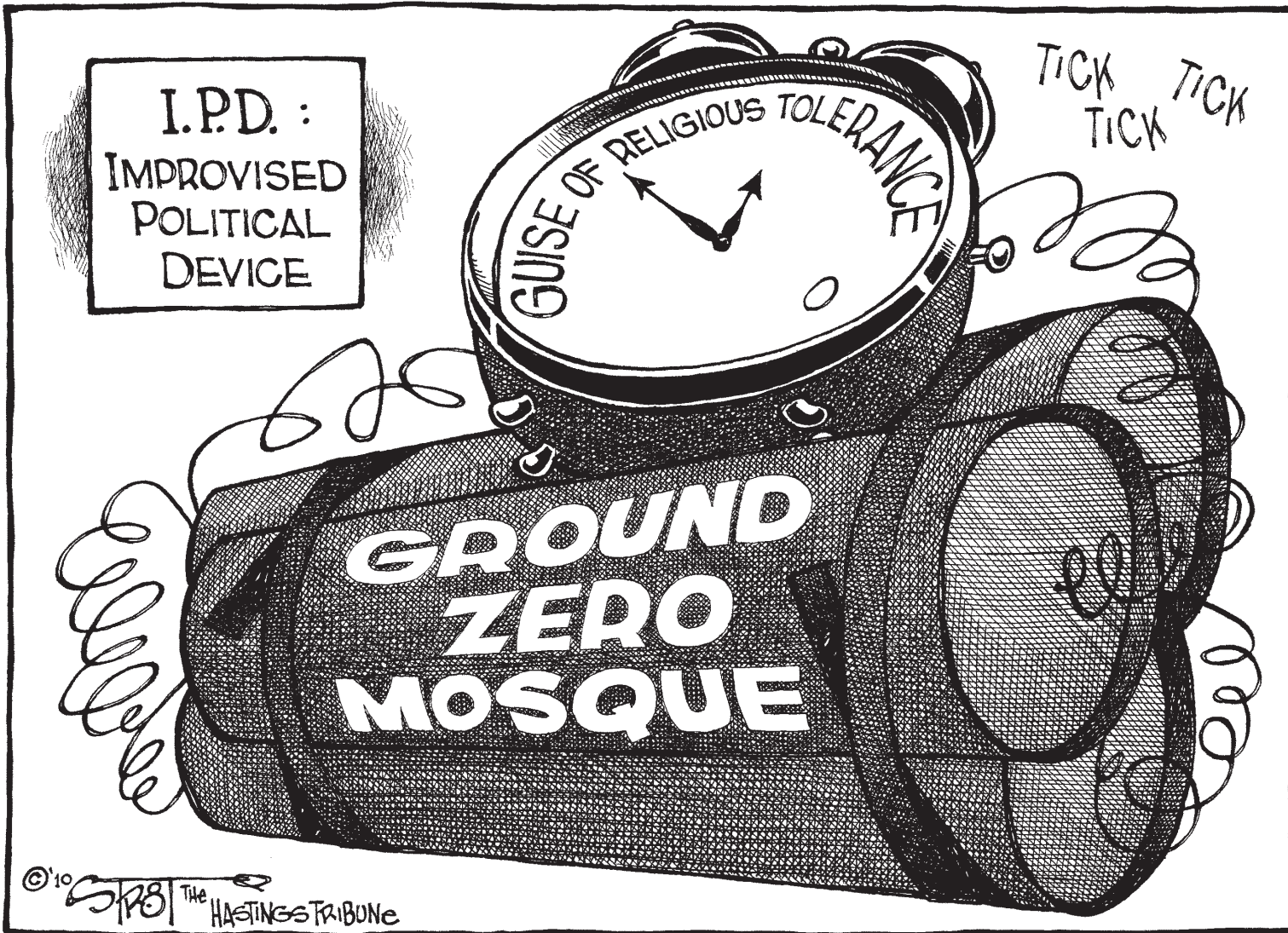
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Wise and prudent



Insight this week

• john schlageck

Are extremists in the environmental movement really concerned about the welfare of our animals, the quality of our water and conserving our planet or are they trying to change the world to fit their own image?

Listening to their agendas and following their actions, there is little doubt such extremists are hell-bent on eliminating animals in production agriculture. Referendums like those in California, Ohio, Missouri and other states by well-funded animal rightists are taking direct aim at the rights of farmers and ranchers who raise, care for and sell farm animals.

You can bet the farm on it – environmental extremists from various groups have played a role whenever new water quality standards are proposed.

Last fall the Environmental Protection Agency announced it was beginning a comprehensive new evaluation of the pesticide atrazine to determine its effect on humans. At the end of this process, EPA will decide whether to revise its current risk assessment of the pesticide and whether new restrictions are necessary to better protect public health.

Atrazine is the most important herbicide in soil-saving growing practices such as no-till and conservation tillage. Farmers use atrazine to control weeds on about two-thirds of this country’s corn and sorghum acreage.

EPA is looking at controlling dust on the farm and herbicide and insecticide spraying drift. Dust is part of farming, it always will be and careful spraying of crops is essential to

continue producing yields necessary to feed this country and the world’s people.

With wise and prudent stewardship, Mother Earth can sustain man and create a desirable living environment with wholesome, abundant food for all.

Anyone with a conscience is interested in making sure our soil, water and air remain in the best condition possible. We all must eat, drink and breathe. It only makes sense to conserve our resources and preserve the environment in which we live.

Not only do some of these zealots want to tell us how to use the land, they want to take it too. They would like to see the federal government buy land then allow individuals to use such property.

Our government has always managed land in a trust relationship for all the people of our country. Not all of the federally managed land is in the best condition. Plenty of questions remain unanswered concerning wildfires burning hundreds of thousands of acres in the hot dry West.

For several years now, a movement has been afoot to take government controlled land back into private ownership. This same trend seems to be happening in other places around the

globe including the former Soviet Union.

There is no way government can take better care of the land than individual owners. Individuals with a vested interest in property will always care for it better than people who have no ownership.

Landowners object to people who wave the environmental flag, then call upon the federal government to secure tracts of land for them without payment. To ask for land without payment is no better than thievery.

These groups should have to pay in the marketplace like everyone else. Once they are required to buy their land, they will have to find ways to offset the costs that come with ownership.

Without a doubt, most people in this country are tired of government taking care of them. We, as Americans, should take back our government from the politicians and bureaucrats. But in order to do so, this means we must participate in the process – if we aren’t already doing so.

The struggle to maintain our freedoms and safeguard our property continues. We must persevere.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of “Kansas Living,” a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

Is your teenager getting enough sleep?

By Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips

Kansas State Health Officer

With school starting up again in Kansas, the lazy days of summer for children and adolescents are coming to an abrupt end.

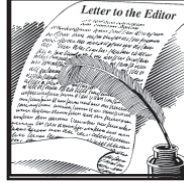
Forteenagers who have gotten used to sleeping late during the summer months, the early start times at many of our state’s high schools are bound to cause a few rude awakenings. In recent years, more schools than ever have begun requiring their bleary-eyed students to arise before dawn to make it to classes that start at 7 a.m., or even earlier.

Without the help of caring adults, these young people will limp through their school days in a chronic state of sleep deprivation.

Sleep loss is becoming a serious concern for teachers, parents and health professionals who care about the well-being of young people. Recently the American Medical Association House of Delegates voted to identify insufficient sleep and daytime sleepiness among adolescents as a critical public health problem needing more attention.

Evidence is growing that sleep-deprived teenagers suffer from an array of problems related to attention, memory, and control of inappropriate behavior. As a group, drowsy teens are more likely to underperform in school, to drive recklessly on the street, and to miss out on getting the exercise they need to avoid obesity and other health problems.

Compelling research now shows that most adolescents need about nine or even ten hours of



from other pens

• commentary

restful sleep every night to function at their best. But surveys tell us that today only 15 percent of teens get even eight and one-half hours of shuteye on school nights, and that many are getting by with barely six hours of sleep, or even less.

What this means is that most teenagers today, kids whose lives are filled with homework, sports, after-school activities and part-time jobs, are falling well short of the sleep their bodies require for good health and full enjoyment of life. Some kids get so little sleep they might best be described as walking zombies.

One seemingly simple solution is to get teens into bed at an earlier hour. After all, wise people like Ben Franklin have told us for years that good things will happen to those who make a habit of being “early to bed and early to rise.”

What Franklin didn’t know was that normal adolescents undergo a physiological change around the time of puberty, a change that sleep experts call the “sleep-wake phase delay.” During the teenage years, humans naturally begin to feel more awake in the evening than they did as children.

This means that throughout the world teens will unavoidably shift their bedtimes by at least two hours into the night, and arise later

the next morning – unless early school bells say otherwise. For American teens today, this biologically determined sleep cycle puts them directly in conflict with school start times, with hours of precious sleep lost as a result.

What can parents and other concerned adults do about the problem of teenage sleep deprivation?

First, we can lend our support to later school start times by raising the issue with school administrators and local school boards.

In schools around the country where later start times have been implemented, adolescents have shown improved motivation, better class attendance, heightened academic performance, fewer incidents of misbehavior and greater overall alertness.

With all that we know now about the importance of teens getting enough sleep, it may be time for Kansas educators to consider seriously the benefits of an 8:30 AM start time in high schools around the state.

On the home front, parents can help their teens get better sleep by assuring that their bedrooms are quiet havens for real rest, with all electronic devices turned off at night.

They can also help their teens avoid caffeine late in the day, ensure that they get adequate physical activity during the day to improve nighttime sleepiness, and see that they take 30 minutes or more before bed to wind down by reading something light, listening to music, or taking a bath or shower.

Finally, parents can help set a consistent bedtime and wake-up schedule for their teens, even on weekends. Routine sleep times will get a teen’s body into sync with its natural sleep pattern, making it easier to doze off at bedtime and be more alert during the day.

We live in a culture that undervalues sleep and its restorative powers for body and mind. Sadly, our teenagers may be paying the price for that, unless we act to make getting a good night’s sleep a higher priority.

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