

from our viewpoint...

Outside spending reaches record level

Kansas voters have been bombarded by commercials for candidates for various political offices, but nothing like the surrounding states as spending on politics has reached a record level especially by outside groups spending millions to influence the outcomes.

A report by the Center for Responsive Politics on Friday showed independent ideological groups for both parties, business associations (Chamber of Commerce) and unions have set a record by spending more than \$167 million on the election process including advertising, setting up systems to poll and influence voters and to get out the vote on election day.

The total is up 367 percent from the \$35.7 million spent during the 2006 midterm elections – the previous record. The spending level does not match the total of \$220.4 million spent during the presidential election cycle two years ago.

The money is coming in at a rapid rate as the Center for Responsive Politics reported the outside groups spending jumped \$13.6 million in about 24 hours from Thursday to Friday before the latest report was released.

The report said the \$167 million figure does not account for spending by party committees. When added together, combined outside spending by independent groups and party committees reached \$247.6 million again a record-setting pace for this point in a midterm election cycle.

The leading groups spending on campaigns include: National Republican Congressional Committee, \$34.3m; Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, \$26.2m; US Chamber of Commerce, \$22.8m; Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, \$22m; American Crossroads, \$12.8m; Service Employees International Union, 10.5m; American Future Fund, \$8.5m; American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, \$8.1m; Americans for Job Security, \$8m; and Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies, \$7.9m.

The top races money is being spent on include the Colorado Senate race where the total being spent by outside groups is more than \$22.3 million. The Missouri Senate race has attracted more than \$10.7 million. The Nevada Senate race has attracted more than \$9 million.

With election day two weeks away the Democrats have 40 Senate seats for sure and 6 considered solid giving the Dems 46 seats and needing five to stay in control. Republicans have 23 seats and 12 considered solid to give them 35 seats, but need 16 to take control. Of the remaining 19 seats Republicans have 8 leaning their way to get to 43 and the Dems have 3 leaning their way to get to 49. In the mix are 8 seats considered toss ups including Colorado, Missouri and Nevada.

The toss up races are attracting the big money with control of the Senate the goal.

In the rush for control the truth is getting trampled – especially by the outside money groups – and adding more voter dissatisfaction with the political process. When the clouds clear after the Nov. 2 election it will be interesting to see what influence the big money had in determining who is in control in Washington.

The bet is the Dems will barely hang on to the Senate and the House may narrowly move to the Republicans.

No matter the outcome people can be sure the big money groups will be in control on both sides of the high stakes Washington game, and the total spending will continue to skyrocket without any controls. American politics should be about more than a shell game for money. Finding a good answer will not be easy or without major opposition from those spending the millions. – *Tom Betz*

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association
National Newspaper Association
e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President
Tom Betz, Editor
Pat Schiefen, Society Editor



Jessica Corbin, Josh Harenberg, Anne Selfridge
Advertising Department

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Richard Westfahl, General Manager
Jim Bowker, Betty Morris, James Jackson,
Lana Westfahl, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel,
Gary Meyer, Judy McKnight

**nwkansas.com**

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)
Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

Babes are tough in potato land

By Ava Betz

I have a new respect for pageant queens since my recent visit to Idaho. My daughter and son-in-law took me to the Shelley, Idaho, Spud Fest, which featured a number of potato-related events.

Most memorable for me was the tug-of-war, which was held over a pit of mashed potatoes. But let me set the scene: There were two banks of temporary bleachers set on either side of a dirt pit the approximate size and depth of a king-size mattress. At one open end was a table where candidates who sought death by drowning in potato slop eagerly crowded into lines to sign up for a tug teams. At the other open end was a cement mixer. A pickup truck loaded with giant cardboard cartons of potato flakes pulled up to the cement mixer and soon men were stuffing buckets of potato flakes into the cement mixer. One man obligingly hosed off dirt and gravel from the delivery chute – I do not know whether the same hygienic operation was performed on the inside of the mixer. Cold water was added into the mixer via a fire hose from a fire truck standing nearby and the mixer was turned on.

When the potato slurp was deemed ready, the mixer truck backed up to the dirt pit and plopped out enough cold, non-white mashed potatoes (and whatever else lingered in the tank of the truck) to fill the pit.



from other pens

- commentary

Then – and this brings me to my opening sentiment – a lovely young woman, teetering on high heels, wearing a crown and a sash which proclaimed her to be “Miss Russet” daintily tiptoed out from the crowd. Yes, she did remind me of the many incarnations of that denizen of the Wal-Mart pink aisle, Barbie. In one hand she carried salt and pepper shakers. The other hand held . . . a spoon!

She walked the length of the pit shaking salt onto the messed potatoes to loud cheers from the assembled crowd. Then she walked the length again, adding pepper as the crowd noises increased. Then she scooped up a spoonful of the potato sludge.

I waited for her to feign taking a nibble. I had an uninterrupted view; her every movement was visible. She popped that spoonful into her mouth and SWALLOWED! The crowd went wild! She grinned and waved that spoon in the air like she had never tasted anything better in her life and was dying to eat the whole pit, but she knew folks were anxiously waiting for her to leave so they could fall into it.

Shelley is a small town – not much bigger than Goodland, maybe even the same size. My daughter, thinking maybe this was a one-time stunt, asked a native if this was the only event Miss Russet had to attend. Oh, no, we were assured, Miss Russet had been crowned the Thursday before Spud Day and had a whole year of spud-tacular events all over the state crowded into her calendar.

Just imagine the multiple varieties of tater tastings in her future. I was quite impressed.

The tug-of-war commenced. Those who plopped into the pit looked coated with something that resembled cement more than it resembled mashed potato. Losers were hosed off at the fire truck.

We ate free baked potatoes capped with cheese and sour cream. In the potato picking contest a 12-year-old girl packed a six-foot long pile of whole potatoes into four sacks almost in less time than it takes me to type about the event, winning her age division and \$5. I predict a Miss Russet crown in her future.

I left the event amazed that the town of Shelley was able to pull together such a good time. All the same, I'm glad Goodland is in an area of wheat, sunflowers and corn – none of which to my knowledge has been slurried in a cement mixer so that folks could fall into pits full of it. I'm also glad I'll never be a beauty queen. I'm not up to the job in so many ways.

Critical thinking



Insight this week

- john schlageck

In today's world, much remains unexplained. Cancer is one disease that comes to mind.

This dreaded disease might be due to genetic conditions, nutrition, a health problem in childhood, prolonged stress or a combination of these factors. One day scientists may find a cure for this disease, but that day has not arrived.

Trends don't always predict the future. During the early '70s some scientists predicted the advent of another ice age. During the '80s temperatures increased and some experts said we'd experience catastrophic global warming. The cold winter of 1993-94 prompted a new wave of hysteria about another ice age.

Today's projected cataclysms are the continued fear of global warming and the melting of the polar ice caps. Predictions of resource depletion are another reason for concern. Most of these are based on projections of past trends. Trends only serve as a guideline of past events and cannot document exactly what will happen down the road.

Another element of critical thinking is reliance on fact rather than opinion. So often in our society, the “squeaky wheel gets the grease.” The loudest or most controversial opinion

receives the most attention.

This has definitely been true in the environmental movement where claims of upcoming calamities receive extensive media coverage. To make sure experts with a minority view don't mislead the public, seek relevant facts and make up your own mind.

One reason apocalyptic abusers thrive is the general public rarely relies on its long-term memory. People are unlikely to remember a doomsayer's dire predictions of a few months ago, much less 10 or 20 years back. We must remember yesterday's false alarms and the people who sounded them if we are to respond to future calls to action.

While few people enjoy risk in their lives, we can't live without it. Everything we do has risk attached even ordinary events like walking down the steps (falling and breaking bones) or crossing the street (being hit by a truck).

Remember the risk of drowning (16 in a million), or dying in a home accident (90 in a million), or being killed in an auto accident (192 in a million) greatly exceeds the alleged environmental risks being hawked by some organizations.

Throughout our lives we make choices. We must decide between the black pair of shoes or the brown. We must decide on catsup, pickles or mustard on our hot dog.

The same can be said about our environment. We have to choose our priorities. We can't do everything at once. To do so could produce unintended consequences that could harm the world in which we live.

Instead, we must apply the same prudence we apply to other significant aspect of our lives. The importance of environmental issues doesn't exempt them from this discipline. Their importance makes careful planning and efficiency all the more necessary.

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.

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — roberts.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 web address — www.jerrymoran.house.gov

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 247W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — jmorrison@ink.org

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399; e-mail address — ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Kansas Attorney General, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767