

from our viewpoint...

Postal Service future object of joint effort

Northwest Kansas citizens and communities wait for answers about the closing of post offices, and for a decision about the changing of the mail processing from Colby possibly to Denver or Wichita.

Sen. Jerry Moran has joined several other Senators to introduce a bill to save many rural post offices. The bill would save post offices that are at least 10 miles apart, and that would at least save Kanorado. Moran is a member of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.

Wednesday a bipartisan group of senators announced they have reached an agreement on a compromise proposal to save the U.S. Postal Service from financial ruin and put it on the road toward more financial stability.

The 21st Century Postal Service Act was introduced by Sen. Joe Lieberman (Ind. - Conn.) Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman, ranking Republican member Susan Collins (R - Maine), subcommittee on Federal Financial Management Chairman Tom Carper (D - Del.) and Sen. Scott Brown (R - Mass.).

The bill will be heard and amended in the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee this week. It is possible the bill supported by Sen. Moran may become a part of this new effort. With the bipartisan senators the hope is the Senate and House can finally get through the log jam and get something approved to address the issues facing the Postal Service.

Lieberman said the bill is an attempt to rescue the Postal Service and give it flexibility to restructure the way it meets its obligations to its customers and employees.

"The U.S. Postal Service is not an 18th Century relic," he said. "It is a 21st Century national asset. Times are changing rapidly and so must the Postal Service if it is to survive."

Sen. Collins said the Postal Service will not survive without these reforms.

"The Postal Service is vital to our economy," she said. "Yet is on the verge of collapse. We are asking the Postal Service to make painful choices about internal costs and not simply slash services and raise prices, which would only add to its death spiral."

Sen. Carper said, "With the right tools and quick action from Congress and the Administration, the Postal Service can reform, right-size and modernize."

The bill would allow the postal service to offer buyouts to employees to help reduce its workforce. The government would refund the overpayment to the federal retirement system. Allow the Postal Service to work with its employee unions to develop a new health plan. Cutting delivery service to five days would be delayed for at least two years.

"The bipartisan postal legislation is a commendable attempt to help the ailing Postal Service," said National Rural Letter Carriers Association President Jeanette Dwyer. "For years our association has advocated the need to fix the Postal Service's financial condition by restructuring its payments for the Future Retirees Health Benefits Fund and by returning the overpayment of the Federal Employees Retirement System."

"However, there are provisions in this bill the NRLCA cannot support. First, the legislation would allow the Postal Service to eliminate Saturday delivery.... The NRLCA firmly believes any reduction in mail delivery will severely harm the Postal Service and deprive its customers of essential services."

The hope is the bipartisan effort will break the Senate log jam, and the saving efforts of Sen. Moran can be included to get this approved and signed into law in a few weeks. — Tom Betz



Cats keep house hectic even without kids

You'd think with the kids gone, things would have gotten less hectic around our house.

Let's face it, three kids keep you jumping, and I figured that when the kids went off to college and the old dog died, it would get more peaceful around here.

Well, two out of three of our children are married and living in Georgia. The last, our son, graduated from high school in 1999 and never looked back. He lives in Lawrence now and comes home only when threatened.

The old dog — two of them actually — did die, and I vowed no more dogs, gerbils, rabbits, hamsters, lizards or snakes. I also decided that two to three cats was the limit.

So why am I living with four cats and a dog?

Well, the dog belongs to Steve and she lives outside. Unlike the children, he really does feed and take care of her, so I can't complain too much on that score.

We own two cats — Molly and April Alice.

So why do I get up every morning to four noses sniffing and four tails twitching for breakfast? Well, Jezebel belongs to youngest daughter, who's husband is allergic to cats.

Frank is April Alice's son and belongs to our son. The two boys were living the life of carefree bachelors in Lawrence when our son moved into a new apartment which forbade his



cynthia haynes

• open season

companion. So Frank came to live with his mother, Molly and Jezebel.

No house with four cats and a dog is ever totally peaceful. There is always quibbling and jockeying for the best spot in the sun, sofa, chair or lap.

Things got really out of hand last Thursday, however.

I was listening to the last high school football game of the year on the radio in the dining room. Steve was tuned in to the sixth game of the World Series on the television while fixing supper. Three of the cats were milling around the food bowls — they each have one — trying to figure out which one was the best, although they all contained the same stuff.

My sister called and was telling me about how she had stuffed 20 relatives into her two-bedroom home for an alumni weekend when the kids all came home with their kids.

With one ear on the radio and one on my sister's hilarious recounting of a wild weekend, I noted that the fourth cat, Frank, was at

the back door.

Frank is a notorious in-out. If he can get the human servants to co-operate, he will go in and out the back door 100 times a day.

I was just about to get up to let him in when I noticed movement in his mouth.

I made frantic gestures at Steve, who — involved with a strike out on the television and putting a BLT together on a plate — was oblivious.

Frank continued to maul the animal in his mouth. Steve continued to watch and cook. I was mesmerized by the cat, my sister and the football game.

Finally, I got Steve's attention and he checked on the cat. The bird was toast and partially eaten by then.

Looking back, I realized several things:

Thankfully, the World Series and high school football are over for another year.

I owe my sister a phone call and an apology.

My husband makes really good BLTs without ever seeming to look at what he's doing.

And, always check the cat's mouth before letting him in.

Well, time to feed the cats. Come on Molly, Jez, April Alice and you too, Killer.

Other side of the ferret story

To the Editor:

On Tuesday, Oct. 18, *The Goodland Star-News* printed a letter from Tim and Rebekah Peterson. The letter contained factual errors and omissions, as well as misleading information, which we would like to correct.

The Logan County Commission was not presented with a petition containing six to eight signatures. They were presented several letters with 18 signers requesting they cancel the reservation of the County owned 4-H building, since a county ordinance as well as a long-standing Kansas Statute has been violated in order to facilitate the ferret release.

The letter omitted the fact the assemblies planned for the schools were restricted access, "available for students and school staff only," and "primarily hosted by the Nature Conservancy."

Peterson's took issue with "who were not all residents of Logan County," however, had they checked the facts, they'd have found all who called school officials were residents and all who made the request to the Commissioners were Logan County landowners and taxpayers.

Petersons claim, "this group used economic pressure.... at a local business," but had they inquired, they'd have found the business owner was unaware initially what the reservation event was, and when informed, he made the business decision to cancel out of respect for many customers who are affected by the release program's consequences.



from other pens

• commentary

If Petersons had made inquires, they'd have found no one was intimidated; reasonable points were presented with supporting facts, so informed decisions were made. Furthermore, Petersons write as though they've spoken with "this group" and can speak to our thoughts on the matter, yet, none of "this group" has spoken with either Peterson.

As for the statement, Logan County receives nearly \$100,000 a year in free prairie dog control, the letter failed to mention only \$19,055 was used for control; the remaining \$80,945 went to program administration and support, annual salary and benefits, transportation, lodging and per diem, etc. in the first year.

We all pay federal and state taxes, so the "free prairie dog control" isn't free considering, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides \$35,000 a year (federal taxpayers) and state Department of Wildlife and Parks provides \$35,000 a year (KS taxpayers). The Nature Conservancy provides the remaining funds \$30,000 a year (non-taxpayer money).

The federal wildlife service is exploiting The Nature Conservancy, Haverfield, Barnhardt and Blank's willingness to defy the law.

A neighbor completely encompassed by the Haverfield release site has pasture evaluated

by Natural Resources Conservation Service to have lost 30 percent of grazing to bare dirt from prairie dog burrows. Our ultimate goal is to conserve the short-grass prairie and cropland, but bare dirt from burrowing, leaves it vulnerable to wind erosion and greater loss of grasses and crops.

Ironically enough, Pete Gober, federal wildlife service project leader of the Black-footed Ferret Recovery Program has stated in an interview, "I don't expect the ferret ever to be recovered to the point where it can be down-listed from endangered to threatened."

A research report said, "He [Gober] is starting to question the wisdom of putting so much effort into a species whose needs are so specialized that it may need constant attention from people just to survive." It seems unwise to cost non-release landowners enormous amounts of money and land damage, which will take decades to recover from, or to invest enormous amounts of taxpayer money into a species, which even those involved with do not believe can ever be self-sustaining.

Logan County Landowners/Tenants Sheila, Mark and Brittan Ellis; Doug, Sharon, Bob, Tracie, Jeff, Sherri, Mason, Dane and Jena Mackley; Darrel and Diane Dirks; Linda Sowers; Lynn Kirkham; Loren, Reta, Mike, Diana, Jeremy, Krista, Jacob and Rachel McDaniel; Joyce Kreigh; Virginia B. Beamer; Scott, Steve and Dianne Schertz; Larry, Garry and Shirley Berggren; James Ludolph; Mike Kough; David Stoll; Mark and Jill Hanson; Keith and Lori Edwards; John and Tonya Lamb; Mary Ann and Morris J. Froelich; and Eve L. Wells

where to write

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