

from our viewpoint...

Governor backs off from arts agenda

Gov. Sam Brownback has backed down – a little – on his plan to do away with the Kansas Arts Commission, proposing that it be merged with the state Film Commission and placed in the Department of Commerce.

Last year, the governor vetoed the arts commission's entire budget, nearly \$700,000, a move which supposedly cost the state \$1.3 million on federal and regional grants. Arts advocates were outraged, from Topeka to the local arts commissions which received a lot of the grant money.

Now the governor is proposing a \$200,000 budget for the merged commission and a plan for an income-tax checkoff to support the new Creative Industries Coalition.

Predictably, Henry Schwaller IV, the former chair of the arts commission who has tried to be a thorn in the governor's side ever since the veto, pooh-poohed the plan. The checkoff couldn't possibly raise enough money to bring any federal funds, he sniffed.

Mr. Schwaller's name ought to indicate which side of the tracks he comes from, and there is the problem with spending taxpayers' money on the arts.

Most of us have no say in how it's spent, and the programs produced often lack mass appeal. It winds up with a few people who could afford to see plays and concerts on their own spending tax money to put on programs that don't serve most voters.

The logic and the ethics are suspect. In a time when schools and universities are short of state money, why put dollars into programs with so little support?

Well, everyone agrees the arts are "good." And good for us, like broccoli. And a few dogged supporters won't give up on reaching for that \$2 million, especially the paid staff of arts commissions in larger cities. Their jobs are on the line, after all.

Mr. Schwaller has been a leader in this movement. He's a busy guy, according to his official biography, a real estate investor in Hays, where he also serves on the city council, and is a teacher in the business school at Fort Hays State University.

We don't doubt his sincerity, or that of anyone who wants to spend public money on what should be a private pursuit. We simply think it's wrong headed.

If all the arts-commission supporters got out and raised money for the arts, instead of just complaining about the end of state support, arts programs in Kansas could be flush with donations.

Maybe it's either more fun to complain, or some of these people just can't get the idea that the idea of an elite few deciding how tax money will be spent on the arts isn't so appealing to many people. Or that the state and federal governments don't have any money "left over" anyhow.

Maybe they will learn with time. — Steve Haynes

where to write

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U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966. E-mail address — <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

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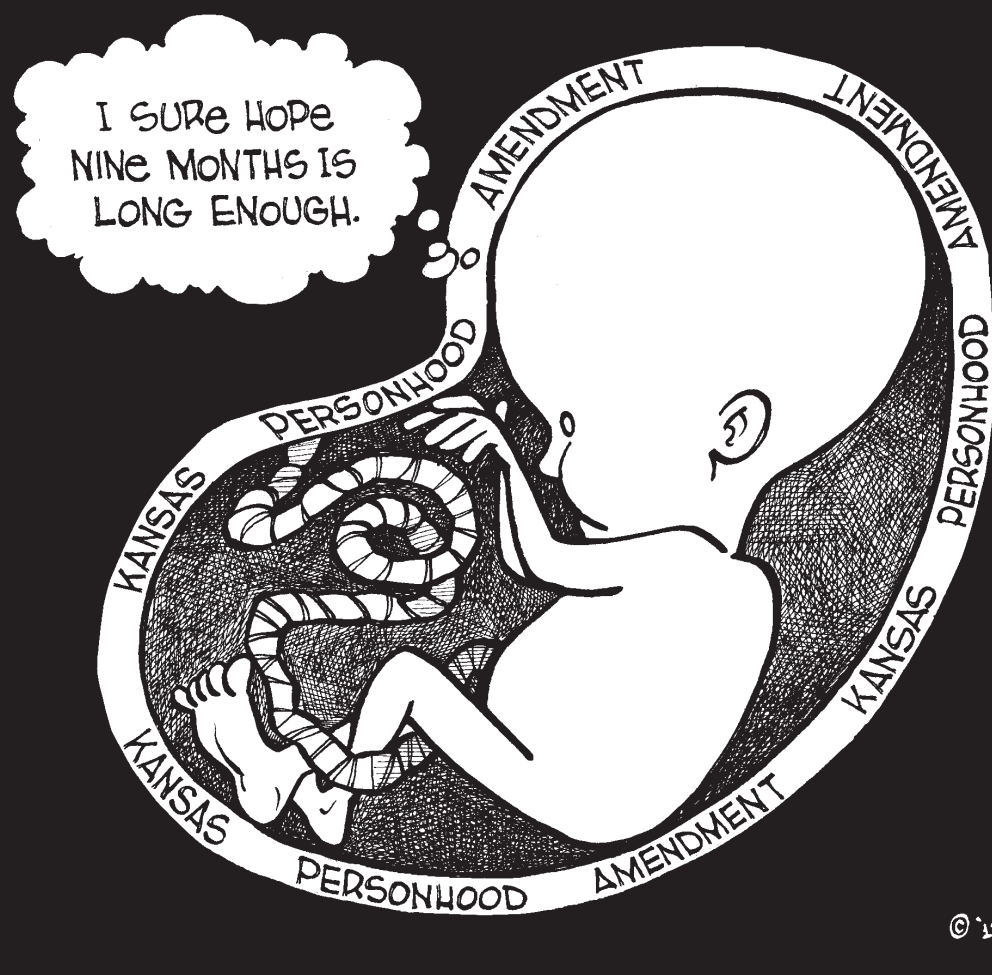
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Ditch the fast food for sure weight loss

Funny, what we depend on to get us through each day, and what we do, but shouldn't, to satisfy our quest for food.

For me, getting through each day means use of a cane and a magnifying glass! Boy, I'd be lost without both.

A portion of my right eye went on the fritz a few years ago, and in the process I lost a lot of vision. So, when reading newspapers or magazines, or letters or greeting cards, it comes in awfully handy. Even when writing brief notes to family and friends, the magnifying glass sort of keeps me on the 'highway of penmanship' so I don't wander off into the ditch, which I still sometimes do. The cane keeps me balanced, thanks to neuropathy of both feet and legs.

Twenty months ago I weighed slightly more than 190 pounds (I am 5'8). When the doctor's office weighed me on Jan. 16 I was at 155! Thus, I have a lot of clothes hanging in my closet that I don't think I'll ever wear again. For laughs, however, I slipped into several dress pants and couldn't believe my eyes! Even my sports jackets and suit coats no longer qualify as choice items.

The weight loss for this 'Man of the Plains' started 20 months ago with the move to Colorado. It really wasn't planned - it just happened. The main thing was not to stop for a hamburger and fries for lunch or dinner three or more times a week, and for an egg and sausage McMuffin and hash browns a couple of mornings each week for breakfast. And because I had sold my pickup when I moved out here due to vision problems, I depend on my kids to get me around and that doesn't include stops at those hamburger houses. That's what I meant when I said my diet just happened!



tom dreiling

• man of the plains

When I finally got around to believing that my weight gain started at the burger and fries places, I also concluded that it wasn't their fault that I couldn't practice a more responsible eating habit. They didn't trope me in when I drove by, I freely pulled in on my own. Fingers should be pointed at people like me, and parents too, who irresponsibly patronize those restaurants with their kids.

I need to credit my kids for not stopping each time we pass a McDonald's or other-like hamburger house. They did me a healthy favor.

But the question now surfaces: did I perhaps shed too many pounds? Some family members think so. I am assessing that situation and will adjust as necessary.

I might add that when I received my discharge from the United States Air Force on Jan. 31, 1963 (four years active duty, four years standby status) I weighed 158 pounds. So, here I am 49 years later at 155. (I must confess that at one time I weighed 219. But that is a story for another column.)

In a nutshell, if you are serious about losing weight—if you are a lover of fries and hamburgers—might I make this suggestion: drive by, not in just because you are in the neighborhood.

Speaking of weight, former House Speaker and presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich comes awfully close to the obesity classification. Looking at him I often wonder when during

the day he doesn't eat.

Snippets

"Note to Tebow: The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away – seemingly in an arbitrary and capricious fashion. So why bother to pray after scoring, he's going to do what he wants anyhow."

"Unfortunately, Tim Tebow has replaced the Rocky Mountains as the state's top attraction..."

"No matter what, John Elway will always be the hero of Denver Broncos football!

"...Mr. Romney's problem is he talks too fast and his words get lost in his mouth..."

"Gingrich would give Prez Obama the toughest debate challenge..."

"...Look at the four finalists. The Republicans again aren't very serious about winning the presidency."

"The Texas gunslinger sure didn't last very long. Boy, talk about a cocky dude!..."

"Guess who will be showing up in the unemployment line in the fall? Hint, middle name Hussein..."

"...They say there is an outside chance the Democrats will regain control of the House in the November election. Pelosi again? Heaven forbid!..."

Snippets to milehitom@hotmail.com. No more than three sentences, please. Thanks!

Peace.

Tom Dreiling is a retired journalist, now living in Denver. He edited and published newspapers in Kansas and Wyoming during his 44-year career. E-mail is milehitom@hotmail.com

Our people, our policy



Insight this week

• john schlageck

any and all concerns in the policy arena in our state's capitol.

Some key areas of concern during the 2012 session will be taxes, school finance and water.

In the tax arena, the Governor is expected to introduce proposals to reduce the current three state income tax brackets to two and substantially lower the rate; reduce the corporate income tax rate; maintain statewide sales taxes at its current level and possibly eliminate some sales tax exemptions.

Kansas farmers and ranchers support a fair and simpler tax policy, but it should not come at the expense of property owners paying higher property taxes.

Related to school finance, elements of a new K-12 funding formula include but are not limited to reduction of equalized state supports from 20 mills to 15; eliminating the cap on Local Option Budgets; and an equalized, local-option sales tax pool.

Farmers and ranchers who belong to Farm Bureau oppose increasing the LOB without

voter approval. They support weightings and favor minimal reliance on the property tax to fund schools.

Water will be at the forefront among farmers during the 2012 session. Farmer members of Farm Bureau support the concept of water flex accounts to provide water right holders greater flexibility in water utilization and profitability. At the same time they would like to protect the source of supply and respect existing water rights.

Farmers continue to support voluntary, incentive-based, stakeholder-driven management plans in over-appropriated areas.

These proposals can provide immediate, much-needed help to drought-stricken Kansas areas. They can lead to long-term policy improvements to help manage a dwindling natural and economic resource while protecting property rights.

And while all farmers and ranchers remain busy with their own lives, families and community, they understand the importance of political involvement. They know politics has a lot to do with preserving their way of life.

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.

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 and letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive will be rejected. 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@nwkansas.com.