

from our viewpoint...

# Governor should have avoided secrecy appearance

Leaders of the state Legislature and the Shawnee County prosecutor are snarling at each other over charges that legislators may have violated the state's Open Meetings Act when they gathered last month at Cedar Crest to mingle with the governor and his staff.

Many Republicans have charged that District Attorney Chad Taylor, a Democrat, has a political motive in pursuing the charge. In fact, it was the *Topeka Capital Journal* and the Kansas Press Association that filed the complaint. Mr. Taylor responded by opening an investigation, which is his duty.

House Speaker Mike O'Neal of Hutchinson barked that Mr. Taylor "should have gone through legislative leaders" to get information, rather than writing to all members of the House and Senate. The speaker, a lawyer, and a good one, should know better; a prosecutor has every right to look where he may for evidence of a violation.

Violation of the Open Meetings Act, while not a crime, is a serious matter. The law forbids public officials of all ranks from meeting behind closed doors to decide public business. Its basis is that the people have a right to know about state business.

The governor's office claims these meetings with legislators were strictly social affairs, and the members were cautioned not to discuss official business among themselves. The meeting involved Republican members of several key committees, who came together, presenting at least the appearance that a majority may have been meeting behind closed doors.

The way things were set up, it's no wonder many were suspicious. Why, we wonder, were the press and public excluded from these "social" gatherings? If the purpose was to get together and get to know one another, why not invite a few of the statehouse reporters and others to come mingle as well?

The governor himself cannot be accused of violating the Open Meetings Act, since he is an elected individual state officer, and not a member of the Legislature. The appearance of undue secrecy cannot help him, however, and he and his staff must have anticipated that tongues would wag.

Inviting Democrats, now that's another manner....

How much smarter the governor's office – and the legislative leadership – would have been to simply have avoided this trap and kept the meetings open. They were not, after all, conducting any important business.

"Social gatherings" held at a state facility with state money and state officials – there's a smell to that, and it isn't good. We doubt the investigation will turn up any serious wrong. But it never should have been necessary.

The governor, the leadership, the Legislature as a whole should set an example of openness for all public officials. It's what the voters and taxpayers expect and deserve. – *Steve Haynes*



## Missing cat finally returns

Where, oh, where has little Frank gone. Oh, where can he be?

We returned from Lawrence last week to find ourselves a feline short.

Molly was at the vet's. April Alice was in the kitchen looking for supper, and Jez was upstairs on her chair. But Frank was nowhere to be found.

We've gone through a lot of cats since we moved to Kansas in 1993. I can count 10 that we used to have but don't anymore and only three of those died of natural causes as far as I can tell. The other seven just disappeared.

So, we've gotten into the habit of counting noses, especially when we return from a trip.

Our cats are in-outs. They can go outside anytime they want, either when a servant opens the large back door or by using the small pet exit in the basement. The problem is they can't get back in without someone opening the big door in either the back or front of the house.

We put the pet door in with the idea they could come and go, but turned it into a one-way device when we started finding strange cats in our house.

One night as we were going to bed, Steve



**cynthia haynes**  
• open season

looked down and asked me if we had a black cat. Let's see, one white and gray, two sand and a tabby. Nope, no black cats.

This fellow turned out to be a friendly little tom from across the street. A nice cat, but not ours, and a) we really didn't need another cat and b) really, really didn't need a tomcat with a full set of claws around the house.

Mr. Tom got tossed outside and the pet door turned into a one-way ticket to the outside for the resident felines.

But this can present a problem when we are gone. Our young caretaker knows that the cats have the right to go in and out, but he's only here once a day to cater to their whims as he feeds them and brings in the papers and mail.

If they go outside then or any other time, they will be out until he comes back the next day. This is normally not too much of a problem.

But, it was cold last week. Really cold. Freezing cold. And Frank was not waiting for us.

Frank was nowhere to be found the next morning when I got up early to get Molly from the vets. (Molly has to have insulin shots twice a day, so she gets to spend our time away from home at the vets.)

When it was time to leave for Goodland for a funeral, there was still no Frank. We called, but we couldn't leave the door open with the temperature hovering around 15 degrees.

All we could really do is worry.

When we finally returned late that afternoon, sand-colored cat shot out of the garage like his tail was on fire. He was at the back door before we could get out of the car, and he hit the food bowl in the house like he had never, ever eaten before.

My only guess is that he took refuge someplace warm, maybe in a neighbor's garage, and couldn't get out right away.

Whatever the reason, Frank has returned and we are once more maxed out on cats.

## President shouldn't be theologian-in-chief

Recently, President Obama made the statement that Jesus would approve of higher taxes and fleshed out the idea that the federal government should be the entity charged with fulfilling Jesus' teachings of helping the poor.

Sadly our Dear Leader, er... President, is no theologian nor is he a Constitutionalist.

Our Founders, who really were Christian and were obviously Constitutionals, clearly opposed the view that the federal government was to be the caretaker of the poor. They had a much different idea of the proper role of the federal government regarding the poor. They believed that the first entity responsible for the poor was the poor person himself. After his efforts and resources were exhausted, his family was next in line to help, followed by the local church. If the issue was more than the local church could handle, then the city or regional government was next in line. In the rare event that sufficient resources were still lacking to help this individual, the state should then be brought in to help.

In short, the line of responsibility for the poor was: self, family, church, local government then state. Note that the federal government is not even listed! In fact, there is no allowance in the Constitution for the support of the poor by the federal government. This is not an oversight but instead the reflection of a deep understanding on how best to care for the poor.

The Founders understood that the best way to solve a problem is to solve it as close to home



**guest columnist**  
• ken klemm

as possible. Our Nation operated smoothly on this principle for well over 150 years.

Times have changed. Now we can watch folks on television sitting in the path of a hurricane, seemingly unwilling to move even their own legs to get out of the way of the storm, and yet feel justified in demanding the federal government come to their immediate aid.

The federal government should block grant every dollar it spends on all the federal welfare programs back to the states – no strings attached. Immediately thereafter, a five-year plan should be developed to end the taxes the federal government takes for these programs. This will leave the money in the States for the States to tax their citizens as they see fit to care for their poor.

As for President Obama's theological foray, perhaps he could provide one instance of Christ demanding that Caesar care for the poor. Christ often spoke of the poor and he instructed that each of us, personally, not Caesar, were to care for the poor. It is well documented in modern times, and was well known among wise men throughout the ages (such as our Founders), that poorly implemented welfare programs can have a corrosive effect on the poor and can

actually endanger a nation's health and vitality. Conversely, properly implemented welfare programs strengthen both the recipient and the giver. By holding to these very Christian principles for those first 150 years, America developed our legendary tradition of giving generously to those in need throughout the world. If we continue to delegate this to the government, this noble tradition will wither and die as it has in Europe.

Lastly, one of the most reliable ways to judge a man's true intentions is to watch how he voluntarily spends his money in private. Christ put it more succinctly when he said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." We recently learned that President Obama gave to charitable organizations less than 1 percent of the \$1.2 million he and his family made from 2000 thru 2004. Then, for the years after his book became seriously profitable he still only gave less than 5 percent. (Note to non-Christians: 10 percent is considered a standard giving level for believers.) I find it inconceivable that he can feel comfortable lecturing the Nation on the importance of giving when he doesn't do it himself. Meanwhile, the supposed poor-hating Mr. Romney gave 14 percent in 2010 and 19 percent in 2011. You decide who is genuinely committed to helping those less fortunate.

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