

from our viewpoint...

Partisan process makes for odd map

The Kansas House of Representatives was set this week to make one more stab at doing something the Legislature should have had first on its agenda all session: draw a redistricting map that can pass both houses and become law.

Redistricting is required every 10 years, after the federal census, to balance the population in districts from the U.S. House to the state Legislature and even, sometimes, the county commission and city council.

The practice was always expected, but not always performed, until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the "one man, one vote" case prompted by a Kansas lawsuit. Forces led by *The Hutchinson News* sued to force reapportionment of the Legislature, especially the House. Before that, districts had varying populations and each of the 105 counties was guaranteed at least one of the 125 House seats, leaving only 20 to distribute to high-population areas.

This year, Goodland might wind up in a six-county House district and the Senate district for northwest Kansas could hit 20 counties, or about one-fifth of the state's area.

While many have predicted the issue will wind up in court, that shouldn't happen. The Legislature should get it's stuff together and adopt a reasonable compromise map, one that at least makes our Senate district more or less square and doesn't attempt to protect incumbents.

Unfortunately, the fight to control the Senate has gotten in the way of reasonableness.

Today, "moderate" Republicans, generally supporters of bigger government and more spending, control the Senate as they have for years.

Conservatives, who generally want less spending, smaller government and more control on social issues such as abortion, now run the House. They and their backers, including the state Chamber of Commerce and it's political action committee, want control of the Senate, too.

The state Chamber - don't blame your local Chamber for this; the state group is entirely independent - recruited about eight opponents, including five current House members. It's raising money for their campaigns and spoiling for a fight.

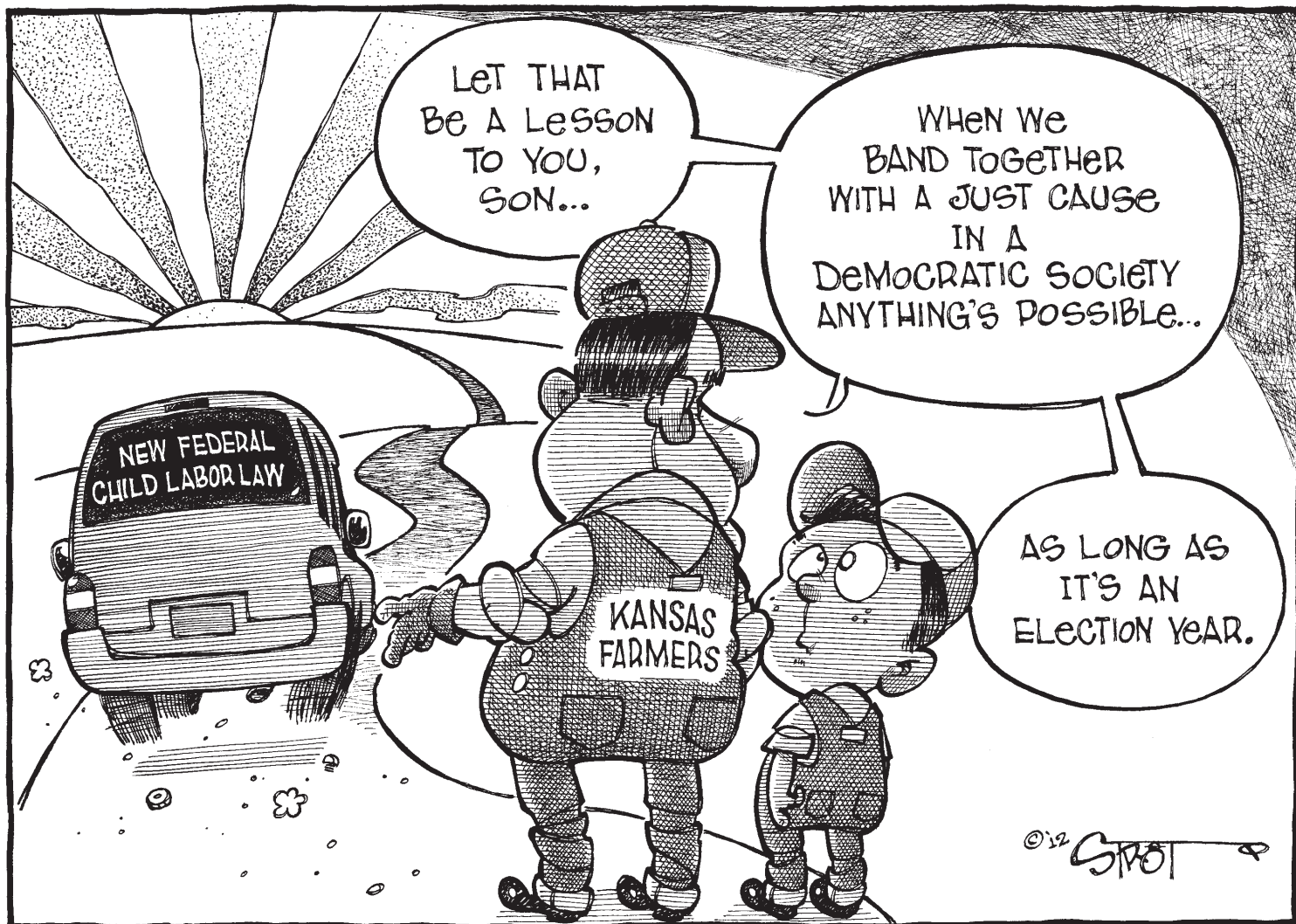
The incumbent leadership tried to head this challenge off by drawing district lines that put some challengers outside the districts they've filed in.

Is that dirty pool or smart politics? Partly, at least, the answer depends on whether it's your ox that's being gored. Nevertheless, this fight should not be allowed to derail the reapportionment process.

A fair and just map can and should be drawn; then let the voters decide who gets the seats. Conservatives in both houses need to keep from meddling with district lines to their advantage also.

Our guess is the Chamber's assault won't be as effective as the liberals fear, but if it is, then the will of the voters will prevail.

And whatever else happens, we must be sure to keep the huge 40th District covering the northwest as compact as possible. That's only decent and right. - *Steve Haynes*



Highlighting music a must for newspaper

You may have noticed a lot of music concert pictures in the paper over the past weeks. There are a couple good reasons for this.

One, that's what is happening right now. The schools seemed to have scheduled all of their end-of-year concerts for last weekend and this week. It's a good time to do it. This is kind of a dead week as far as school sports go, with just one high school track meet scheduled.

Two, it's important not to forget the non-sports school activities, the bands and choirs, debate teams or other academic activities like drafting or the Science Olympiad.

Covering music programs in particular has always been close to home for me. When I was in high school I played trumpet in marching band, and we always felt like we were ignored in the local media.

In Colorado, marching band is serious business. We worked as hard physically as any of the sports teams. We felt the same thrill at winning and the same disappointment in losing. Each year we got to go to Mile High stadium for the state competition. In my three years in band we got third, second and finally first place.

Still when we won there wasn't much in the paper. Years later and now being a part of that media I understand why and it isn't out of any desire to deny publicity. It's history. Newspapers always have a sports page. It's expected to always be there. But band pages are a rare thing. Bands don't fall into sports, so they have to live elsewhere in the paper, and there's not always room to dedicate a whole page.

Actually the *Goodland Star-News* has a pretty good mechanic for this, the Community Page. It wasn't something I've really encountered at other papers this size, and I think it's a great thing. It allows us to dedicate a page to something that otherwise might get a small ar-



kevin bottrell

• simple tricks and nonsense

...ticle buried on Page 3. The sponsors are already impressed with the musical groups in Goodland so far, what I've heard of them anyway. The pep band during basketball season was far better than many I've heard - although I'm quite amused to find Styx in a pep band repertoire. But then again the Colby Community College pep band likes to play Black Sabbath, I guess these songs are becoming the "oldies" that are fit for pep band music.

Their trumpet section in particular was impressive, and as a former trumpet player, I have a discerning ear. I also attended the junior high vocal concert Tuesday evening. While music at this level can sometimes be excruciating (they are beginners after all) they did quite well and it was a great concert.

Whenever I attend a school activity in these small towns, I always think about the interesting differences between my high school and the ones out here. My high school was very segregated between the activities. If you were in band, you weren't in choir or on the track team. If you were in football, you weren't on the debate

team and you didn't play basketball. There were exceptions here and there of course, but for the most part, you were in one activity and you didn't associate with the others.

I particularly remember how strange it was my senior year to hear that the starting quarterback for the football team had gotten the lead in the school musical. He turned out to be quite good, despite never having sung a note in his life, but it was unusual to have that cross-faction movement.

You even had feuds between the activities. Our marching band had a longstanding feud with the football team. It mainly involved our occasional use of their practice field - which was a paradise compared to our muddy, buffalo-grass field - and our monopolization of the hall outside the band room, which was one way to get to the locker rooms. The feud got quite intense on some occasions, with insults, chair throwing and even arson... maybe.

The class ahead of me were the main perpetrators in that feud. It calmed down quite a bit when they graduated.

But all that is different here in Goodland and Colby and all the other small towns I've worked in. Here the star basketball player might also be a starting pitcher. Here girls from the junior varsity basketball team come play in the pep band when they're through playing. Your lead cheerleader might also be the captain of the debate squad. It's an entirely different atmosphere, and I wouldn't be surprised if it leads to a lot less of that feuding.

In any case, that kind of intermingling and multi-activity participation can only be good for the students. It is one place where the big cities really can learn a lot from how we do things out in the boonies.

Grass roots effort to reverse farm regulation

Agriculture is a way of life, and today - thanks to your help - that way of life will be easier to preserve for our children and grandchildren.

Kansas farmers and ranchers voiced their concerns about the Department of Labor's proposed youth farm labor rule, and the Department withdrew the proposal which would have fundamentally altered the future of agriculture in America. In the announcement, it was made clear that "this regulation will not be pursued for the duration of the Obama Administration."

This news speaks to the power of engaged citizens making their voices heard. Without the efforts of individuals like you, the Department would have moved forward with their plans to regulate the relationship between parents and children on the farm. If this precedent had been set, virtually nothing would be off limits when it comes to government intrusion into our lives.

Throughout this process, I shared the concerns of Kansas farmers and ranchers with the Department. The level of detail and specificity of Labor's proposed regulation made many of us wonder if those responsible for this rule had ever worked on a farm or ranch. For example, the rule would have prohibited youth under age 16 from participating in many common farm and ranch related tasks like cleaning out stalls with a shovel and wheelbarrow, rounding up cattle, and even operating a battery-operated screwdriver.

The Department also proposed banning youth from working on a farm or ranch jointly owned and operated by multiple family members - evidence of the Department's complete lack of understanding of the structure of modern agriculture. And the Department's proposal would have effectively eliminated successful and critical farm safety programs like those



jerry moran

• U.S. senator

run by cooperative extension, 4-H and FFA. Today, more than 800,000 students participate in formal FAA agricultural education programs each year.

Ask any farmer or rancher about the importance of safety, and they would tell you that safety is their top concern. Local experts should be the ones conducting safety training programs to educate our nation's young people. And parents and communities should be allowed to look after the best interests of their families and citizens.

It was the Labor Department's responsibility to ensure a thorough vetting of a proposal with such far-reaching consequences. But from the time the Department published the proposal in September 2011 - and set the public comment period during the fall harvest season - the Department continually turned a blind eye to the concerns of farmers and ranchers.

Together we were able to make certain your voices were heard. First, we successfully persuaded U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis to grant an extension to the comment period. We then launched the grassroots effort www.KeepFamiliesFarming.com with other members of Congress, to invite farmers and ranchers to express their concerns about the rule. Because of our efforts, the Department announced it would withdraw the parental exemption portion of the rule. Finally, I joined Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) in introducing legislation - the Preserving America's Family Farm Act - to prevent the Department from enacting the remaining portion of its contro-

versial proposal.

This is a tremendous victory for farmers and ranchers across the country, but we still have plenty of work left to do. Our argument throughout this fight was that parents, grandparents, neighbors, local vocational agriculture instructors, and local 4-H and FFA teachers are in a better position to teach our youth how to be safe on the farm or ranch, than a bureaucrat in Washington. Now that we've won the argument we must live up to the standard we've set.

I am pleased the Department says it will now work with rural stakeholders - such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Farmers Union, FFA and 4-H - to ensure the educational programs needed to promote safety among youth workers in agriculture are in place. This is exactly what we have been asking for all along, and I know those who know agriculture best look forward to finally being consulted.

In addition to working with the Department, I will work with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to make certain the family farm remains a safe place to work - and the best place for our youth to learn essential life skills like hard work, personal responsibility and perseverance.

Thank you for coming together to protect and preserve our values for the next generation of American farmers and ranchers.

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