

from our viewpoint...

# Electoral College a useless dinosaur

The time has come to do away with the antiquated Electoral College.

In the history of the United States, there has been three times when the electoral college has produced a different result from the popular vote. In 1876, Democrat Samuel Tilden won the popular vote by more than 200,000, but Rutherford Hayes edged him out in the Electoral College 185-184. Kansas went for Hays.

In 1888, Democratic incumbent Grover Cleveland, looking for a second term, won the popular vote by less than 100,000, but Republican Benjamin Harrison won a huge victory in the Electoral College, 233-168. Harrison carried states with large electoral counts such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois, even though Cleveland won every state south of Maryland.

Most people voting today will likely remember the 2000 election that saw Democrat Al Gore winning the popular vote by 543,000, but losing to Republican George W. Bush in the Electoral College 271-266. The election famously came down to a recount of Florida's 25 electoral votes.

In the days of horses and buggies and telegraphs, having an electoral college made sense. It was easier to count up the vote in each state and then send representatives in to a central location. But its just not necessary anymore. The three examples above need not happen today, because of the lightning speed (comparatively) at which we can count the vote and the speed at which we can get that result out to the public.

State lines mean far less today than they did when the Constitution was being written. When the Electoral College was first conceived, the states had not long before been separate colonies with separate interests. We are far more united and far more closely intertwined in commerce, politics and every other aspect of life.

The Electoral College also ensures that some states – such as Kansas – are considered completely irrelevant by presidential campaigns. Money is spent in swing states and states with large electoral vote counts such as Pennsylvania, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin and Florida. With the electoral college, it is entirely possible to win only 11 states – California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Georgia, North Carolina and New Jersey – and still win the presidency because the electoral college takes precedence over the popular vote.

This, in turn, can lower voter turnout in states that are predicted to be a landslide one way or the other as well as states with low electoral counts – both of which describe Kansas.

Simply taking the popular vote, which we can now do within a day thanks to the computerization of not only voting but of counting the votes, gives a more accurate representation of the wishes of the country.

By all accounts, today's election is expected to be close, and we could end up with yet another instance of the Electoral College taking one of the most important parts of our national identity out of the hands of the people. If there are any fans of democracy remaining among the populace and our legislators, they should push for the elimination of the Electoral College before the 2016 election. –Kevin Bottrell



## Cooking up a storm

I love to cook, and when I get the chance, I cook up a storm. When Steve bought home eight enormous yellow squash and zucchinis this summer, I accepted the challenge.

I packed the squash up and took it to Colorado, where I have (or at least I take) more time to enjoy working in my kitchen.

While I normally leave the peel on when fixing a stir fry or sauté with my small squash, these babies had skin as thick as paint on a 100-year-old house. They had to be peeled. They also had to be seeded. But after peeling, halving, seeding and chopping them into reasonable size pieces, I still had a lot of squash.

I grabbed a Salad Shooter. You remember Salad Shooters. They were all the rage about 20 years ago. You just put your carrots, cucumbers, radishes or whatever in the tube, push the on button and point the gun-like appliance at your salad and neat slices or strips of vegetable would cover your lettuce.

I've never tried that, but this little gizmo is



**cynthia haynes**  
• open season

great for grating carrots, onions and celery for spaghetti sauce. It's also good for grating zucchini and yellow squash that has been cut up into strips that will fit into its little chute.

Before long, I had a bowlful of shredded zucchini. Six squash later (I gave one to a neighbor), I had 10 bags of squash all measured out in two-cup increments.

This week, I grabbed two of those bags out of the freezer, let them thaw on the counter and prepared to make zucchini bread for friends. I was also going to make a low-sugar loaf for Steve.

I'm not sure what I did wrong, since I've

made this recipe dozens of times without mishap. I think I mismeasured the flour in the first batch. When I opened the oven door, the two loaves had fallen. Each one had a crater in the middle.

I had all the ingredients for the low-sugar variety measured out, so I went ahead and made the next two loaves with great misgivings and an additional two tablespoons of flour. They came out great.

Now, I had a dilemma. I ended up taking one of each loaf to friends we were going to dinner with. Steve and I ate the second low-sugar loaf, but I still had one rather mishapened loaf left. It was cooked through, but it looked weird. I finally cut it into squares and took it to a church social. Everyone thought it was great.

I think I've given the recipe in this column before, so I won't repeat it. However, if anyone wants to try it, e-mail me at c.haynes@nwksas.com and I'll send it to you. The amount of flour you put in is up to you.

## Hunting is a privilege

This weekend the hills, fields and woods will once again awaken to the sound of booming shotguns as hunters and their dogs swarm the countryside searching for pheasants, quail, ducks and other wildlife.

It goes without saying that Kansas farms and ranches have always been a handy, ready-to-use outlet for many urban dwellers in search of recreational hunting. On opening day of the upland game season the interstate and U.S. highways will be a steady stream of pickups, SUVs and cars headed for central and western Kansas.

If you're one of these hunters who plan to hunt on private land, remember one key word when your thoughts turn toward hunting. This word is consideration. Translated, this word means thoughtful and sympathetic regard.

In this country, wildlife belongs to the people, but landowners have the right to say who goes on their land. If you are interested in hunting, make arrangements before you hunt.

Don't wait until the day you plan to hunt someone's land and then pound on their door at 6 a.m. Once you've secured permission,



**Insight this week**  
• john schlageck

here are some suggestions to follow that will ensure a lasting relationship between you and the landowner.

Agree on who, and how many, will hunt on the land. Specify number and furnish names. Talk about specific times and dates you plan to hunt.

Phone each and every time before you plan to hunt, and let the landowner know your intentions. The landowner may have forgotten about your original conversation. It's just common courtesy to say hello before hunting and ask again for the opportunity - or privilege, as I consider it - to hunt on someone's property.

Always, and I can't stress this enough, leave gates the way you find them. If they are open, leave them that way. If they are closed, shut them after you pass through.

If you ever leave a gate open and a farmer's cow herd gets out of the pasture, "Katie bar the door." You'll never be invited back to hunt.

Once you've enjoyed a successful hunt, stop by to thank the landowner for his generosity. Offer to share the game you bag.

Leasing of land by the hunter from the landowner is becoming more popular in Kansas. Such agreements allow hunters a guaranteed hunting site. It also provides the landowner income to recoup some of the investment he needs to leave habitat suitable for wildlife to survive and prosper.

If you enter into such a lease, make sure it is written and includes all provisions both parties deem necessary. This should include a clause for the landowner and his or her family to hunt on the land.

Remember that the hunter and landowner should always discuss the terms of the hunt before hunting begins. This is extremely important. And hunters, never forget you are a guest and it is a privilege to hunt on the owner's land.

## Lost science standards

The national "Next Generation Science Standards" are moving into the last phase of review. That means future American students will be studying less science, not more.

Biology comprises seven subdisciplines: zoology, botany, microbiology, anatomy and physiology, ecology, evolution and molecular biology. The Next Generation Standards only addresses three: ecology, evolution, and molecular biology. Over half of biology will be discarded.

The rationale for this is the old education-school argument that American science has tried to teach "a mile wide and an inch deep." Their solution is to just teach a few ideas "deeply." By using the magic of "inquiry learning and questioning," our students will then be able to somehow fill in all the missing science they never learned.

Of course, you can't solve a chess problem if you do not know how to play chess. And you can't fix a car if you don't know how a car works.

The ed-school folks designing the standards appear clueless to the fact that all future citizens need to know how their bodies work as we handle medical decisions throughout life. Studying just ecology, evolution and molecular biology will not help students understand kidney symptoms or make nutrition decisions. If they know nothing about the life of plants, animals and microbes, just how will ecology and evolution be meaningful – because it is animals, plants and microbes that have ecological



**education frontlines**  
• John Schrock

relationships and evolve?

Everyone needs to graduate from public schools knowing how their body works. Our ongoing failure to teach detailed human anatomy is one major factor contributing to every man, woman and child in America costing \$2,000 more every year in medical and health insurance costs when compared to other developed countries.

The promoters of these federal science standards claim that they are supported by the science community, just as they claimed for the earlier reforms of the American Association for the Advancement of Science "Less Science Not More" and the National Science Education Standards of the late 1990s. But these prior "standards" were primarily written by education specialists. Most scientists did not pay much attention to public school curricula, but the many who did point out that "less science is less science" were ignored.

If Kansas continues down the road to approving the standards, we can expect a range of reactions in Kansas schools. Some affluent schools can maintain some academic freedom and ignore the standards because their students all perform well and might possibly have made

the 100 percent annual yearly progress mark. But most schools have some poor students and struggle to make the needed assessment scores, and their administrators restrict teachers to teaching to the test.

No Child Left Behind has not gone away under the recent Kansas waiver, but has merely been renamed. Of the four waiver provisions, raising test scores and narrowing the gap between high and low performers remain test-driven criteria. Testing the standards drives teaching. That means that for most Kansas schools, adopting the standards will mean the elimination of animals, plants, anatomy and physiology, and microbiology from the biology classroom.

Why would the state Board of Education continue on a path to approve the next-generation standards? The board has had a solid majority of pro-evolution members for several years, and this will continue. If Kansas did not adopt the national standards, our state standards would be up for their regular cyclical review. While I cannot read their minds, I can only speculate that the majority do not want to have a state-level curricular discussion that could open up the topic of evolution again.

In a state where botany and zoology are at the base of our agriculture, and ignorance of anatomy, physiology and microbiology drive up health care costs, avoiding publicity about evolution is a poor reason to abandon teaching the critical biology desperately needed by our next generation of Kansas students.

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