

from our viewpoint...

Legislature stymied on several big issues

The Kansas Legislature hasn't done much so far this year, but sometimes that's for the best.

The Legislature, so far, can't agree on school finance or gambling or a budget. It's saving those for the final minutes, when the worst laws are passed without much question.

Right now, the Legislature is stalled on a bill to raise the 70-mile-an-hour speed limit on Kansas freeways. It's a bad idea, but there's some danger they will pass it anyway.

This plan is being pushed by shadowy forces who claim that the difference between driving 70 in Kansas and 75 in Nebraska is keeping business away from our state.

One sponsor, Sen. Robert Tyson, a Parker Republican, claims there is twice as much truck traffic on I-80 in Nebraska as there is on I-70 in Kansas. He's probably right, by the way, and we'd suggest that if he likes that, he go drive around in Nebraska on weekends.

If you've been there, you know what we mean. The road is rough and pitted, traffic is awful and a person in a small car is fearful.

Do we want that for I-70, I-35, U.S. 81 and K-10? More road damage, higher taxes, more accidents, big repair bills?

Never mind that truckers and tourism officials, when someone asks, say they don't mind the slightly lower limit. Never mind that travel-center workers say almost no one calls to ask about the speed limit here when planning a trip. Never mind that many, especially those with green-and-white tags, already drive well past 70 on our freeways today.

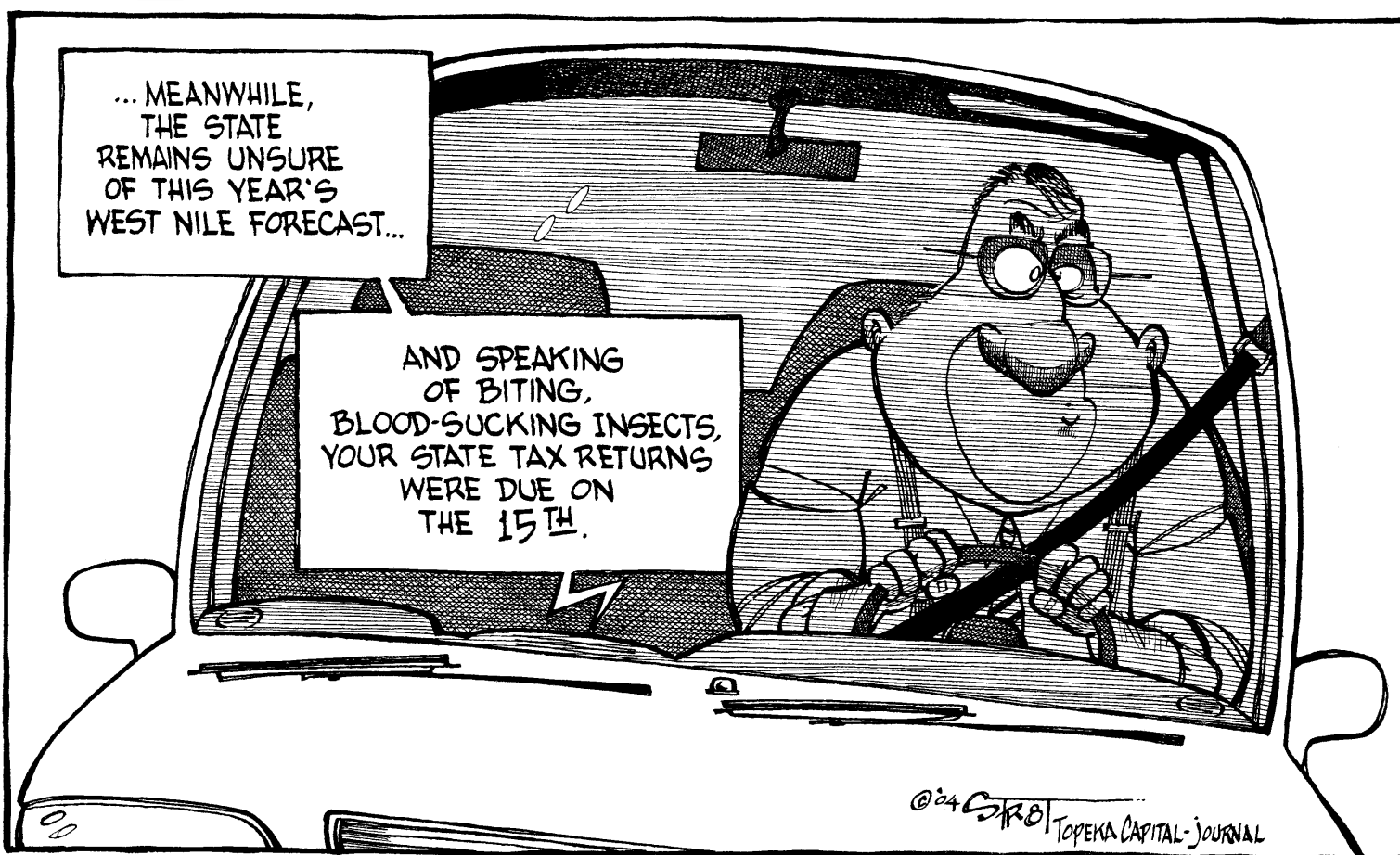
Never mind that the Kansas Highway Patrol says all raising the speed limit will do is cause more and more severe accidents.

But do mind this: The 70 m.p.h. limit was written with rural Kansas in mind. Legislators wanted to keep the differential between two-lane roads at 65 m.p.h. and the Interstates at 70 to a minimum to encourage people to spread out and put some of the traffic back on the blue highways.

There may be some pressure to drive faster and burn more gas on the freeways, but we don't see it out here.

So do we want more and faster trucks tearing up I-70 and frightening our tourists anyway? Or do we want the safe and responsible drivers we have now, running 70 m.p.h. clear across the state?

Like we said, sometimes that Legislature is best that does the least. With any luck, this turkey is done for the year. — Steve Haynes



'Words' make me wonder about the media

I don't know about you, but I sometimes am stopped dead in my tracks (so to speak) at some word or phrase in the written media.

Often I have to read it over again, and sometimes even resort to reading it out loud.

Granted, I have often complained about how hyphens are becoming obsolete in the English language, but really. Aren't they? I still maintain that we're missing a lot of clarity by leaving them out.

Here are some words that have stymied me lately; (consider how you might read them if you were just learning the language): postoperational, trisyllabic, preternaturally, nonoption, prekindergarten, distress (couldn't that be mistaken for a mis-spelling of distress).

Well it could. My spell check even corrected it to distress, so I'm sure it should be de-stress if you're talking about taking stress out of your life), reenter, premed, prepass, minicities (wouldn't mini-cities make more sense?), unused, multitiered, and pretwilght.

(By the way, my computer spell check indicates that over half of those words are misspelled!)

No wonder the English language is so hard to understand. It was bad enough before we



**lorna
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• commentary

tried to "save key strokes."

Now, it's getting to be impossible.

All the e-mail spelling shortcuts will really sabotage spelling in this country.

One phrase I read recently still has me scratching my head: non-American Indian volunteers.

Did the writer mean willing workers from India who were also not Americans? Or did he/she mean American Indians who were not American citizens? Or what? Maybe even American Indians who were not volunteering.

Who knows? Here's a few more: pregame, deemphasize and prenup. Now really!

Pre-game? De-emphasize? Pre-nup? Prenuptials makes much more sense than the shortened version. This is all worse than lawyer's legal babble.

What's happening to the English language?

What in the world is an "ex-murderer"? If you murder someone, how can you ever be an "ex-murderer"?

And here's a quote from the front page of a section of the August 21, 2003,

Wichita Eagle: "A woman who died after being strangled in her home Monday had canceled a protection of abuse order against the man accused of killing her just 10 days before her death."

It takes a little time to figure that one out! When did "settle" become a noun? Again from the Wichita Eagle (Sept. 17, 2003): "The settle includes \$300,000 for restitution and \$100,000 in penalties and fees."

And the author of the well-known Alphabet Mysteries doesn't even capitalize God, as in "god only knows" or "for god's sake." Another maneuver by atheists? Maybe those expressions are just slang, and she means to take away all religious connotations.

Okay, I'll quit. But do you ever wonder why we often use one form of a word and seldom use its opposite, like illicit and licit?

And why few of us would call the ruler of a country the dynast, but we might refer to his domain as a dynasty?

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People need to speak up about school finance

I recently read an article in the *Hoxie Sentinel* written by Jim McDaniel, superintendent of the Hoxie Schools. He ended that article saying, "It is time for district patrons to express to area legislators how they feel about our schools."

Since I represent the 121st District, I agree and would very much like for you to send me a letter to Box 366, Colby, Kan. 67701 or email to jmmorriso@ink.org your thoughts regarding money for our schools.

I really need to know the support there is for increasing income and sales taxes to support education in Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan and Graham counties. Most all the information I receive says "Do NOT raise my taxes!"

I really think people need to reconsider that statement. Our taxes are being raised every year. Look at your property tax statement. Are you paying less now than you did? How much more in property tax are you paying now than you did five years ago? In my view, that is the most onerous of taxes.

Property tax is not based at all on ability to pay. Income tax is based on earned income and sales tax is based on purchases. State increases in sales and income taxes are used to offset our need for increased property taxes.

Hoxie, if the schools do not get some help, may have to increase the Local Option Budget tax levy by as much as 11 mills.

If the Legislature does increase taxes, as I earlier mentioned, then there just might not be a need to raise local property taxes. That will likely result in your paying less, not more, tax than you do now or will in the near future.

I support more help for education, including increased funding. I have voted to increase spending for schools this year and will continue to do so.

McDaniel is correct when he says I voted yes on this last vote to support an increase in funding for education. That "yes" vote was to send it on to a final vote the next day. It would not



**jim
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• capitol review

have passed without my "yes" vote, so there would not have been any final action on the increase. The next day, I was on the phone with McDaniel as the vote was taking place and explained to him that if the vote to pass when the vote was closed was 68 or more, that I would change my vote to a "no". It had 77 votes for passage, so I switched to a "no" vote, knowing that the passage was secured.

I am not going to take time to explain why I did that, but people need to think about politics as the game of baseball. Sometimes to win the game, a hitter must make a sacrifice out to get the final run in. The Senate rejected that bill as "too much" spending. They also rejected our earlier bill that increased about \$50 million. At least the House agrees with me that there needs to be more spent for education and other services to people.

Being a legislator is hard work and requires ability to gain consensus to get required votes for issues to pass. We work all year helping people in our districts with problems in state agencies. It is a full-time job, somewhat stressful and actually will cost a western Kansas legislator out-of-pocket-money to represent their district. Most are surprised to learn it can cost as much as \$4,000 or so out of pocket to represent a district. I do not mind that; I love the job and the contact with people. I need your help now, and I do not usually ask anything from my constituents. This is, however, important.

The future of our communities lies in the health of our community health care system, schools and businesses. These are things people moving to the area first look at. How

good are the schools, health care systems and how are local businesses doing?

Throughout my district, one of the largest employers and sources of income is education. Putting more money into the business of education helps the local business community and health community. In fact, in some area's the schools ARE the primary economy. We do not get the increases in funding that the larger schools do because we do not build new schools or have the bilingual problems that others do.

Our schools are actually losing money and having to do away with programs and teachers. That snowballs into reduction in the local economy that forces a raise in the property tax and an increase in the Local Option Budget. Simply put, the schools need more money and I know that and have always supported that. You may see some votes that do not reflect what you might consider a reflection of support, but you need to see the entire game and what I do as a player to fully realize that a NO sometimes means a YES for a later issue of greater importance. Politics is not for the faint of heart, or for someone who can only provide part-time involvement. At least for us in rural Kansas, the Legislature is a full-time commitment.

So how can you help? Send me notes, emails, letters expressing your support of more money for education which includes a state tax increase. I need to know what taxes in which you would support an increase or that you absolutely will not support me voting for any state tax increase. Remember, local taxes will have to be raised if we (the state) do not do something to help, so simply saying that you do not want a tax increase will not be acceptable.

Tell me what taxes you would support, knowing that a increase is likely inevitable. Local property taxes must be raised if the State of Kansas does not increase the spending for schools and for other programs to help people. But that helping people is another long subject.

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