

from our viewpoint...

Public should know what officials make

It's nearly time for Kansas school districts to publish their executive salaries again.

We want to serve fair notice that this newspaper will once again print the salaries reported by area districts and compare them with those of other districts and other public officials.

The reporting requirement is sort of a screwball law, but it's not a bad idea. It originated a couple of years ago when someone found that an old Kansas law required Kansas school districts to pay for a legal notice to publish administrator's pay.

There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth, and school groups tried to get the Legislature to repeal the law. Instead, it was changed so that districts only have to give out a press release with the salaries. It's up to newspapers and broadcast stations what to do with it.

We happen to think it's a healthy thing for the voters to know what they pay public officials, elected or appointed. Salaries of all public employees are open information, and any citizen can go to the courthouse or the school office and see them.

In some states, in fact, county and school payroll is published each month. There would be nothing wrong with that.

One of the things you give up when you take a tax-paid job is a certain amount of privacy. As a public employee, you know *when you take a job* that you may be in the public eye, and your salary is public information.

We think it's hardly fair to pick on school administrators, though. If their salaries are going to be in the paper, we think other public executives — county officials, city administrators, hospital executives — should be there as well.

These people are your employees, your administrators, running your tax-supported agencies. You pay them; you deserve to see how much.

School people seem to be a little defensive about this, because on the whole, they make more than most public officials. They may well be worth it, considering the years of education and experience their jobs require, and the importance of the task they are charged with. That is not for the newspaper to decide.

Rather, the voters need to have this information so they can make informed judgments on who gets what, who needs what and who deserves what. Maybe some of the other officials are underpaid.

We plan to present the information in an objective manner, and let you, the taxpayers, voters and readers decide what you think.

We won't be revealing any secrets, but unless somebody does the legwork, it's hard to make comparisons. All the officials will get a chance to comment. The voters always have the final say.

And that's how it should be in a democracy. — *Steve Haynes*

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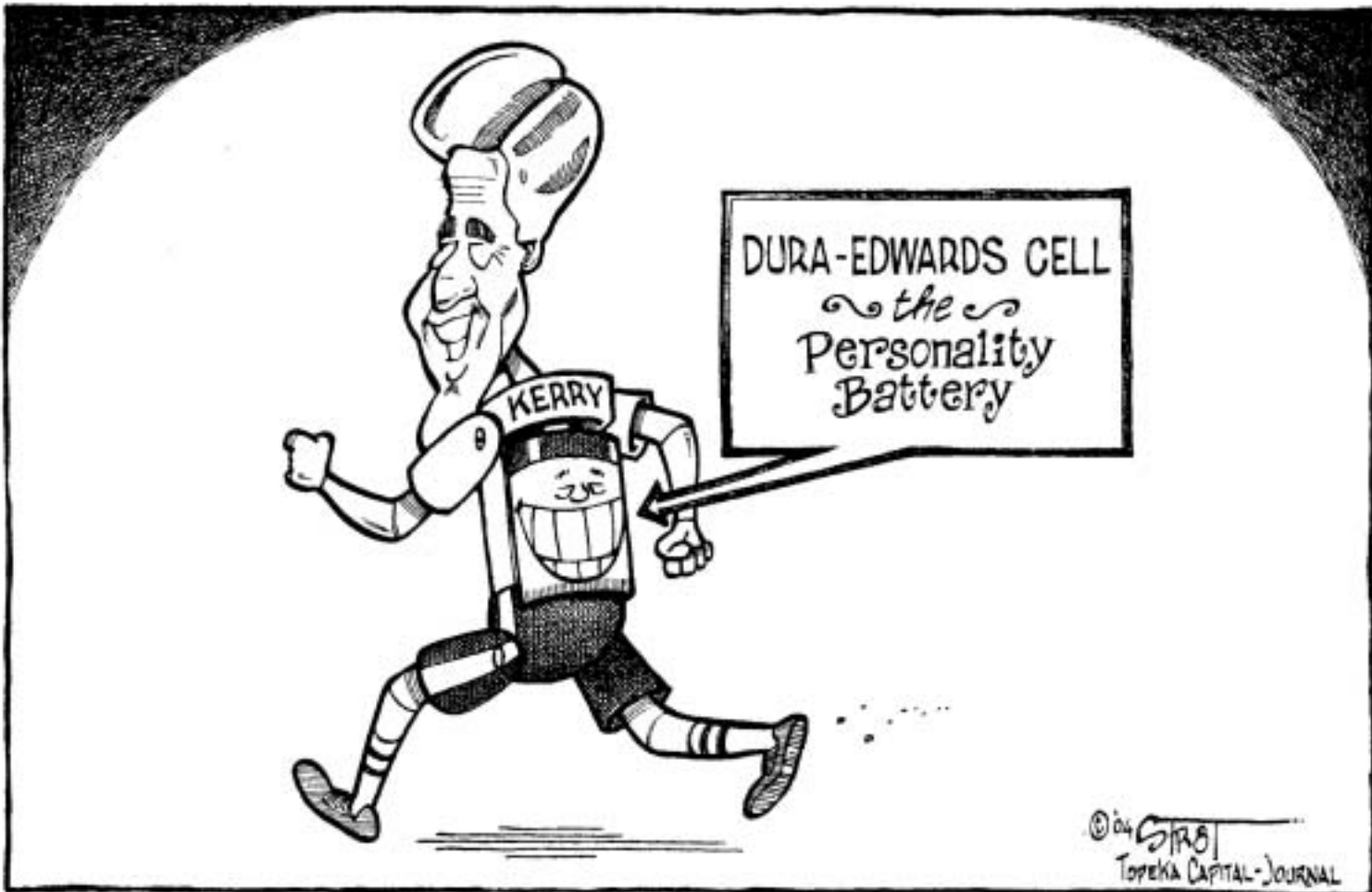
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Advancements come faster than I can handle

I don't know about you, but things are changing too fast for me.

I suppose there have always been inventions, new ideas, "advancements," but now they come faster than I can handle them.

Maybe younger people are more versatile, but somehow I doubt that.

Age does tend to make you set in your ways, I suppose, but I know younger people who also complain about constant change. I'm not the only one who likes predictability. I suppose I should just accept that the only thing we can count on is change.

Recently my old laptop computer more or less gave up the ghost. There really isn't that much wrong with it. The cord that runs from electricity to the computer is loose and won't make connections any more. It should be easy to fix. At least, it seems that way to my simple mind. I took it to a computer repair store.

In short, it probably is an easy fix — but a terribly expensive one.

The loose plug receptacle inside the computer is connected to the "mother board" so the whole "mother board" will have to be replaced. The plug-in on the cord is also damaged, so it will require — not a new plug — but a whole new transformer, since they are only made connected. The whole repair would probably run about \$900, and would only have a 90-day guarantee!

So I thought it would probably be better to get a new one — even though I am very much against contributing to our "throw-away" society trend, hate learning how to run a new appliance and am very upset with IBM for purposely making their components in tandem.

With all the talk about the split in the Kansas Republican party, I can't figure out where I belong.

Maybe that's a good thing. Maybe neither side would want me.

When I look through the readers' comments for the year, I usually find a couple that can't stand "those lousy, liberal editorials," and some who think the worst thing about the paper is the "liberal editor."

I'm against high taxes and big government, so maybe that makes me a conservative.

But I believe the state should provide good schools and good roads and great universities. Maybe that makes me a liberal. I might even tumble to a tax increase or two, but not often. Not often.

I'm all for order and tradition in society, and that's conservative. But I see no reason for a concealed carry bill. I don't think we need to carry heat in Kansas, not the Kansas I know and live in. It scares me.

I get kind of hinky when someone wants to push his idea of religion and morals off on me. "God said so," is not necessarily good government.

And because we can't all agree on what God wants, I think people ought to have to make up their own minds on moral issues. Separation of church and state is a good thing.

Abortion? Bad. I hate it. But I don't think the state can or should do anything about it. Same for



**lorna
gt**

• commentary

I started pricing. Am I mistaken, or are laptop computers the only things that haven't reduced in price as they have become more a part of our habits?

Well, maybe I just haven't priced anything else lately.

And am I the only one who remembers going to a store and just pointing to the item you want to purchase, paying for it and taking it home? Now, you have to listen to some teenager rattle off all the configurations of the "hard drive," the number of "bits" or memory, and other things that sound like a foreign language, while purposely ignoring the fact that it costs three times what you have said you want to pay.

The first store (office supply) didn't keep any laptops (now called "notebooks") in stock, but I could order one made just the way I wanted, or so he said.

The second office supply didn't have anything under \$1,300. I easily got discouraged. A new computer wasn't anything I really NEEDED. So I decided to wait and think about it.

After about a week, I decided to order one made to my specifications. A different salesperson "helped" me. "No, you can't get Microsoft Word 2000 on it. Just go over to that computer and see what options you can get." I stood my ground and claimed computer illiteracy. He grudgingly went to help me. And he

couldn't get his own computer to work! "Well, I guess you can't order anything today."

He certainly didn't seem to mind that I was inconvenienced — or that he might miss a commission. I left the store more discouraged.

Then I saw an ad in a Sunday newspaper, and thought it was probably going to be the best deal I could get. I took the ad into the store — intending to buy the "package" of Toshiba computer, plus additional "hard drive" (installed), plus a carrying case, plus a Lexmark printer. All for a "final" price of \$699 — after two "instant" rebates and FOUR mail-in rebates.

Guess what! I got the expected "teenager" who first told me that the computer I was looking at was not the one in the ad — even though the ad was laying right beside it. Then he proceeded to tell me they sold all the "specials" they had — 13 — in the first 10 minutes the store was open. (Nowhere in the ad did it say anything about limited quantities available. I looked.)

He said they didn't have the "extra hard drive" component — which could be ordered — but if it didn't arrive by Saturday (the day the sale ended), I couldn't have the "package" at the sale price — EVEN IF I PAID FOR IT TODAY! He was more than willing to show me more expensive models.

I muttered something about deceptive advertising, having never been in the store before and probably would never come back, and I left the store. I sat in the car a minute, re-reading the ad. Then I decided my irritation should not prevent me from getting such a good deal. I swallowed my pride and went back in.

Tune in next week for the continuing "saga."

Split in Republicans; where do I belong?



**steve
haynes**

• along the sappa

gambling, liquor, drugs and sex.

What people do on their off time is between them and their maker. He said he would judge us all, and I believe he will.

I have better things to do.

If people want to place a friendly bet, it's OK with me. I'm not much for casino gambling, which liberals keep pushing as a "revenue enhancement." Like the state lottery, it amounts to taking money from people who often can't afford it to line the pockets of big corporations and the state.

I remember when the state ran the vice squad and the mob ran the numbers racket. Today, they call it Lotto, and the state takes half, but the Mafia gave better odds.

The so-called progressives in the Republican party keep pushing for more social programs, more spending on schools, more money, more taxes. I think our state government is plenty big enough. The tax cuts of the 1990s helped to slim it down, but there's always pressure to grow.

Our schools are topnotch compared to most states. Overall, there's no evidence that they need

more money, and certainly not another \$1 billion a year.

Maybe I am a conservative. But I worry about the Patriot Act, the excesses of Homeland Security, the ever-growing presence of Big Brother in government. I think we are losing our rights to spreading regulations and insidious.

Does that make me a liberal?
I'm not sure. I don't think I belong.
I'm not sure I want to.

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 will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. 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@nw-kansas.com>.

garfield

