

from our viewpoint...

Gambling money not best school deal

It seems certain the Kansas Legislature is going to put another \$400 million to half a billion a year into public schools over the next few years.

No one seems to know how the state will pay for this, beyond the first year. Revenue projections don't show the state bringing in enough to make ends meet, but then a few years ago, the projections showed the state having a lot more money than it actually got. A rising tide makes all the difference.

And while there may be a lot of support for increasing the school budget, it's the Legislature — not the courts — that needs to decide how much and where it comes from.

There is no ground swell among voters or business people for a tax increase, no matter the reason. The results of the last election ought to convince people of that.

Relying on gambling expansion to finance schools is a bad idea, bad because gambling is destructive, and bad because it's not a reliable source of money.

There's just something repulsive about paying for kids' education with sin taxes, any way you slice it.

So the Legislature, faced with a Supreme Court order to come up with more money before it goes home, needs to shift around existing dollars and new income from a growing economy to find the money for schools. It's not going to be easy.

The members will have to keep in mind, as Chancellor Robert Hemmenway at the University of Kansas says, that it makes little sense to educate kids through high school and not provide a decent higher education.

Kansas colleges have been starving the last few years as public schools and welfare soaks up every available dollar from the state budget.

Nor can the Legislature expect to take much out of the highway fund, lest the state default on its promises under the 10-year transportation plan.

The devils in the works, it seems, include social programs, from public assistance to help for the disabled, Medicaid and welfare. These programs have grown uncontrollably during the recession. Even today, they show little sign of slacking off, and many are considered "entitlements," which the state has to pay for whether it has the money or not.

Special-interest groups keep pushing for more money for these programs, and at even a hint of cuts, they organize demonstrations in front of the State house. It's hard to be firm with people in wheelchairs. It looks mean.

The Legislators will have to balance all that out and do the best they can. That may not be good enough for the courts, but then, the courts have no power to raise taxes. At least, we hope they don't.

The best anyone can hope for is that the economy will keep improving and there'll be money to cover all the bases. If not, there is nothing writ in stone that says the state government has to grow every year. — *Steve Haynes*

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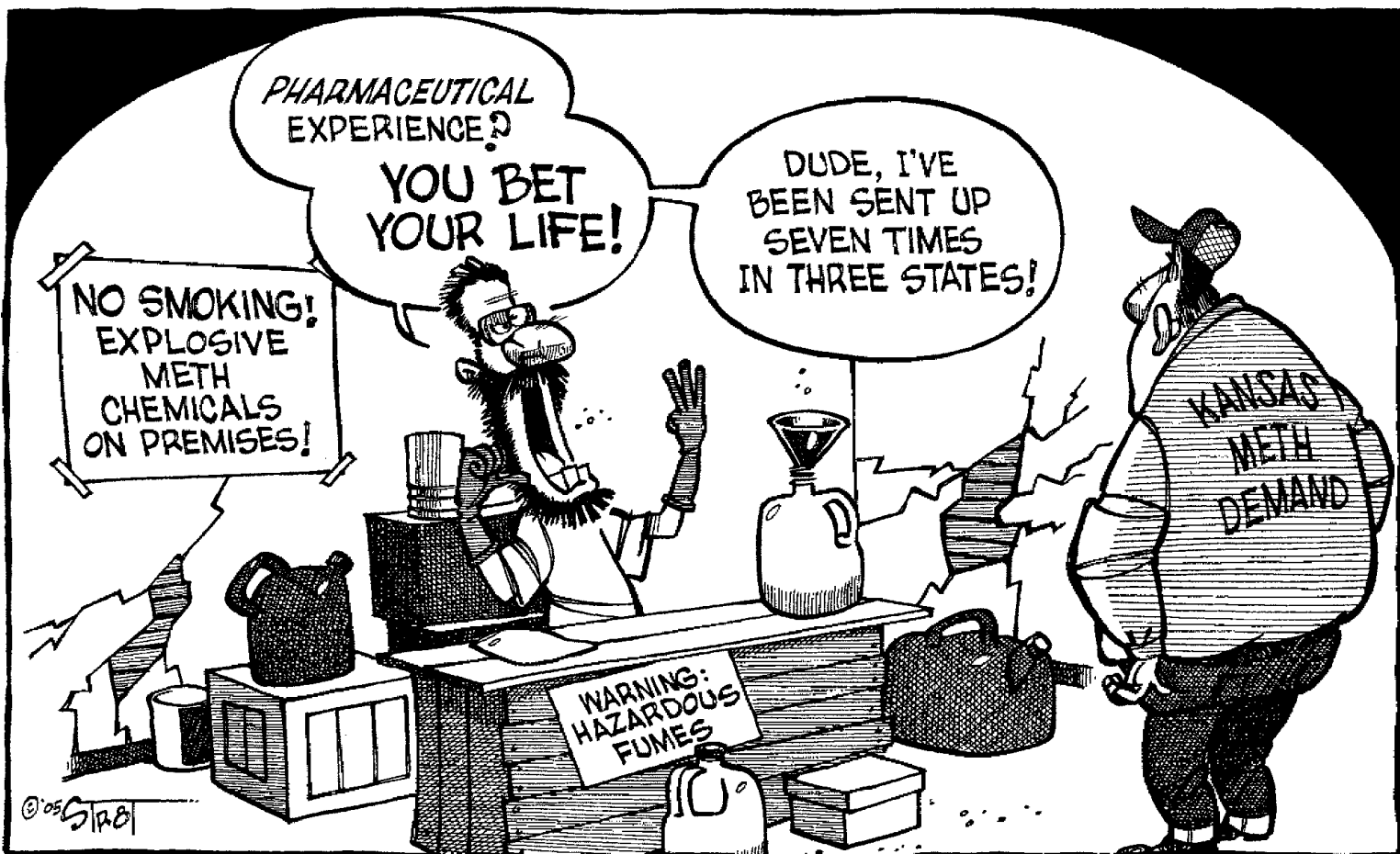
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The weather makes me want spring

I don't know about you, but I'm ready for spring.

The weather hasn't been all that bad this year, but I'm still ready for it to get warm.

There's something about "the dead of winter" that conjures up thoughts of futility, depression and death.

So I thought I'd go to my file and share some quotations I have saved on death. Not a cheery subject, but one we should consider occasionally.

"There ain't but three things worth saying about somebody that's passed on, and I can truly say all three of this good man. I loved him. I'll miss him. And I'll not be the same for knowing him" — Sutter's Cross. W. Dale Cramer.

"So that was the life of Little Mary. She had got through it...the way you eat a plate of food when you're not hungry a bit. The truth was, she wore out. Just wore thin and then wore through, like a shirtsleeve at the elbow." Farewell, I'm Bound to Leave You, Fred Chappell.

"The social structure of the hospital had regressed to high school sensibilities: Us-Them as religion, a lusty proliferation of castes,



**lorna
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• commentary

cliques, and cabals, endless jockeying for power and turf. Adding to that was the end-means inversion that captures every bureaucracy: the hospital had devolved from a healing place needing funds to treat patients to a large-scale municipal employer requiring patient fees to meet its staff payroll." — John Kellerman, The Conspiracy Club. (That last sentence is certainly a statement of our time. — LGT)

"Obituaries always list the year you were born and the year you died, separated by a dash: 1990-1996. When you were born and when you died is not nearly as important as what you did in between — what you put in your dash. What have you put in your dash?" — Wally Amos, "Add a dose of fun to your daily rou-

tine," The Costco Connection. (Something to consider while we still have time to make a difference. — LGT)

"Her voice seemed so clear to him that he could not accept the fact that she lay beneath the ground he knelt on, never to see the daylight again. He was alone now and the thought left him lost. When a woman loses a man, he recalled hearing somewhere, she picks up her life as before and perseveres. But when a man loses a woman, he dies by half." — Clive Cussler in Viking 03.

"That which we expect of life is indeed all that it ever can be." — Richard Paul Evans in The Locket.

"We come into the world crying while all around us are smiling. May we so live that we go out of this world smiling while all around us are crying." — Old Persian proverb

"We're all going to die. We just have to take turns." — 6 year old child — Kylie House.

Kylie has the right idea. Death is nothing to dread. It's just a turn in the road as we travel toward our eternal home.

New vehicles a waste of tax money

To the Editor:

I, Mark Jenkins, own a 1996 Chevy pickup and it has 278,000 miles on it.

Then the sheriff's department wants to buy a new car and a pickup.

I got more miles than these sheriff vehicles they want to get rid of combined.

That's just a total waste of taxpayer money.

Take a look at all the new vehicles the sheriff and the city have. It is a total waste of taxpayer money, and all they want to do is drive around and show it off with coffee and a donut in their hands.

I have seen one too many times the police and sheriff talking to one another through their car windows and trying to figure out what to do next. Many times their conversation is way too



**from our
readers**

• to the editor

long, and we as taxpayers are paying them for visiting.

Take a look at all the new vehicles that city has. Look brand new to me. For what!

I notice the city got a couple new dump truck that haul dirt. The farmers have old dump trucks that are 20 to 30 years old and haul grain and made profit off of, and the city dump trucks haul dirt.

Go figure.

Bills must be moved out this week

This brings us up to date following the recent round of appearances across the district.

The Capitol has become noticeably busier as we approach the halfway point of the legislative session. Committee meetings are busy with hearings and debate to push bills out before the turnaround deadline on Saturday.

Important issues like human trafficking, the school finance formula and worker's compensation will soon reach the House floor.

School Finance

Last week, the Select Committee on School Finance introduced House Bill 2474, which will help to make up a comprehensive K-12 education funding plan.

The plan will add \$63 million in new money to the education base, distributed among bilingual weighting, at-risk weighting, special education and capital outlay. The plan also seeks to add \$244 to the base state aid per pupil by shifting money from the deleted correlation weighting.

The bill calls for the creation of an advisory Education Council based on the model of the



**jim
morrison**

• capitol review

Judicial Council. The Council will have the ability to gather input from committees of its making.

The plan also allows for more local control of raising revenue through local option budgets. The proposed legislation allows school districts a 5 percent increase in local option budget authority and a 5 percent cost-of-living allowance for qualified districts.

While details are still emerging, we know that additional money will be added to the base (\$4,107.00 final figure as of last Friday). The House Education Committee will hear testimony on the bill this week.

Health

HB 2337 on importation of drugs will be heard. This would make it illegal to import

drugs for Canada or any other foreign country. Unfortunately, this is likely to become a political issue and divide along party lines rather than a discussion of the merits of importation.

HB 2417 regarding formation of a Council on Obesity Prevention and Management will also be heard. Many other legislative issues (including school food vending machines) would be germane to this bill and could be added on the floor as amendments. For that reason, I doubt it will leave the Health committee.

Previous bills that have been heard may be worked on Monday and Tuesday. Tuesday is the last day we have to get bills out of the Health Committee this year.

Weekend meetings

Saturday, Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and I visited Goodland, Colby, Hoxie and Plainville to hear concerns from people in the district. Meetings were well attended with lots of good interaction. I really appreciate your comments, help and suggestions. You can e-mail me at jmorrison@ink.org. With any other address, receipt may be delayed or I may never see the email.

garfield

