

from our viewpoint...

Who is running the state of Kansas?

Maybe we'll get one thing settled in Kansas this year. And that's whose running this state. In civics class, we all learned how a state is supposed to work. The governor proposes a budget and leads the bureaucracy. The Legislature makes laws, adjusts and approves the budget. And most of all, the Legislature raises taxes. The courts referee everything. They interpret the laws and, when asked, decide whether they fit in the state's constitutional structure.

Courts have no power to draw up a budget or increase taxes. Or so we thought. In Kansas today, the state Supreme Court has ruled that the Legislature isn't putting enough money into schools. The court based its decision on one sentence in the Constitution. It says the state shall make "suitable" provisions for educating all students. What happens if the Legislature doesn't move fast enough? The court set an April 12 deadline for making things suitable, whatever that means.

The judges aren't saying. Presumably, the court can't just order the Legislature to raise taxes. We all learned that in civics class, or thought we had. If the court finds schools not suitable, perhaps the judges will shut them down. Right. That would be good for our kids.

At best, the court should be able to rule on dividing up the money the state has, not on a tax increase.

The whole legal process was begun by a group of medium-sized school districts that felt they lost out in the legislative process.

This brazen attempt to circumvent the process and get more money ought to be stopped. Someone needs to stand up to legal blackmail, and to activist, liberal judges who would back such a suit.

Many in the Legislature are mad. One bill would require judges to be confirmed by the state Senate before taking office, as federal judges must be. Another would return the high court to the election process, giving voters more say.

Both ideas have merit. There's no evidence Kansans want to pay more taxes, even for schools. It'd be interesting to see, at the polls, what they think of our high judges and their self-imposed role as spending advocates. Whatever happens, we'd suggest that any judge who thinks we need more taxes should step down from the bench and run for the Legislature. That'd give a better picture of what people want. — *Steve Haynes*

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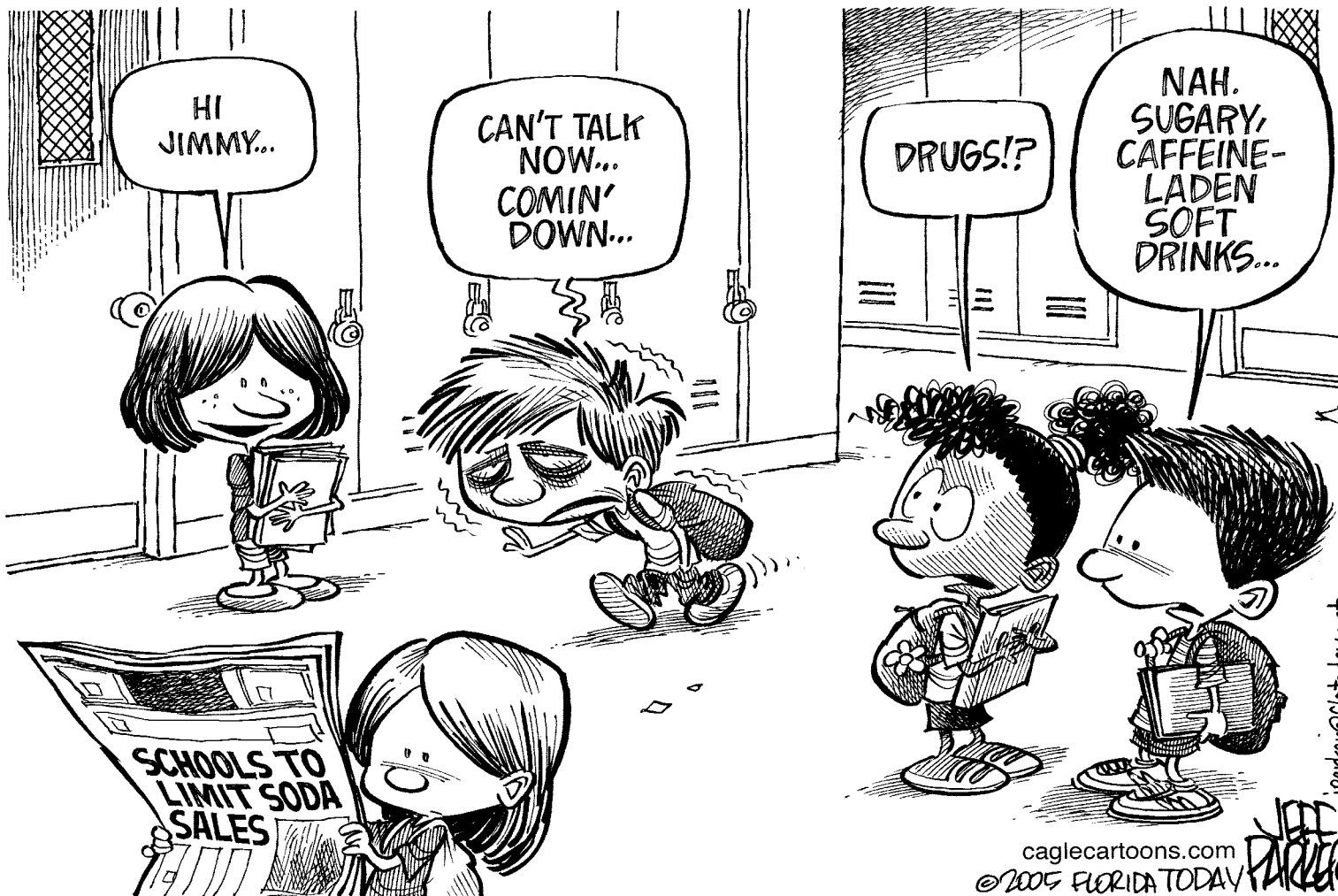
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Stay-at-home moms keep country together

After much thought and soul searching, I've decided that stay-at-home moms are the glue that holds this country together.

I've always been a working woman. I quit my job just before my first child was born, but by the time she was 2 weeks old, I was on the phone to my old boss, begging to be taken back.

I hate housework, I'm no expert on child rearing and I'm no good at clubs and groups.

But looking around, I see dozens of mothers taking care of their young children and volunteering their time to help the Little League, PTA, Cub Scouts and other groups.

I'm not saying that there aren't lots of working moms doing the same things. But, let's face it, by the time you get the husband and kids ready for the day, put in 8 hours at a job and get home to fix supper, help with homework, throw in a load of laundry and do the dishes, you don't have much time or energy for other projects.

We visited Steve's sister and brother-in-law last week, and I started to realize how much she does. Barb is Steve's much younger sister. She lived



cynthia haynes

• open season

with us for several years and she seems more like my sister or one of my older children than an in-law. A smart, good looking woman, she has a master's degree in city planning and had worked for several towns in the Kansas City area. Then her husband got a job in their old home town.

Instead of getting another job, she turned her time and energies into raising her son and doing volunteer work.

She's the secretary of a dog rescue group and drives hundreds of miles every month or so to pick up or deliver Hungarian vizulas, a breed about the size of a pointer, but with the lean looks of a greyhound and the dark red of an Irish setter. Besides finding new homes for displaced dogs, she keeps them for up to three or four

Aid coming for drought sufferers

Disaster Sign-up Coming in Mid-March

Last October, I helped shepherd through Congress assistance for farmers who have suffered from multiple years of drought.

I have received many calls from Kansas farmers and their bankers, asking when disaster assistance would be available. Following my inquiry, top officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture have confirmed to me that a sign-up should begin the third week of March. The Crop Disaster Program (CDP) and the Livestock Assistance Program (LAP) will be administered in the same manner as 2002.

Producers with crop or quality losses that exceed 35 percent of historic yields due to damaging weather or drought in 2003 or 2004 will be eligible to sign up for disaster assistance payments. The livestock provides assistance for stockmen for 2003 or 2004 in any county that has received an emergency designation by the president or the secretary after Jan. 1, 2003.

For additional information, as that date approaches, contact your Farm Service Agency office.

Working for Kansans

Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert has asked me to continue serving on the Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Transportation committees for this session. These assignments are important, because they represent the priorities of many Kansans.

On the Agriculture Committee, I will continue to serve as chairman of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management. The subcommittee will play a prominent role in crafting the next farm bill. I will also serve as a member of the Conservation, Credit, Rural Development and Research Subcommittee and the Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Dairy, Nutrition and Forestry. The protection and preservation of our farms and ranches is vital for the survival of the economy and our Kansas way of life.

On the Veterans' Affairs committee, I will



jerry moran

• in Congress

serve on the subcommittees on Health and on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. Health oversees the health care system for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, which serves nearly 250,000 veterans in Kansas. It is important that we do everything possible to guarantee that they receive the health care benefits and services they deserve for protecting our country.

Finally, on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I will serve on the Aviation; Railroad; and Highways, Transit and Pipelines subcommittees. These assignments are important to help ensure that the thousands of Kansans employed in the aviation field are represented during this changing time for the industry. It is also important as we work to pass a new federal transportation bill that will improve of country's highway infrastructure.

Discussing the Future of Railroad Service

This week, I joined several of my colleagues on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the national conference of the American Association of Railroads. We discussed the challenges facing the railroad industry and received input on ways to improve this vital means of transportation for Kansas and the country.

In our state, many farmers and businesses depend on railroads to keep them connected to the national transportation network. Kansas has over 2,000 miles of short-line railroad track, and ranks second in the nation in the amount of farm products it ships by rail. In 2004, a bill I introduced providing a tax credit to encourage investment in short-line railroad infrastructure became law. In 2005, I will continue to look for ways to improve transporta-

months adding them to her menagerie of three indoor and countless outdoor cats, two vizulas of her own and five to eight horses.

She's the president of the Lake Kahola Homeowners Association, having inherited half of her parents' cabin at the lake. With her knowledge of planning and development, she keeps folks from building garages on the public right-of-way or somebody else's land and other such nonsense. It doesn't make her too popular sometimes, but she just keeps working to make things right.

She's a member of the parent-teacher group, and when we were visiting, she had designed, copied and was mailing 1,800 flyers for the school carnival.

I realized that she and hundreds of others like her are keeping things going across the country, volunteering their time to guide children, protect animals, enforce the rules and bake the cookies.

Thanks, Barb, and all you stay-at-home moms, who just never seem to spend that much time at home. You all keep us glued together.

tion and infrastructure needs that are important to our Kansas economy.

Meeting with Ambassador Allen Johnson

On Wednesday, I met with U.S. Ambassador Allen Johnson, chief agriculture negotiator for the United States. Ambassador Johnson is responsible for critical trade negotiations and enforcing trade agreements related to agriculture products. We discussed beef trade with Japan, the pending Brazilian cotton case, the timeline for future World Trade Organization negotiations and the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Ambassador Johnson has spent time in Kansas, meeting with farmers, and understands the need to open foreign markets to our agriculture products. Kansas farmers benefit from higher prices when we can expand export markets for our surplus commodities.

Increasing Fines for FCC Violations

On Wednesday, I supported H.R. 310, the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act of 2005. This legislation increases the Federal Communication Commission's maximum fine on broadcasters who violate indecency laws. The measure passed in the House and now moves to the Senate. Violators of the law will face fines of up to \$500,000 for each incident.

Contact Me

It is an honor to serve you in Washington. Please let me know how I can be of service. You can e-mail me through my web page at: www.house.gov/morankso1/hearingfromyou.htm

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