

from our viewpoint...

Evolution debate fosters intolerance

The state Board of Education has been holding hearings on evolution, much to the glee of those who think us a backward and uneducated place.

It's unfortunate, though, that the liberals who laugh at any mention of creationism don't see the intolerance that they foster.

In reality, this is a debate we shouldn't be having.

While the scientific evidence for evolution is strong, there is plenty of room to believe that God created this world. Since there is no way of proving that, however, it's not really in the realm of science.

Our schools need to be both rigorous and tolerant of all views.

That means they should teach evolution as science, and explain to students that not everyone accepts it as fact.

Evolution is a scientific theory. So is gravity. And like gravity, it rests on plenty of evidence.

Yet science has a way of changing as we learn more about any field. Religion tends to lag behind. Remember that once, everyone believed that the world was flat, and that the sun and stars revolved around us.

The church accepted that as God-given fact, and punished Galileo for challenging it with his theories.

There may still be a few who believe the universe revolves around this place, and that is their right. Science, though, has left them behind.

There is no science behind the idea of creationism or of "intelligent design," rather philosophy and religious faith. But you can't prove either with research, and those who claim that you can almost always argue from a religious, and not a scientific, background.

One thing is certain: our understanding of all these things will change over the next century, and schools need to keep up.

Our schools need to teach the latest science, but they need to temper that with a healthy respect for other views. Creationism and intelligent design ought to be considered, but not as science.

They rightly belong in the realm of religion and philosophy. These are the intellectual underpinnings of our society. An education which ignores them would be poor indeed.

That said, it would be wrong to flog anyone's religious beliefs off as science.

Most Americans probably accept the idea that a greater power created this universe and the wondrous life it contains.

Most would accept the idea we know a lot less about life's origins than we think, and most would agree we should respect each other's views.

That's what Kansas schools should teach kids, but defining how is not easy. Humans tend to be low on tolerance, short on science and blind to the weakness of our knowledge.

Let the debate continue, but look with a jaundiced eye on those who claim they have all the answers. History shows they do not. — *Steve Haynes*

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Easter story shows Jesus conquered death

I don't know about you, but this week I'll be celebrating Easter.

It is the highlight of the Christian year. To believe in Christ is to believe in the resurrection. Death has been conquered. We will live eternally with God because Jesus conquered death for us.

Here is an Easter story by an unknown author that vividly explains it:

"There once was a man named George Thomas, pastor in a small New England town. One Easter Sunday morning, he came to the church carrying a rusty, bent, old birdcage, and set it on the pulpit.

"Eyebrows were raised and, as if in response, Pastor Thomas began to speak:

"I was walking through town yesterday when I saw a young boy coming toward me swinging this bird cage. On the bottom of the cage were three little wild birds, shivering with cold and fright. I stopped the lad and asked, "What you got there, son?"

"Just some old birds," came the reply.

"What are you gonna do with them?" I asked.



**lorna
gt**

• commentary

"Take 'em home and have fun with 'em," he answered. 'I'm gonna tease 'em and pull out their feathers to make 'em fight. I'm gonna have a real good time.'

"But you'll get tired of those birds sooner or later. What will you do?"

"Oh, I got some cats,' said the little boy. 'They like birds. I'll take 'em to them.'

"The pastor was silent for a moment. 'How much do you want for those birds, son?'

"Huh?? Why, you don't want them birds, mister. They're just plain old field birds. They don't sing. They ain't even pretty!"

"How much?" the pastor asked again.

"The boy sized up the pastor as if he were crazy and said, '\$10?'

"The pastor reached in his pocket and took out a ten dollar bill. He placed it in the boy's

Legislature wraps up next week

SESSION COMING TO A CLOSE

Debate on legislation will wrap up this week. Monday and Tuesday, March 28 and 29, conference committees will reconcile differences between House and Senate positions on passed bills.

The full Legislature then returns to complete voting on conference committee reports March 30 through April 1 or 2. We will adjourn until the last week of April for the "wrap up" session and to consider the final budget, known as the omnibus bill. This session has been speedy and "to the point."

GAMBLING

Gambling issues could still come alive as more cities are added to the "gambling approval list" to garner more votes for passage. In effect, the bill cannot pass without including large enough areas to obtain a majority vote in both the Senate and the House.

Efforts are being made to fund schools from the gaming revenues. That is not a popular issue, and I will oppose tying gaming revenues to the funding of schools. It is considered too unstable a source of revenue and seems simply a bit "wrong" to me anyway.

CANADA DRUGS

Canadian drug imports legislation did NOT pass the Legislature as some people have thought. Canada made the exportation of drugs from Canada unlawful unless the patient receiving the medication had been seen by a Canadian physician and that physician signed the prescription. As a result of Parliament's action, Canadian drug imports will soon be a thing of the past.

Good things have happened from the debate, though. There is more dialog between pharmacists, physicians and patients to utilize generic drugs or other replacements, including drug manufacturer "scholarships" to make less-costly medication available to those in need.



**jim
morrison**

• capitol review

The actual cost of the medication in most cases is less than people were paying via Canadian imports anyway. Hopefully, these and other health issues will be resolved in the near future. I am a part of a select committee to develop less-costly health care. You will hear more about the committee as it begins working in the near future.

SCHOOL FUNDING

The school issue ready to be "hammered out" in a conference committee, as both the House and Senate have passed their versions of education funding. The two are not far apart on dollar amounts but the Senate version eliminates our low-enrollment weighting while the House version does not. We MUST keep our low enrollment money, or it could be a disaster for schools in northwest Kansas and other rural parts of state.

I am sure the Supreme Court will find that the Legislature is making significant progress and will not interfere with the current discussions, but will monitor the school budget for several years into the future. This is not the time to start a "separation of powers" battle between the Legislature and the Judicial branch of government.

BUDGET

Both the House and Senate have completed their work on the budget and - will meet in conference to reconcile differences during the next 10 days or so. Both chambers will then vote on a final product, to be refined at the omnibus consideration. The 2006 budget increases new money to schools and spending for state pro-

gram. In a flash, the boy was gone. The pastor picked up the cage and gently carried it to the end of the alley where there was a tree and a grassy spot. Setting the cage down, he opened the door, and by softly tapping the bars persuaded the birds out, setting them free. Well, that explained the empty birdcage on the pulpit."

That's what Jesus did for us. Evil had trapped us and there was no way out. We weren't any good. Life would tease us and give us no hope for escape.

We scorned God and refused to listen. We were doomed to die. Until Jesus came to buy our freedom.

The price was exorbitant: all Jesus' blood, tears and life itself.

Because of His great love for us, he paid the price and set us free.

That is the Easter story. That is the Easter I'll be celebrating, not once a year, but every day of my life.

Saying "Thank you" once a year just isn't enough!

grams and employees without a tax increase. That does not mean a tax increase will not be considered or pass the session.

MORE OPEN GOVERNMENT

Our project making legislative committees and documents legislators use to consider issues during meetings more accessible is working out well. Quite a bit of interaction and MUCH better discussion of the issues, devoid of political "spin," have taken place since the committee is "live" on-line and being watched throughout the world.

This experiment in "open democracy" has proved valuable and will be expanded to more committees in the 2006 session. It is expected that ALL legislators will have tablet computers, eventually saving more than \$3,000 per year per legislator by reducing the need for paper and making more efficient discussion of issues.

By the time you read this, committees will have concluded meetings in the "electronic" room (526-S). I hope you had at least one chance to observe how the technology worked. Next year you will be able to follow even more committee action, including that of conference committees not now available to the public.

THANK YOU

Thank you very much for all your help and suggestions during this session.

Apparently, I managed to foul up my e-mail server so that the last month or so most of my "broadcast" communications were blocked by my spam filter.

Individual e-mail has been received, but if I or you sent e-mail to more than two recipients, I have not been receiving them! Sure does cut down on spam, but also seems to cut out a lot of people I do want to hear from or communicate with. I just removed the filter until I can figure out what went wrong.

Again, thanks very much for all your help.

garfield

