

from our viewpoint...

School budget mess will linger for years

The Kansas Legislature did its duty and has gone home. The mess it left behind will be with us for years. Conservatives in the House blinked, and came up with very little.

Schools suing for more money got the state Supreme Court to enshrine a “duty” to fund education at whatever level some consultant says is “suitable” in the Constitution.

And the Legislature no longer has control of state spending.

The results?

Quite possibly, a tax increase to pay for the \$146 million the court insisted the state add to school spending this year, plus millions more over the next five years.

Budget cuts for social services, higher education, highways, economic development and other state programs, as schools take a larger and larger share of the pie.

A continual fight over how to pay for ever-increasing demands on the state treasury.

It’s hard to say what will put a stop to the budget spiral that could ensue.

Conservatives, when they folded their tents, vowed to continue the fight to limit the court’s power over spending next year. The reality is, there won’t be any more votes for a constitutional amendment to curb the court in January than there were this month.

It lost by 11 votes this time after breezing through the Senate.

That means the House was nearly a dozen votes shy of the two-thirds required to pass the measure. That’s not going to change.

Demand for school spending won’t go away, though there is little demonstrated need for the extra billion or so the court could wind up ordering.

It’s true, one consultant report found that kind of need. The Legislature looked at it, and decided the taxpayers couldn’t afford it.

Some school officials were adamant that they needed more. Having lost in the Legislature, they sued the state, using \$2 million in state money to pay the legal fees.

Another study under way might come in higher, might come in lower. The state *still* wouldn’t have the money.

And the taxpayers *still* couldn’t afford it.

That’s the missing link. What the taxpayers want.

What people can afford.

And right now, the tax-and-spend crowd, led by the Supreme Court, is in the driver’s seat.

Kansas taxpayers can expect to have their pockets picked over the next couple of years.

They should remember who is in charge. And who paid the bill for all this. — *Steve Haynes*



‘Force’ doesn’t want us to see Star Wars III

Sometimes you get the feeling that there is something, some force out there that is making sure something happens or doesn’t happen.

Whatever it is, it is making sure that Steve and I don’t get to see the latest “Star Wars” film.

We both saw all three of the original films about a hundred years ago, but for some reason we’ve had trouble with the latest trio.

We missed the first one, but everyone said it wasn’t a big loss. Still I’d like to see it sometime.

When the second film came out, we all went to the Sherman Theater next door to *The Goodland Star-News* office for a special matinee. It was great fun, with popcorn and Milk Duds and everything.

Now the latest, last film is out, and our kids say best of the recent Star Wars trio. All the 20-somethings and middle-aged geeks lined up for the first midnight showings at the city theaters.

I don’t even like to line up for the bathroom at Rockies baseball games, so when Star Wars III was advertised for the Sunflower Cinema in Oberlin, I was overjoyed. I was going to be home both nights.

Steve said we should go on Friday since we had a lot of yard work to do on Saturday and might not be done in time for that showing.



cynthia haynes

• open season

Sounded good to me until I got a call at 5:30 p.m. from him saying his truck wouldn’t start. Since he was in Goodland, an hour and a half away, I saw the Friday show slipping away.

But there was still Saturday. Surely, the fence repairs we were planning wouldn’t take all day.

The fence had blown over two weeks earlier in a heavy wind and was propped up by a brace in the neighbor’s yard. She was nice about it, but really hoping to get to mow her yard on Sunday.

So Saturday, we sawed off the top of the fence, dug out a rotted post and the two feet of concrete it was buried in, and reset the post in new cement. By the time we were done, we figured the movie was half over and we were more than half done for.

Later we found out that the film hadn’t come in and would be showing the next weekend, while we were on vacation in Colorado.

So, I told Steve, we would catch the movie in

Colorado. There is a six-plex in Alamosa and a drive-in and three-plex in Monte Vista, both easy driving from our house.

As we drove through Alamosa on Thursday, we noted that Star Wars was playing and it was also on at the drive-in in Monte Vista.

We figured the drive-in was the way to go. Star Wars under the stars sounded great. We figured Saturday for Mexican food and a movie in Monte.

When we arrived, we noted that the drive-in had changed movies. The choices were now “The Longest Yard” and “Mr. and Mrs. Smith.” The three-plex downtown didn’t have Star Wars and a quick call to the Alamosa theater confirmed that the movie wasn’t there anymore either.

The force just wasn’t with us.

We ended up at the drive-in watching “Mr. and Mrs. Smith.” It was fun, but not Star Wars.

Maybe our children will give us a three-CD set for Christmas so we can watch both the first and last of the series. Of course, watching an epic drama on a screen that’s measured in inches isn’t quite the same as one that’s measured in feet, and several notches under one that’s under the stars.

I guess I’ll keep remembering Anakin as a nice, if slightly weird, guy for a while longer.

The rare double-pronged, red footed Bushie

Raging Moderate, by Will Durst

There are a lot of things President Bush would rather do than give a speech to the nation.

Play golf with his dad. Fall off a mountain bike. Even think clearing brush wearing nothing but boots at high noon in the middle of an August rattlesnake migration would win hands down over the speech thing.

But this week, America was treated to a rare double dose of the president talking out of both sides of his mouth. Happy and sad, that is.

The early part of the week, we were presented with his sad, serious side. The one without the Texas accent. Where “having learned the lessons of 9/11, our mission is clear, we must stay the course, and advance freedom in what has become a terrorist’s paradise.” A situation for which neither we nor the people of Iraq have ever properly thanked him, and being the simple humble man he is, for which he takes little if any of the credit, when truth be told, it is a single-handed accomplishment that he need not share with anyone.

Bravo, Mr. President! Bravo!

In less than 25 minutes, Dubyah managed to slip in five references to 9/11, at a time when over half of the country believes he misled us into Iraq.

Does the term “stop beating that horse, he ain’t breathing, and is starting to smell funny already” have any meaning here? Recognizing the fact that recruitment is so low that the slogan “An Army of One” is destined to soon become a reality, he also threw in: “There is no



from other pens

• commentary

higher calling than service in our armed forces.” Which apparently is a plea for the privileged sons of politicians to join the Alabama National Guard.

That was the tough one. He only gave it because his poll numbers are skewing lower than snake belly futures. And he gave it in front of 750 soldiers who could only work up enough enthusiasm to interrupt the speech with applause once, and that was for the joke applause that always comes when a politician says “in conclusion.”

If you think we’re frustrated with a policy in search of a mission, imagine having to defend it against desperate zealots who think you’re the devil.

But then, on Friday, it was another story altogether. We got to see the very same George W. Bush squeal with girlish delight as he broke into daytime television soap operas to deliver

the news that Swing Vote Sandy was retiring from the Supreme Court and now he finally, finally, gets to make an appointment. His accent was so thick I half expected the word “hornswoggle” to slip out at any minute.

And oh yeah, the nation thanks whatshername for her longtime valuable service and blah blah blah and hee hee hee. The excitement shone in his eyes, with an interior dialogue clearer than branch water poured over distilled ice:

“Watch out you Senate Dems, because here comes the wrath of Rove. And he is going to smite righteously down on you liberal pantywaists who only want to give the terrorists backrubs.”

With Bush determined to announce an appointment in time for Advise and Consent to finish up before the Supreme Court reconvenes in October, you might want to replace the filter in your air conditioner, because this looks to be one of those long, hot summers.

I think the president is not going to rely too heavily on either the advice or consent portions of Advise and Consent.

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The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

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National Newspaper Association
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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year’s Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkanssas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkanssas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor’West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

garfield

