

from other pens...

## Cuts from the top may save money

While the state of Kansas hems and haws over how to fund public education, one legislator is proposing some action rather than just talk.

Rep. Shari Weber, a Republican from Herington, is suggesting Kansas have only one superintendent for every county in the state. That would mean just 105 superintendents, opposed to the current estimate of 360.

Because of the highly competitive job market of public school superintendents, the school districts and state would save a truckload of money because of the high pay superintendents typically receive.

While the lone superintendent would oversee all schools, principals would still manage buildings. Each district would still have its board of education. Those boards would work together in hiring a superintendent.

Of course there are still some bugs to work out with her suggestion.

The farther west you go in Kansas, the fewer school districts there are. But Thomas County, for example, is one western county that has multiple school districts: Colby, Brewster and Golden Plains. So which superintendent do you keep to run the entire county?

Making tough decisions is a part of public education. Just ask any board member.

Kansas National Education Association lobbyist Mark Desetti said the proposal would be detrimental to metro school districts, like in Wichita and Kansas City. One person couldn't manage that number of students and responsibilities.

But having one superintendent for Sedgwick County is no different, in principal, than the CEOs of major companies, like Coca-Cola or General Motors. They too have many people and things to take care of. And like Weber's proposal, those companies have midlevel managers, like the principals at the schools.

Remember, Weber's idea is based on expenses in education. A Standard and Poor's financial analyst said having more money in the classroom does not guarantee better students.

But some districts may never see more money in the classroom, or anywhere else, because what is dedicated to administration and staff salary and benefits. That is a significant chunk of a district's budget.

So the school buses have to last a little longer. School boards still have to find the money to put the rising cost of fuel in those buses and heat in the buildings.

Weber is on to something, but the question to ask is what school boards and legislators are willing to sacrifice to improve public education. — *John Van Nostrand, Colby Free Press*

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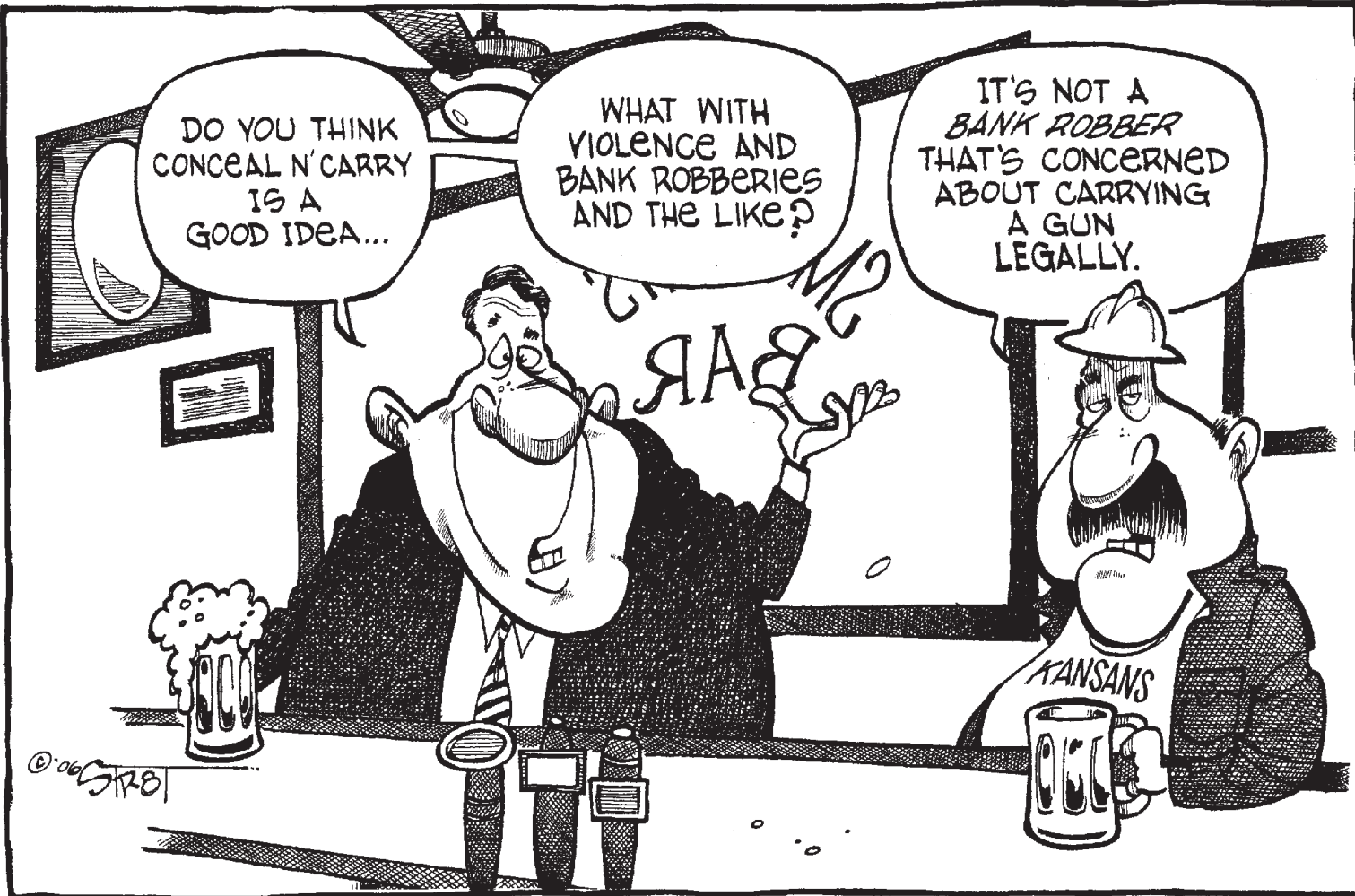
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## Not sure about the eavesdropping scheme

President Bush came to Kansas to sell his secret eavesdropping scheme, and a lot of people seem to buy it.

I'm not so sure.

The president has a right, maybe even a duty, to spy on foreign enemies. When American citizens get involved, it's a whole different set of rules. We need careful safeguards, because it would be easy for the government to grab too much power here.

Just what is the difference?

We're talking about electronic spying here, space-age technology so secret that few even understand how it works.

I guarantee, if you send Osama bin Laden an e-mail, assuming you knew his address, the National Security Agency just might read it. And then, you might be in trouble. You certainly would go on the watch list.

The question is, is it OK for your government to listen to your conversation with some terrorist financier in Saudi Arabia? Or read your e-mail to an al Qaida operative in France?

Of course, you're not in touch with those people, and neither am I.

But some Americans are. And our Constitution does give us certain rights, among them the right to have our affairs kept private and shielded from government snoops. The law says the govern-

ment has to have a warrant if it wants to listen in on us, at least in this country.

President Bush is saying if one end of the conversation is at a terrorist hideout abroad, though, all bets are off.

Whether that's OK is a complicated question.

Will the FBI come knocking at your door? Will you be hauled off to Guantanamo Bay and made to watch Qurans go down the toilet? Will you even know you've been spied upon?

Well, you might say, it's just terrorists and other radicals they're spying on. But your government has a history of abusing its power to spy. It bears watching.

It may be that Americans are willing to trade the admittedly esoteric rights of a few for the security of the majority. But that might be a mistake. An agency that's fighting for freedom one week might be just the opposite at some future date.

As the government's ability to spy grows ever greater, we might wake up one day and find that it's all of us who are being watched.

It's not funny. It happens.

Ben Franklin once said that a people who will trade Liberty for Security deserve neither.

That in mind, while we know our government needs to keep an eye on the bad guys, we'd best be keeping an eye on our government as well.



### steve haynes

• along the sappa

we've had our secret successes to go with our many secret failures.

Where this gets tricky is when an American citizen, here or abroad, calls one of those bad guys. The tape, or computer disk or whatever, is still rolling.

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## Stray dogs have been a problem

To the Editor:

I've called the sheriff out to do something about stray dogs three times. These dogs have been dumped out here.

One was a small puppy so thin you could count every rib, ears full of mange and starved. She finally became a lovable companion, but let a man or a strange pickup come on the place and she runs and hides, so we know she's been abused.

What can be done to these people who are so cruel to animals?

"If you didn't want me, why didn't you take me to the Animal Shelter instead of dumping me out in the country without food or shelter?"

"At least I would have had some wind protection and something to eat.

"I found a thistle in a ditch to get out of the wind and an old dried-up skunk to chew on.

"I'm cold and hungry; maybe God will come tonight and there will be a little boy up there wishing for a little Dog.

"Bang.

"God did come."

Fern Estes

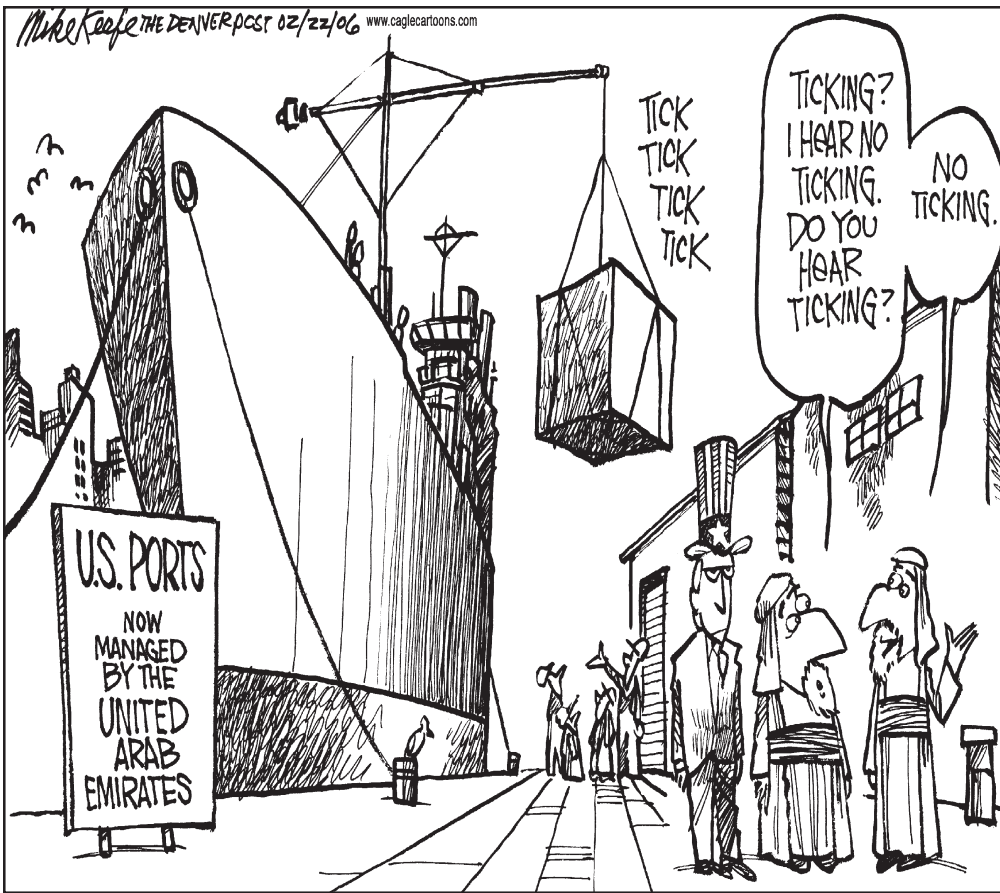
Fourteen miles south of Kanorado



### from our readers

• to the editor

actions of the accused. Depriving them of earnings and stressing their business and personal affairs is an excessive fine (cruel) and unusual punishment to them and the taxpayers forced



### garfield

