

from our viewpoint...

Watch Topeka’s school finance plan

No one is certain what will come out of Topeka as legislators and the governor craft a new school finance plan. One thing we know, though: the Legislature has been a lot more friendly to small, rural schools than the Division of Post Audit was in its report on school finance.

Still, the Supreme Court is looking over everyone’s shoulder, and whatever plan passes both houses will have a day in court. There’s no telling what the justices will say.

As the plan emerges, though, the Legislature seems willing to “hold harmless” smaller schools that otherwise would lose millions in “low-enrollment weighting” money.

The Post Audit proposal wouldn’t do away with low-enrollment money, but it could have reduced the weighting by half. Post Audit proposed the hold-harmless clause, noting it might cost the state an extra \$7-\$8 million.

When some city districts stand to get as much as \$130 million a year extra in “at risk” weighting, that’s only a drop in the bucket. With courts looking for another \$500 million a year in school money, the low-enrollment money is small change.

So why cut small schools at all?

The big argument in the lawsuit which brought all this chaos was that students in large, medium and small districts were not being treated alike. The medium districts pushed the suit over a decade (Salina and Dodge City were the primary plaintiffs) but the six large urban districts — Leavenworth, Kansas City, Topeka, Wichita, Hutchinson and Turner — will get the biggest share of the new money.

There’s always an argument if the small schools get more per pupil than the others. Everyone agrees it costs more per pupil to run a small school, but there’s a lot of disagreement about how much.

This newspaper has said for several years that many in Topeka want to cut small schools, and the Post Audit report bears that out. Right now, it looks like the small districts may come out all right when the new bill is drawn, but that’s far from certain. There’s always next year.

It’s a shame, because small schools work. Partly, that may be because of the extra money and a lack of the grinding city poverty which devils some urban districts. Partly, it may be because of stronger community values in rural areas.

Still, there have been four or five bills the last couple of years to consolidate schools and force smaller districts to give up their superintendents, but none to split big districts into smaller, more manageable units. That, interestingly, was one of the recommendations from the Augenblick and Myers study a few years ago which touched off much of the current controversy. But no one has the guts to suggest breaking up the big districts.

There are a lot of axes, it seems, being sharpened with an eye on our school money. Every dollar will be a fight, and just doing a good job for kids won’t save small schools. — *Steve Haynes*

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I make up a bed no one sleeps in

Each morning, Steve makes our bed and I make Lindsay’s, even though our daughter hasn’t slept in that bed for several months.

Steve almost always goes to bed after I do and gets up after I do, so he’s the one to make our bed each day and he’s very faithful about doing it, even though he really hates making beds.

Then there’s Lindsay’s bed.

I don’t actually make it every day — usually just every two or three. It takes that long to get so messed up I feel compelled to do something about it.

I’ve known for a long time that its the cats messing that bed up.

I just assumed since the quilt is usually pushed back that the cats prefer to sleep on the soft, comfy pillows.

I also assumed that only Lindsay’s two cats — Jez and Rupert — were sleeping there, since they are the only ones I had ever seen on that bed.

When Lindsay visits — which isn’t very often



cynthia haynes

- open season

now that she’s moved to South Carolina — her cats sleep with her. The rest of the time, they tend to sleep in a chair, but occasionally, I’ve found them curled up together on her bed.

It seemed to me that the covers were getting pushed farther and farther down, and after I had been gone for a week in January, the covers were practically pushed over the bottom of the bed.

This seemed to be a lot of work to sleep on a pillow or two, so I started watching that room more closely.

One day, I went in to straighten the bed and found a lump in it.

Simple is as simple does



will durst

- raging moderate

sir, are no King George the Third.

He’s starting to make less sense than a polar bear sipping a sloe gin fizz on an escalator. Said he didn’t want any interval standing in the way of fighting terrorism.

Hello! George! Tutor Time! Go ask Condoleezza; she went to school and actually studied. Have her tell you about the whole space-time continuum deal. How what happens afterwards doesn’t affect the speed of what went on before. In other words, if you kill a chicken, it does not alter how many eggs it has laid in its lifetime. Might put a slight crimp in the number to be laid in the future, but the past tense is finite. Hell, you said it yourself:

Your calls are important to us. For quality control and training purposes, the rest of your life will be monitored.

While we were all distracted by Scooter and the Shooter, big-time conservatives tried to sweep this whole warrantless wiretapping thing under a rug of complications. First they claimed it’s a matter of the president’s prerogative.

“He wants to bug somebody. He bugs them.

That’s what a commander in chief does.”

Then they applied a legal paint job.

“Congress said he could when they authorized his use of force against terrorism.”

Then they hammered it down with the big gun. The golden oldie. Their game-saving Hail Mary: national security.

“If you disagree with listening in on al-Qaida, you’re endangering the troops and giving the terrorists a back rub.”

Next they’ll tell us he was just assuaging Democratic concerns that he never listens to them.

It’s not complicated at all. He broke the law. Peed on the Constitution. Flipped off the Founding Fathers. Nobody knows why. All he had to do was notify the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court within three days of when he started eavesdropping. In previous trips to the court, 18,000 wiretaps were OK’s and five turned down. Eighteen thousand out of 18,005. Not a bad return. We’re talking a .999 batting average here. As an old baseball man, he should know they keep you in the bigs with that.

I don’t know why he didn’t go to the court. Maybe he worried they wouldn’t buy these specific warrants. Maybe he stretched the definition of terrorist to include Michael Moore’s dog walker. Maybe he suspects David Gregory has a mole in the Justice Department.

Or maybe he just really believes he is above the law. I know he claims during wartime to possess special powers. Special powers: I love that. He can’t even ride a bicycle without falling off. I don’t want a president with special powers, I want a President to uphold the laws he swore to protect. I never knew King George the Third. I only read about King George the Third, but you,

The lump turned out to be Rupert. Apparently sleeping on top of the bed was no longer her preference. She was snuggling under the covers.

Two days later, I found April Alice, our yellow cat, snuggled under the covers. She must have seen Rupert get comfy and decided to try it herself.

I’m glad I finally figured out how and why the bed was unmaking itself each day. Even though I was fairly sure it involved a cat or two, the whole thing was a little unnerving when I could never catch them at it.

Since Rupert and April Alice tend to keep an armed truce, I’m thinking of changing the antique quilt on that bed for an old comforter.

It’s weird to think that the quilt my grandmother made for me when I was 5 is more than 50 years old and a valuable antique now.

If the quilt is old and valuable, what does that make me? No, I don’t even want to go there!

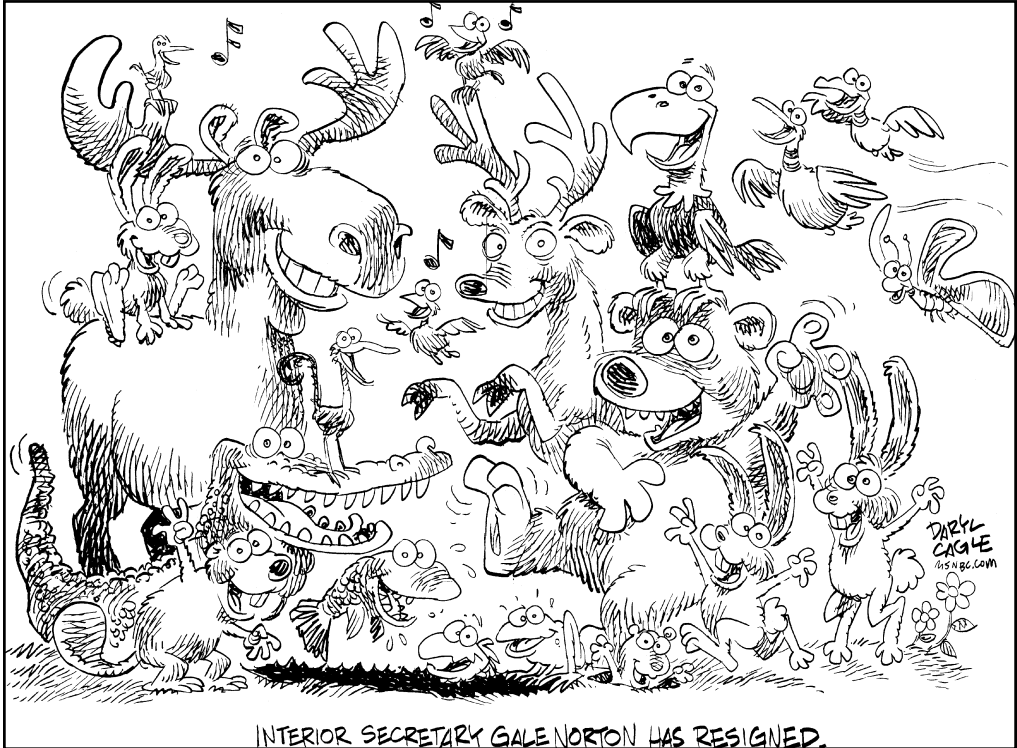
“The past is over.”

It’s a reality thing. They may not have lived in the real world at Yale, but I’m pretty sure they talked about it.

And stop with the silly charge that the person who told the press about the program is the real bad guy, that they brought the plan to the attention of al-Qaida. Any terrorist who doesn’t know that talking on an open, unencrypted line is on a fast track to 72 perfumed virgins and probably not trusted by the big turbans to do anything more important than run out to get the scorched coffee and day-old baklava. Kind of what you’d be doing if your dad hadn’t made his bones with Reagan.

Besides, we’re never going to understand the mind of al-Qaida. These guys spell their name with a “q” that’s not followed by a “u;” they play by rules we don’t even understand. That’s a grammar thing.

Political Comic Will Durst thinks they probably talked about that at Yale, too. E-mail him at willdurst@sbcglobal.net.



garfield

