

from our viewpoint...

## School group may file another lawsuit

The arrogance of the group which keeps suing to force Kansas to spend more and more money on schools apparently knows no bounds.

The group, which calls itself Schools for Fair Funding, has been suing the state for seven years. The case finally ended last week when the state Supreme Court said the Legislature had put enough money into schools to comply with its orders.

The court invited the schools to sue again, though, and the group's lead lawyer, Alan Rupe, is making noises about another case.

The group got nearly all its money from 18 school districts, which in turn got it from the state they are suing. In effect, the state had to pay for both sides of the lawsuit against it.

When Kansas newspapers asked, though, Mr. Rupe refused to say how he spent more than \$2 million in tax money.

The *Topeka Capital-Journal* asked for an accounting, claiming the group falls under the state Open Records Act since its all tax money.

Mr. Rupe offered to list where the money came from, but refused to say how it had been spent.

At least one Kansas editor, Tom Bell writing in the *Salina Journal*, commented that made him wonder just what they had spent the money on. Why wouldn't they want taxpayers to know? What do the school lawyers have to hide?

"I think they're playing hide-and-seek with the money," said Mike Merriam, a Topeka First Amendment lawyer who filed the suit for the *Capital-Journal*. "What the ... public needs to know is how the school districts are spending money through this corporation."

It's bad enough that school districts spend taxpayer dollars to try to get more money — legislators have been grumbling about their heavy spending on lobbying for years — but the constant, expensive lawsuits are an insult to those of us who have to pay for them.

Voters essentially have no say in this process — the schools and the judges have taken school finance decisions out of our hands and put them in the courts, where those who pay the bills have little influence.

We're entitled to an accounting of how our money is being spent by this group and by the school districts that contributed to the suit.

Are the lawyers spending it on fancy dinners and greens fees? Trips out of state? Private ventures?

No one knows.

Taxpayer money should never be spent in secret. It must always be accounted for in the open.

And the dubious nature of this effort to squeeze more money out of the state through constant lawsuits only makes the matter worse.

Shame on you, Mr. Rupe. Shame.

What are you hiding?

Tell the taxpayers what you did with their money, and do it now. — *Steve Haynes*

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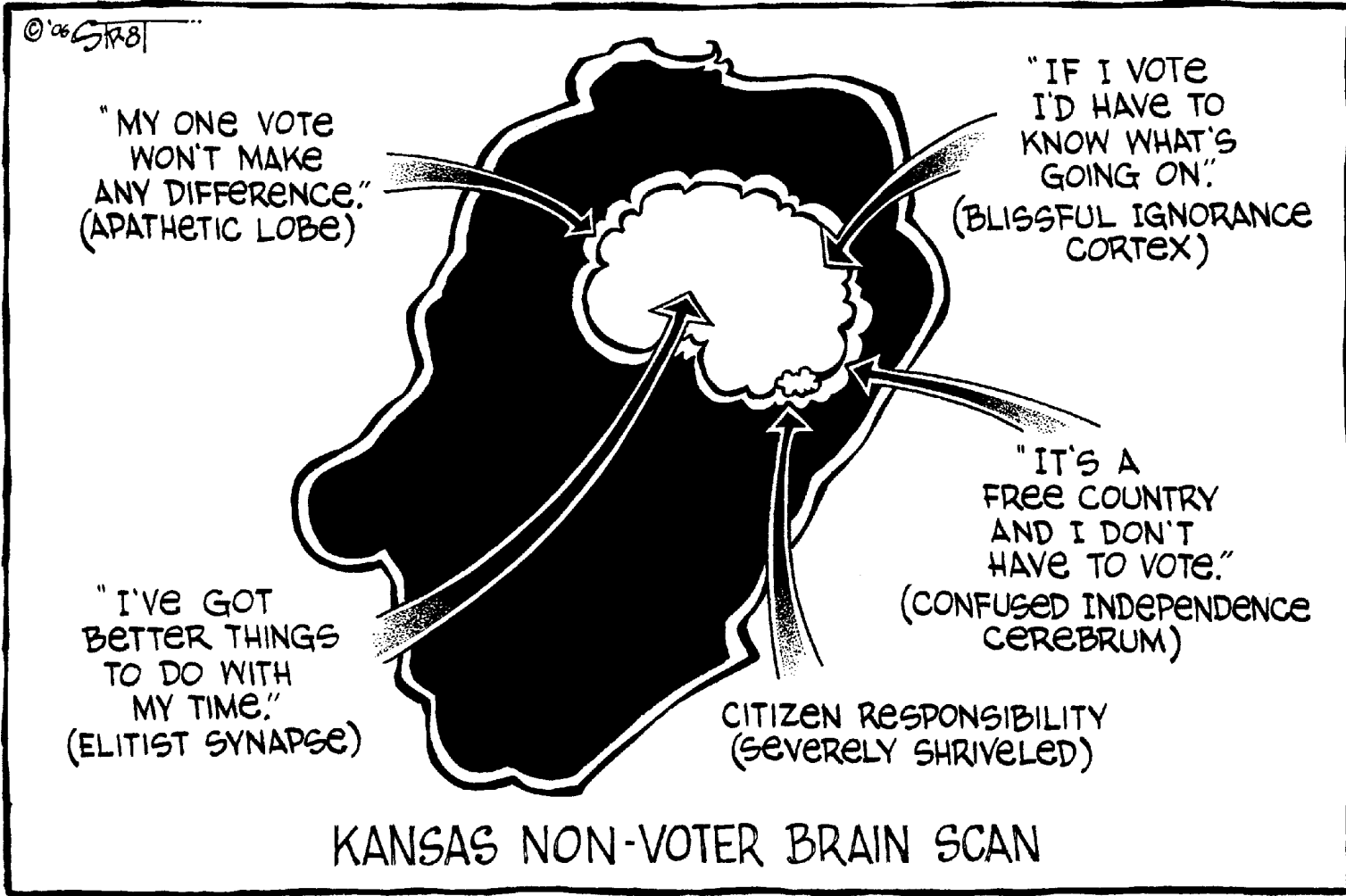
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## Remembering all the cats we've had

I'm not sure why we were counting cats, but it had something to do with our anniversary.

We celebrated our 35th on Saturday night by going out to dinner. On the way there, the subject of cats came up and Steve started counting the ones we've had over the last quarter century plus 10.

He came up with 16 plus many visitors, cats we picked up on the roadside and gave away and children's felines we kept for two weeks or two years

Later that night, the count went up to 17 — or maybe not.

Gato Negro is a half-grown kitten. He's black, declawed, neutered and too friendly for his own good. He was lost and trying to hitch a ride at The Gateway in Oberlin when we ran into him.

After the car left without him — and somehow missed him backing up as he lay on the pavement behind it — I crouched down and whispered, "Kitty, kitty, kitty." He came running over, stopping when he came nose to nose with Annie, our Brittany. They were both fairly surprised.



## cynthia haynes

- open season

Despite a hissy fit over the dog, Gato knew suckers when he saw them. He trotted after us as we continued on our walk around town.

"Can I keep him," I asked, holding the purring bundle of fur. "He followed me home."

After we had left the parking lot, we kept a close eye out for little Gato. After all, he's just a baby. When he cried, we carried him, and when he wiggled, we let him down. He spent the night in our garage.

On Sunday, he came in the house and took over the furniture, much to the surprise and disgust of the other four felines.

We figure that maybe he's one of those traveling cats that like to get into cars. They end up in odd places when the car stops and they

get out or off without their owners knowing they even had a hitchhiker.

We called county dispatch and the veterinarians. Someone out there has got to be upset about the loss of this little guy — he's a cutie.

Plus, they'd spent a bundle of money on the little nuisance.

I had come up with several names and Steve through in a few. Just in case we ended up with No. 17.

Cat No. 4 was named Midnight, so that's out, and we had Gato Negro, Blackie, Hitchhiker, Broom Rider, Shadow and Inky.

I kinda like Dang It's a Dog, but that may be a little bit long.

I needn't have worried, however. I struck pay dirt on my second call. The lady at the vet's office remembered the kitten. They had done his front and rear-end realignment just two weeks ago.

After a lazy Monday sleeping on feet, running around and bugging Tigger, the office cat, our little hitchhiker went home with his people. And wouldn't you know, his name is Midnight.

## Tom Delay is back!



## will durst

- raging moderate

Hey guys, guess what: he's back!

Yes, dear friends, Tom DeLay has crawled out from under the rock he's been hiding for the last couple of months, apparently prematurely completing all those important pieces of personal business he needed to attend to, like the filing the of scuff marks off his cloven hooves and the sucking of hundreds of pints of virgin Mormon blood so he's refreshed and ready to jump back into electoral politics.

Whether he wants to or not. Inflicted with a tertiary case of the Michael Corleones: every time he tries to get out, they pull him back in. And if the "they" in question have a lick of common sense, they're wearing sterile gloves while they're doing it.

Right now, a dilemma is facing down the Republican Party like a stampeding bull in a dead-end alley of Pamplona. This is trickier than a magician's junk drawer, so follow close. Because the King of K Street retired from public service after winning the GOP primary for Congress in Texas's 22nd district last spring. But unless the decision to keep his name on the ballot is overturned on appeal, he's going to have to mount a campaign to run for the same seat he resigned and if he gets elected, he'll have to resign again, then let the governor of Texas call a special election to name his replacement.

The upshot is, he's either going to run or he's going to run. And I'm putting my money on the former.

Or the Republicans could decide to put together a write-in campaign. Which might prove to be a mite ticklish, especially when you consider voters in Texas 22 are about as bright as a buried 15-watt bulb to begin with, which can be verified by their perpetual required love affair with Mr. DeLay. So, teaching an entire district to learn how to write is going to be about as easy as untying the shoes of a greased-up centipede while wearing oven mitts.

If he's really serious about keeping us from having Tom DeLay to kick around anymore, there are a variety of directions he could pur-

sue. For instance, he could become a conductor on that new Beijing-to-Tibet railway, contract a severe case of elevation sickness causing his head to bloat up to the size of an over-inflated soccer ball and escape detection that way. Or maybe he'll just pull a Ken Lay, fake a heart attack, fly to some uncharted deserted isle and play a quick 18 in a foursome with William Casey, Tupac Shakur and Elvis.

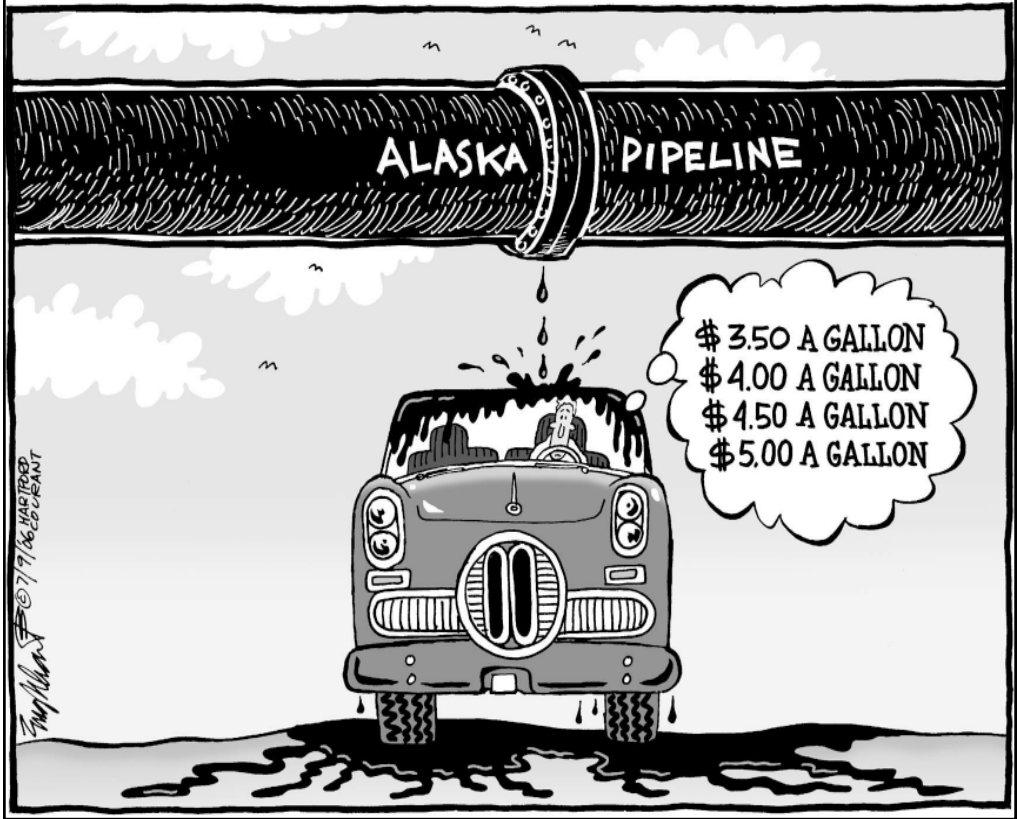
In any case, this has got to be good news for

the Democrats, putting Mr. DeLay, symbol of Congressional corruption (not to mention poster child of smug self-satisfaction), flush front blunt back in the cross hairs of the national spotlight.

Again.

Maybe this time, that negative of him and Jack Abramoff and Karl Rove naked under a goat at a Junkie Hookers for Satan convention will finally surface. Of course, with the Democrats' luck, Louisiana Congressman William Jefferson will be bent over in the background pulling out a couple of cold ones from the refrigerator. And I ain't talking about brewskies.

*Comic, writer, actor, radio talk show host, volleyball head Will Durst is fond of reaching for a few cold ones. And no, he ain't talking about bank wrapped bundles of cash.*



## where to write

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