

from our viewpoint...

## Citizens to begin plan for the future

The future of Sherman County may be determined by outside forces, but most people believe fate can be shaped by planning for the future.

A week from today, Sherman County citizens are invited to a free dinner at 5:30 p.m. at the Goodland Elks Lodge, to be followed by a "Community Conversation" on our future.

There is no such thing as a free dinner, of course, and those attending will spend about two hours talking about what they want to see happen in the future and what our priorities should be.

Citizens from across the county will have an opportunity to hear the results of 80 interviews and 300 surveys that the Shine on, Sherman County steering committee gathered to form the basis for discussion.

Consultant Terry Woodbury, who works with cities and counties around the state, says the discussion is planned to bring people together to talk about how things are going and what the future should look like.

People from what Woodbury calls the "public square"—business, schools, health and human services and government—will be part of the open meeting. Everyone will get a chance to work on some of the ideas that come up.

Getting a strategic plan done was one of the goals of the Sherman County Economic Development Council when organized four years ago. Attempts were derailed when the council was without a director for a year.

Tiffani McMinn, who was hired in May, pushed to bring Woodbury's program to Sherman County. The consultant spoke at the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce banquet in January, and McMinn had seen Woodbury in action when he was working with Wallace County while she was the economic development director there.

Woodbury he said his approach to community planning is different because he wants people to focus on the good things in the community and what can be done to improve the quality of life and opportunities for progress.

A priority for one part of the community may not be the priority for another, he said. The idea is to develop a consensus on priorities that cover the largest part of the community—and then develop an action plan to get them done.

We've watched planning sessions over the years, and have never felt they were a waste of time. Tangible results came from every one.

Everyone should have a say in the future of our county, and the Community Conversation is a chance for all of us to get involved. Ideas will be accepted, no matter how wild they may seem on the surface. With a multitude of brains working on an idea, most can be formed into something that is doable.

The future is ours to make, and Tuesday will be a major step to determining what it will be for Sherman County. Be there and be part of the plan. — Tom Betz

The point where Denny Hastert blew the call...



## Immigrants are the American culture

One of the arguments you hear about immigrants today is that "they" come here with their own culture, band together, speak their own tongue and don't mix with the rest of the populace.

How soon we forget. In a nation where all of us descend from immigrants, you'd think we'd understand this process. Yet the Cassandra's are everywhere. Even Paul Harvey, the noted news commentator, jumped on the bandwagon, decrying "the end of American culture."

It's pure hogwash. We grew up, reading in our history books about the great "melting pot" of cultures that makes up America. We believe that, or used to.

Of course immigrants speak their own language. Immigrants always have.

No one gets off the boat speaking perfect English, at least not in the last century and a half. Often, the first generation never really masters the new language. The second usually does, and the third tends to move clear away from its roots.



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

It wasn't that long ago that the Kansas plains were dotted with schools where students learned in the languages of their parents' homelands. There are plenty of people in this county who can remember speaking low German in Lutheran schools.

Few of them today could carry on a conversation in German, we'd guess. In fact, the state has a project to preserve the language as it was once spoken here. It seems the third-generation descendants wanted nothing to do with it.

Cynthia tells an old family story that she was left with a couple of aging aunts near Concordia as a baby, and the first words she spoke were in French. Her parents were mortified, of course.

The point is, we're not that far removed from

the last round of foreign-born, non-English-speaking immigrants.

The Republic withstood that wave, emerging stronger, more vibrant, more diverse and more interesting.

It will survive the current wave, too. Immigrants, as they do today, always have faced obstacles to integration into society. Spat on and discriminated against, they always gather in some ghetto, take the worst jobs and bear the slings and arrows of outraged, if misguided, "natives."

They persevere then and now, because they see the promise of a better life in a free country. They want that for themselves and for their children.

That's part of our heritage, the good and the bad of it.

They speak another language? They always have. It used to be Greek, Italian, German, Polish, Russian, French, Croatian, Serbian; today it's mostly Spanish and Asian languages. Tomorrow, who knows.

They'll get over it. So will we, if remember our history.

## Neither side deserves to be reelected

Sorry, but you don't.

At the start of Congress, right after George Bush's re-election, two topics dominated your agenda: Social Security and immigration reform. Neither passed.

Congress punted on Social Security after it got scared to death by the reaction of senior citizens to Bush's proposed reforms. Ironically, the group least affected by the changes—the elderly who, were exempt from their provisions—was the most opposed. And the people directly affected—current wage earners—were largely in support, albeit apathetic. Democrats never got to stop the reforms by waging the gallant filibuster for which they were hoping. The Republicans quietly killed Bush's proposals by agreeing never to talk about them again.

And the record on immigration hasn't been any better. Again, the Democrats didn't have to obstruct action. The Republicans did it for them.

The compromise between the Senate bill's emphasis on an earned path to citizenship and the House's tough border protection is to adopt one from column A and one from column B. The public supports both border protections and an earned path to citizenship. But the House and Senate leaders don't have the guts to pass the obvious compromise, and Bush won't force their hand.

Then, as the session unfolded, two other issues became prominent. The Abramoff scandals put ethics and lobbying reform on the agenda and the rise of gasoline prices made energy a center-stage issue once more. And



**dick morris**

• commentary

again, Congress did next to nothing.

It hasn't even considered anything approaching tough ethics reform, conspicuously rejecting bans on congressional travel paid for by private organizations and earmarking limitations, apart from tepid disclosure requirements now up for consideration.

Congress won't even consider such ideas as banning employment of spouses on campaign payrolls or limitations on lobbying by sons, daughters and wives. Those should be major priorities. Otherwise, a campaign contribution that pays for a wife's salary becomes a direct cash payment to the member's checking account and a job as a lobbyist becomes an avenue to exploit special access.

On energy, Congress passed a weak bill without Alaskan drilling or any aggressive alternative fuels legislation except for some marginally helpful items on ethanol production.

For the rest of this year, according to the whip's schedule, the House will be in session for fewer than 90 days.

A Congress dominated by alleged fiscally conservative Republicans has set all-time records on earmarking money for special projects, and members, not challenged by the

whip's lackadaisical schedule, spent most of their time funding their pet projects in return for campaign donations from businesses and lobbyists involved.

The increase in student-loan interest rates and the so-called bankruptcy reform bills were especially cruel to the families the GOP professes to care about. They make a college education harder to afford and the resulting possible bankruptcy impossible to escape.

And, in a broader perspective, what good has the Republican Congress done since Bush took office? The tax cut was excellent and the good record of the economy bears it out. The No Child Left Behind bill is a landmark piece of legislation that is proving its worth. And the Patriot Act has done a lot to keep us safe.

But lately? In the past four years, what has this Congress done to deserve re-election? Precious little.

All the pundits are focusing on whether the Republicans keep power in the 2008 election or whether the Democrats take over. But both parties have a dismal record in this Congress—a record of non-achievement.

This has been, truly, the do-nothing Congress of all time!

Eileen McGann coauthored this column. As lawyer and consultant, she a chief executive officer of VOTE.com and LegislativeVote.com. She works with Dick Morris on campaigns and around the world, specializing in using the Internet to influence elections.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years. E-mail for Dick Morris is dmredding@aol.com.

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e-mail: star-news@nwkanssas.com

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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

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To the Editor:

Asking the question "What would Jesus do?" is an excellent method to reflect on the ethics of your actions.

That question came to mind when I read about how Attorney General Phill Kline was going to various churches to further his re-election campaign. His own campaign memo states that one objective for attending these worship services would be to meet "money" people for the purpose of getting large campaign contributions.

Every gospel in the New Testament tells of the wrath of Jesus against those who were mis-using His temple to gain wealth and power. The Gospel according to St. John states: "Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the



from our readers

• to the editor

temple..." (chapter 2, verse 15).

The answer is obvious what Jesus would have done to Phill Kline because of his repugnant abuse of God's house. It is equally obvious what voters must do.

They must vote him out of office.

Tim Peterson  
2015 Cedar Crest  
Monument, Kan., 67747  
(785) 846-7834

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