

Leaders ready to slash session to 60 days per year

After last year's marathon disaster in Topeka, there'll be a real movement this year to cut the Legislature back to just 60 days.

Some people will say that's not enough time, but we think it's more than the House and Senate require to get done what's important.

And what isn't important probably shouldn't get done.

Last year, the Legislature put in more than a week of overtime. With the clock running on their salaries and expenses, that cost thousands. Since the state is broke, we certainly can't afford any extra legislating.

That means just cutting the session isn't enough. The members abused the current 90-day limit last year, and they'd be just as likely to overrun 60 next year.

We also need to eliminate any extra pay or expense money for members. If they stay past the deadline, they'd be on their own nickel.

We bet that won't happen too often. Only if the governor calls a special session to clean up some unfinished business should there be any extra pay, the members would have to appropriate the money.

Somebody is going to say that the Legislature isn't going to have time to get anything done in 60 days, but that's just so much BS. Last year, and every year, the members spent the first two months posturing and didn't get around to any serious business until March.

That's the way it usually works.

Members are supposed to be citizen-legislators, and it's not good for them to be in Topeka too long. They get to feeling important. They are, but they shouldn't act it.

In 60 days, the Legislature can do everything it did last year, and if the members work at it, they might be able to balance the state's budget.

We're not saying it's going to be an easy year. The state faces a budget gap nearing a billion dollars. Everyone has promised not to increase taxes and not to cut education, so there won't be many decisions to make.

Cut the posturing and the squabbling with the governor, and they'll be home in no time. And we'll only have to read about it for two months instead of four.

The change might save the state a little money, too, what with expenses and heating the big chambers. But that's not the real point.

As voters and taxpayers, we want the Legislature to get its work done and go home. We don't need the delays and carping that have marred recent sessions.

So go ahead, cut the session. But do it right, and take away the automatic overtime for long sessions.

That's what we need in Topeka. Less bluster and debate, more common-sense solutions.

— Steve Haynes

Parties seem to be switched

In Congress this year, you're going to hear one party yell a lot about growth in the federal budget.

This party will complain that excessive federal deficits will strangle the recovery, bog down the economy and even threaten inflation.

Deja vu?
Not hardly.

This party will be the Democrats, the same party that fueled the growth in the deficit in the 1960s, '70s and '80s. The same party that bowed at the altar of deficit spending and scoffed at inflation for decades. The party that *owned* the deficit.

One party will defend the deficit and call for more.

That would be the Republicans. And while they'll take a different tact than the tax-and-spend Democrats of yore, they will be boosting the deficit like crazy.

The same Republican Party that year after year cried that the Democrats were going to break this country.

This Congress will mark an almost complete role reversal in the two parties on the deficit.

The Republicans are the party of the unbalanced budget. The Democrats are the party calling for less deficit spending.

The Republicans will be running a war without cutting back on domestic spending — the "guns and butter" policy they decried when Lyndon Johnson did it.

Democrats will try and convince us that deficits are bad.

Who are *they* kidding?

It all amounts to a tremendous twist in the political fabric, but in a weird sort of way, it all makes sense.

The Democrats don't really care



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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about the deficit. They just need something to complain about. Give them their lead, they'll be back to their good old tax and spend ways in a jiffy. They always want more social programs, more domestic spending.

But if Republicans are building the deficit this year, why not give them heck for it.

The Republicans want more tax cuts, but they can't afford to rein in spending, not when the economy is soft and there's a war afoot. They claim a tax cut will boost the economy more than higher spending, and they're not pushing for more programs.

Nonetheless, the end result will be a bigger deficit. They've already asked Congress to lift the lid on the

national debt.

How did it get to this point?

Well, Ronald Reagan and the first George Bush tamed the deficit, but the budget didn't balance until Bill Clinton's watch. By then, Democrats were pretending to care.

Now, the Republicans are wedded to tax cuts, as the right thing to do and as an economic stimulus. Deficits don't count; it's the old Reagan "supply side" voodoo warmed over.

Deficits do count, but neither party really cares as long as they get re-elected. And most of them probably will.

Taxpayers, eventually, will be stuck with the tab.

But maybe we will get a tax cut in the process.

Darrell Lutz
Oberlin

Writer wants prepaid gas

To the Editor:

No more gas cops!

I think the gas stations should go to prepaid for gas.

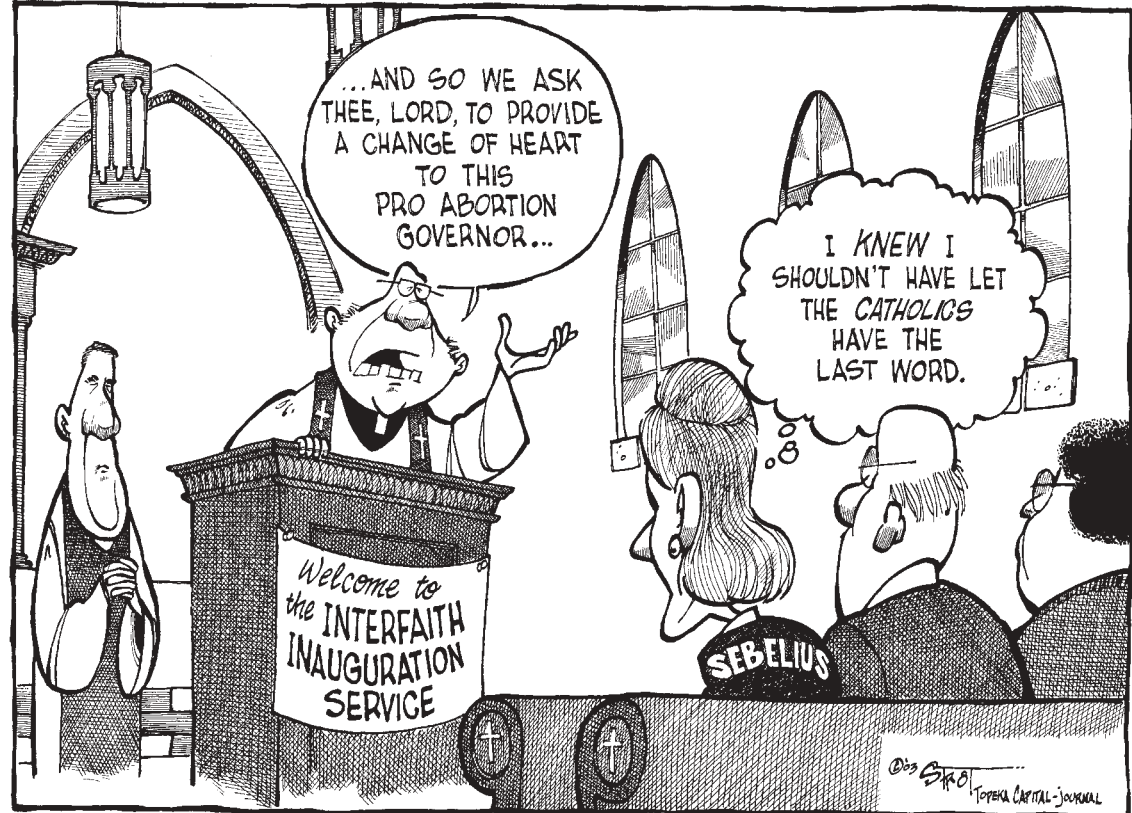
Then they won't lose money, nor you the taxpayer, and it would relieve the police of one problem. Sure, it's inconvenient, but think of the cost saved.

Overtime pay, gas, wear and tear on vehicles, and dangerous high-

speed chases. Is it worth it?

Besides, a smart criminal knows to first lead the police away, then rob the bank, or even you.

We can solve this problem, Oberlin, for the police and ourselves. Call your city council and tell them no more gas cops.



You can't wear out a 4-year-old

How do you wear out a 4-year-old?

Apparently you don't. A call to my youngest daughter Kara on the evening of her daughter's fourth birthday revealed that no amount of planned activities, no amount of nonstop fun, and no amount of go-go-go seemed to phase "I'm-4-next-I'm-gonna-be-5" Taylor.

When I asked Kara if they had worn Taylor out with bowling, a movie AND a party, her exhausted reply was, "That just never seems to happen."

I've said it before and I'll say it again, "That's why God gives us children while we're young."

Can you imagine trying to keep up with a 4-year-old in your 40s?

My mother may have been almost 41 when I was born, but she had a few kids at home to help out with a toddler. Sounds like she might have needed it, too.

When I was about 2, she wrote in her "Out With the Hillbillies" column what my 12-years-older brother, Dick, said after a shopping trip with me: "Now I know why you don't like to take her to town with you."

It wouldn't be so bad to have your fourth, fifth or sixth child late-in-life, but, oh, pity the poor girl who waits till she's 40 to have her first. She doesn't know what she's in for.

—ob—

I can tell already that we're going to be ardent supporters of "corn power."

After seeing a corn-burning stove in action at a friend's house a couple



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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of years ago, we have been talking about the virtues of burning grain instead of wood. We talked about corn being a renewable resource; we talked about how clean it would be; we talked about the cozy feel of a fire; we talked until we talked ourselves into investing in one of the units.

Installation seemed to be a snap. Of course, it helps when your husband is the kind that always has the needed parts on hand. Which is a kind way of saying he keeps everything.

Nonetheless, with the help of a neighbor who had the misfortune of stopping by at the wrong time, the not-so-big-but-mighty heavy heater was pushed through a side door. An exhaust pipe was run outside and lashed to the TV tower.

We were ready. Let there be fire... and there was fire. We hadn't had time to actually find corn to supply the fire. We just knew we wanted to use the thing. And we wanted to use it now. It was good it came with a bag of wood pellets. Soon a nice, steady flame was burning brightly as the pellets "caught".

So far, it is everything the sales-

man said it would be. The furnace never kicked on once the fire heated up. The top of the stove is cool to the touch due to the insulated firebox, and the exhaust pipe is barely warm. Very little heat is wasted. It is all blown out the front of the stove into the room. The down side is, I won't be able to cook beans on top.

Finding corn might be our only problem, since so little was raised this year. One farmer friend says he could spare a little, enough to get us going, at least.

We'll have to plan ahead a little better for next year, just so Jim doesn't get the idea that we have to grow our own.

I never was very good at shucking corn.

From the Bible

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. II Corinthians 7:1

Councilman takes issue with editor

To the Editor:

This letter is in response to the editorial that was in the paper last week.

First of all, the City Council is not "hell-bent" on getting rid of one of our oldest police cars. We as a council are doing the reasonable thing and getting rid of a car that is of no use to the city. Explain why this will "cause more problems than it will save the city money"? If a statement is going to be put forth, then please give proof that it is true.

Again, explain how "the police department, as usual, will be left to pick up the pieces." Statements like this, in my opinion, are irresponsible unless you have proof. Yes, the police cars will be driven as much as before, seems logical to me, but that is why we purchase police cars, to patrol our city streets.

By the way, the 1998, 1999 and 2003 model police cars are not "three beat up police cars". As far as the part-time police having a car to drive, he/she can use one of the regular cars in the fleet.

Do you have names of "most police agencies" that provide personal cars for each of their officers? To me it is ridiculous to have a car sitting around for a part-time officer and paying for insurance and upkeep when we have three other cars available.

Readers wonder if we are shutting out opportunity

To the Editor:

After reading the articles concerning a possible school consolidation, we felt led to respond. It seems as if Atwood is very open to change while Oberlin is not. Could this be a window of opportunity for Oberlin? Are we so adverse to change that we would miss it?

Yes, there are financial factors to consider. Changes would cost money. But there are many in our town, including us, who would donate money to finance the removal of Satan, as student journalist Grant Reichert calls our mascot. Possibly a new mascot could be adopted, such as the Patriots, and red, white,

Letters to the Editor

Your knowledge on the way city governments work is lacking. Two members of a five-member council cannot advance their "agenda," even if they had one. We work very hard at being council members and look at all of the options so we can make sound decisions. Your statement is insulting and unfair. "Cut and slash" seems a little melodramatic, but if being fiscally responsible and trying to keep taxes and expenses as low as possible is what you mean, then cut and slash it is.

Please tell me how spending \$20,000 per year for a police car is saving money. You save money when you do not spend it. We have a 1996 car with only 65,000 miles on it (using a little oil?). To me it still is a very good car and it should have been kept in service instead of buying a new car. If it is using oil, repair it; it is still cheaper than \$20,000 spent on a new car.

How much have we saved since we purchased the last new police car? The answer is, around \$60,000. It appears that you feel this is pocket change, but if my math is correct this is about 8 mills that we did not have to put on our mill levy. Please look

at how much the city has spent on repairs for these cars over the last few years; virtually nothing, except for normal maintenance.

And why would maintenance suffer as you said it would by getting rid of two cars? Will we just forget to maintain these cars so new ones can be purchased later? I would hope not.

I have lived in this community since 1957. We had a small community then and we have a smaller community now. We had very little crime then and we have very little crime now. Look at the police report put out each month. Actually, you should publish this report when it comes out so that the citizens can actually see what is happening. Yes, we need a police force, but one that is sized for our community. Let's work with the sheriff's department; maybe we can lighten the load for every one. I have no doubt that your "nice little felons" will continue to stay away.

People wonder why others will not run for council or mayor. They need to read your editorial and it will make perfect sense.

Jerry Fidele, Oberlin

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by E-mail to obherald@nwkansan.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

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