

# Opinion Page

126th Year, Number 38

Wednesday, September 22, 2004

## State of Kansas should spend its money at home

Who says the world has to make sense? Because if it did, the State of Kansas wouldn't be buying \$14 million worth of Homeland Security supplies from a single New Hampshire contractor.

Fire chiefs have complained that they can't buy from Kansas suppliers. The New Hampshire outfit, Fisher Safety, says it has contracts to supply emergency equipment to 14 states. Apparently, Kansas officials wanted a single-source contract and didn't try to find local vendors, because it was easier and quicker.

Capt. Mark Bruce, director of emergency operations for the Kansas Highway Patrol, told a legislative committee last week that Fisher allows a "one-stop shop" for fire departments and emergency management agencies using the grant money.

Bruce said the contract's "large-volume efficiencies" allow the smallest department to get the same price as the largest.

He noted that Fisher will buy about 30 percent of the equipment, \$4.2 million worth, from Kansas suppliers which include Next-Tech in Lenora.

While that is laudable, that leaves \$9.8 million going out of state.

Officials said agencies can use an in-state bidder if the price is the same or less, but the program is not set up to actually encourage that.

You'd think state officials would have more sense, but apparently not. You'd think they'd have a marked preference for buying from taxpayers who support them, but apparently not. Next thing you know, they'll be contracting to have welfare calls answered in India.

Oops. They already tried that. No, Kansas government has no faith in or loyalty to Kansas taxpayers. From call centers to drivers licenses to fire and emergency equipment, it sees no value at all in shopping with those who pay the bills.

And surely there are plenty of tax-paying businesses who can supply these needs, even if the cost is a little more.

The Legislature needs to crack down on state purchasing. Unless we support Kansas businesses, there'll soon be no businesses in Kansas to pay taxes or support the state.

Kansas, as the saying goes, needs to dance with the one who brought her.

And that means a strong preference for buying at home. — Steve Haynes

## Take me out to the ball game

You have to appreciate real artistry, even when it's on the other team.

That's part of the fun of baseball. We went to the game the other night, and the Rockies were awful. They blew a 6-2 lead, then lost in the 10th inning. They fluffed their only double play chance. Rookie outfielders let the ball drop.

Hey, it's September, and the team is way out of it.

But Eric Gange was phenomenal. Gange is the Los Angeles Dodgers' closer, the specialist in shutting out the ninth inning that every team needs these days.

And Gange is very good at his job, though you wouldn't know it by his salary, a mere \$550,000 this year.

He's young. He'll be a free agent soon, ready to move up to say \$7 million a year, or more. And well worth the money.

Gange's fast ball screams in at 98 to 99 mph. Hardly anyone can hit it. Then there's his changeup. It floats over the plate at, oh, 88.

Lots of pitchers get their fast ball in at 85.

If he has another pitch, he didn't need it Friday.

Grown men, major league hitters, whiffed at his pitches.

They say the hardest thing to do in sports, the most difficult, is to hit a major league fastball. The guy who said that probably hadn't seen Gange.

He's just a pup, of course, 27 years old. He's in his fifth major league season, and his second as a closer. In two years, he's "saved" 107 games and blown just three opportunities.

Some days, somebody may be able to hit Gange. Not Friday.

Todd Helton, the Rockies' All-Star, Hall-of-Fame-candidate first baseman struck out.

So did Jeremy Burnitz, their jour-



## Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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neyman power hitter. So did their best clutch hitter, third baseman Vinnie Castilla.

They swung late on the changeup, early on the fastball. They looked like little leaguers, reaching for low, slow ones.

Maybe Gange will wear his arm out. Right now, he can pitch.

Not so for the Dodgers' starter, Hideo Nomo, the Japanese wonder who pitched the first no-hitter at Coors Field a few years ago.

Back with the Dodgers, but never up to his old form, Nomo couldn't find the plate. He was out of there in the second, which was kind of sad to see.

Some nights are like that. Nomo was, in his prime years in Japan and with Los Angeles, as good a starting pitcher as you see. Friday, he was serving up 85 mph fastballs that anybody (on a major league roster, at least) could hit.

Best to remember him as the guy who completed a no-hitter in frigid weather after a two-hour rain delay.

Friday, the Rockies got a good start out of Jamie Wright, then sent in their alleged closer, Shawn Chacon from Greeley, Colo., to finish the game. Tied 6-6 in when he came in, the game got away.

Technically, it wasn't a blown save because the Rocks weren't winning. But fans have taken to calling Chacon "the uncloser."

While Gange stands up there with Rob Nen and Trevor Hoffman, Chacon seems destined for middle relief.

Maybe the Rockies could hire Gange when he is on the market. Their record with expensive pitchers has been poor, but they sure could use a closer. And a bullpen, for that matter.

Ah, as they say in Chicago, "Wait until next year."

## 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.

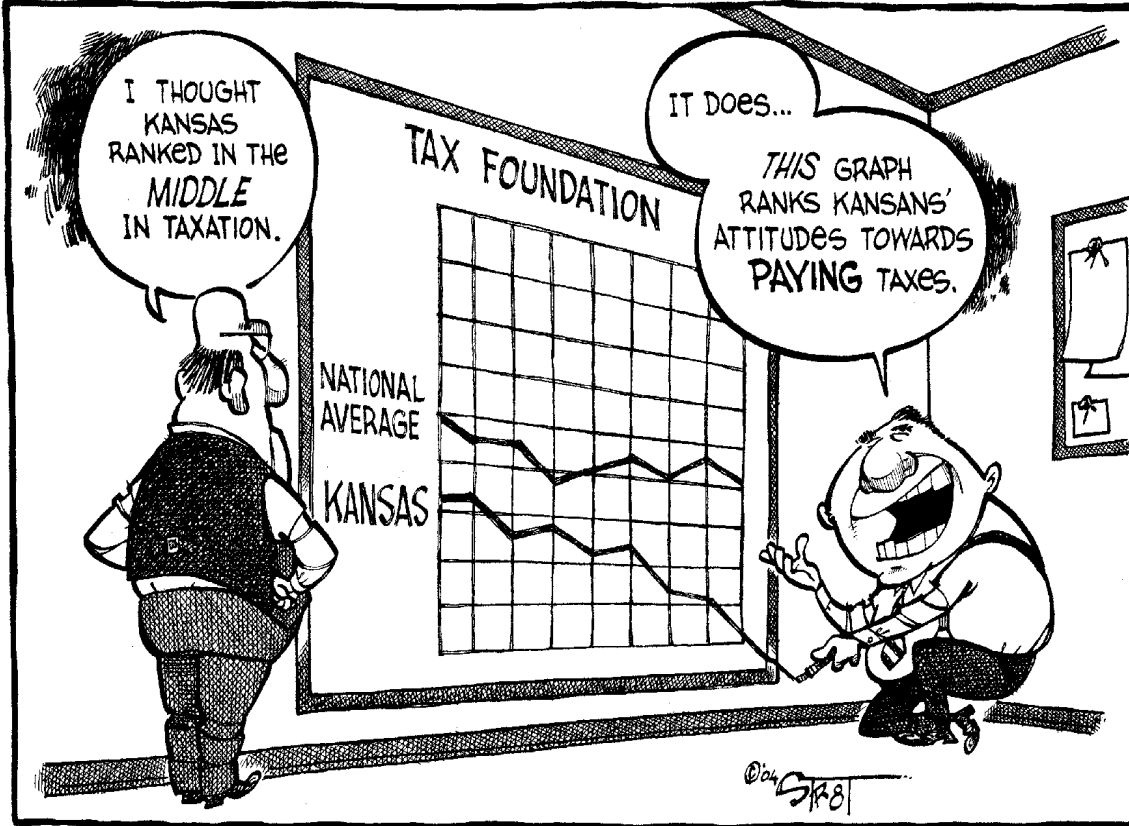
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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses.



## Hike was no leisurely stroll

It was the last day of our Colorado vacation and Steve was determined to get up to Phoenix Park.

We had been taking walks most every day.

We had walked on the roads around the area, up the slight incline of the Forest Service trail on the other side of the river and up a steeper, but not too difficult trail, several miles away.

The one thing all those hikes had in common was they lasted no more than an hour from hopping out of the car to hopping back in.

Phoenix Park would be longer and steeper.

We hadn't hiked up that trail in several years. Now it was time to try it again.

We grabbed our pack, which contains waterproof matches, slickers, a mirror and a Forest Service map. We added lunch, water and our books.

We would walk up to the park, picnic, read for awhile and walk back.

The trail is steep, rocky and crosses several creeks. It took us an hour to go the four miles up to the park. On the way up we met some hikers from Texas. They said they had gone up to the 10-mile marker but were returning before the weather set in.

Well, yes, there were clouds



## Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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forming over the mountains. But then again, clouds form over the mountains every day. We had our pack. We hoped we were prepared.

By the time we reached the park, we both wished that we hadn't chosen to wear shorts and T-shirts. However, we had brought long-sleeved shirts as backups and soon put them on.

We picnicked in a grove of trees that gave us some protection from the wind but didn't bother to get out the books. As soon as the last bite of sandwich was devoured and the last bit of trash stowed, we started back down.

It usually takes about the same amount of time to go down the mountain as up—in this case it was an hour's trip up.

However, we found that we went considerably faster downhill as the rain started to fall. It never got heavy enough to break out the slickers, which tend to be smelly and uncom-

fortable. But, it gave us a sense of urgency we don't usually have.

It was the kind of storm that you hear about in the mountains. The kind of storm that drops a foot of snow on unprepared, short-and-T-shirt-wearing hikers.

We made it down the mountain in a little under 50 minutes and back to town before the rain started in earnest.

It never did snow, although later we found that the forecast called for possible flurries.

The next morning we found frost on the truck and ice on the dog's water bowl.

My mother warned me about Colorado when she studied copies of the newspaper we were planning to buy.

"You don't want to move there," she said pointing to the weather column. "It freezes in July and August."

Mother always did know best.

## It's real work to work on home

When Jim goes to work (at least for the past few weeks), he steps out the back door, crosses 30 feet of lawn, and goes in our other house next door.

Since finishing his last house-building job he has been working on ours. The new kitchen space has been sheetrocked, textured, painted, the cabinetry started and lighting installed.

But just because Jim is working on our place doesn't mean he isn't "working." He is the king of multitasking. If he doesn't have about three different projects going at the same time, he thinks he's being lazy.

During the past week, he has built doors for my cabinets while making doors for a friend's cabinets. He has rebuilt the motor on his belt sander, made banners for the church, worked on his sermon, overhauled my vacuum cleaner, preached a funeral, took our calves to market, taught Sunday school, installed doors at our daughter's house, made a pot roast dinner, and probably lots more stuff I don't even know about.

No need to wonder when he sits down at night and says, "I'm as tired as if I worked all day."

—ob—  
As a news reporter, you're supposed to maintain a "professional



## Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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distance." You are not supposed to get involved in a story—just report it. Saturday, I covered a story that would challenge any hard-core reporter to stay distanced from.

A young woman from a small town in a neighboring county, who was in the Ready Reserves, had been recalled for active duty. That's interesting, but not the real story. The real story is that she had to leave not only her husband but her 4-year-old and 4-month-old sons. I had a hard time keeping the tears out of my eyes long enough to focus the camera while this family bade each other farewell, for how long they do not know.

You can debate the rightness or wrongness of this young mother going off to war. But the fact remains: she did. And, more importantly, she did it honorably and proudly.

She said, "This is the hardest thing I've ever done. But I have to. The Army wouldn't have called me if they didn't need me. I want my sons to be proud of me."

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the caliber of young people that will be the leaders of tomorrow. She, unselfishly, put the demands of her country above her personal desires. I believe she and her family represent the best of what makes this country great. We, as a country, should offer a collective and heartfelt, "Thank you."

## From the Bible

Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones. Proverbs 16:24

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Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

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Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers  
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year, \$28 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$32 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$35 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$20 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)



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