

Opinion Page

Legislature no longer has control of state spending

The Kansas Legislature did its duty and has gone home.

The mess it left behind will be with us for years.

Conservatives in the House blinked, and came up with very little.

Schools suing for more money got the state Supreme Court to enshrine a "duty" to fund education at whatever level some consultant says is "suitable" in the Constitution.

And the Legislature no longer has control of state spending.

The results?

Quite possibly, a tax increase to pay for the \$146 million the court insisted the state add to school spending this year, plus millions more over the next five years.

Budget cuts for social services, higher education, highways, economic development and other state programs, as schools take a larger and larger share of the pie.

A continual fight over how to pay for ever-increasing demands on the state treasury.

It's hard to say what will put a stop to the budget spiral that could ensue.

Conservatives, when they folded their tents, vowed to continue the fight to limit the court's power over spending next year. The reality is, there won't be any more votes for a constitutional amendment to curb the court in January than there were this month.

It lost by 11 votes this time after breezing through the Senate.

That means the House was nearly a dozen votes shy of the two-thirds required to pass the measure. That's not going to change.

Demand for school spending won't go away, though there is little demonstrated need for the extra billion or so the court could wind up ordering.

It's true, one consultant report found that kind of need. The Legislature looked at it, and decided the taxpayers couldn't afford it.

Some school officials were adamant that they needed more. Having lost in the Legislature, they sued the state, using \$2 million in state money to pay the legal fees.

Another study under way might come in higher, might come in lower. The state still wouldn't have the money.

And the taxpayers still couldn't afford it.

That's the missing link. What the taxpayers want.

What people can afford.

And right now, the tax-and-spend crowd, led by the Supreme Court, is in the driver's seat.

Kansas taxpayers can expect to have their pockets picked over the next couple of years.

They should remember who is in charge. And who paid the bill for all this.

— Steve Haynes

Savor, save recipes from Mom

If your mother is still living, stop. Take a moment to call her and find out how she makes a particular dish you especially like. You won't regret it.

Yesterday, a friend at church brought what looked like a bushel of fresh zucchini and garden lettuce to church. "Help yourselves," he and his wife both said. They were even kind enough to provide grocery sacks.

I know I took our share. The thoughts of fried zucchini and wilted lettuce danced in my head.

But later, staring at a sink full of crispy lettuce leaves, thoughts of "Now, how did Mom make wilted lettuce?" bounced around in my noggin.

I remembered bacon was involved and there was something about vinegar and sugar, but quantities and sequences were fuzzy. A call to my friend Dee left me with another good recipe, but it wasn't quite what I remembered.

Maybe Donna Kelley, my brother Dick's wife, would know. Sure enough, she said her mother made it the same way my mom did. They fried some bacon in a skillet, removed it and crumbled it for later;



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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added salt and pepper, sugar and vinegar to the pan and cooked it down some. That's right. I remember now.

Here is where Donna said she parted ways with our mothers' techniques. Her mom and mine both put the lettuce in the skillet, tossed and stirred and covered until it was wilted. They added the bacon at the last. Donna said she puts the lettuce and chopped green onion in a bowl and pours the hot mixture over. It practically wilts before your eyes.

Either way, it's sure good eatin'. So call your mother. Don't let those old recipes be lost. *Bon appetit.*

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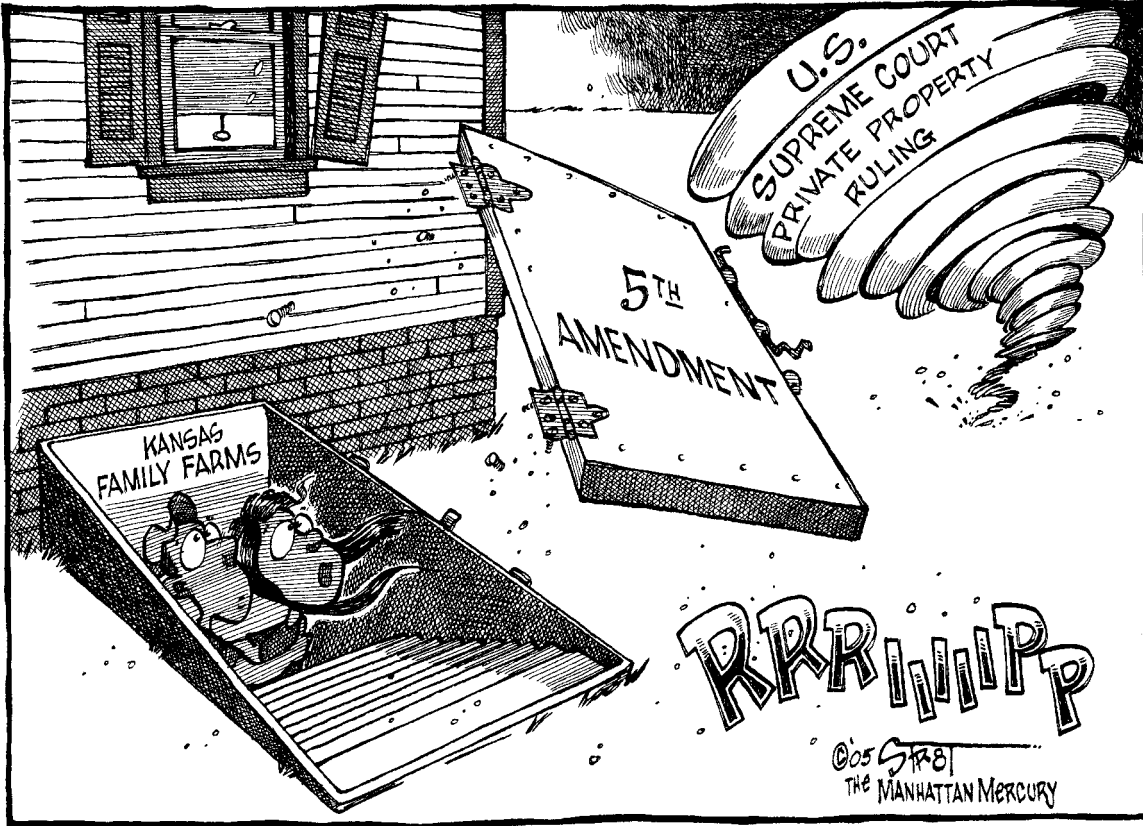
Our 10-year-old granddaughter, Alexandria, was on a swim team this summer. She finished her season with several medals and the satisfac-

tion of knowing she got better each time she competed. We got to go to one of her closer competitions and could see why she thought it was so much fun.

Team mothers arrived at the pool early to stake out the best site. Tents and canopies went up, coolers came out, food appeared and the day-long party began. Kids in goggles, rubber swim caps and matching suits dashed in and out. Someone had always lost a towel or sandals.

A loudspeaker announced upcoming events and mothers would frantically urge a dawdling child to, "Hurry up. You're going to miss your race."

Besides watching Alex, we had as much fun watching all the other people.



Ah! The melody of summertime

We call him Toady. It's not very imaginative, but it fits him.

He lives under a bush near the garage during the day, and at night he hops out to catch his supper by the lights we have up on the garage.

He started out small, but he's growing. With the population of bugs around the garage, this toad could grow to monumental proportions.

We have to watch him pretty carefully, however, because he's hopped into the garage several times when we've gone in to get dog food, charcoal or a screwdriver.

We always chase him out because, while there's plenty of bugs in the garage, it would get too hot for him the next day and we like him like he is — big, fat and warty. By toad standards, he's a beaut.

It seems that every summer we get new pets.

Other people adopt cats and dogs; we gather toads, turtles and spiders.

And speaking of spiders, we have a lovely one living on the side of the back deck. Every night, she spins a beautiful web, and when we're home, we watch her at her work.

There are a half dozen wolf spiders making webs on the grass. I was worried that when Steve mowed he would destroy them. He said that when he mows, though, they would



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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be near the ground and would just rebuild their webs that night.

I'm glad I'm not a spider — they're busier than ants. At least an ant doesn't have to rebuild its home every night.

Every night as we go for our walk, we listen to the night sounds and watch the fireflies.

Steve is especially glad that the cicadas have come out.

I like the crickets, but Jiminy seems to have set up shop in my kitchen, and can he sing! I'm getting night sounds at all times of the day, and I don't even have to be outside.

We heard a woodpecker last night as we meandered down the street and the sounds of boys whispering and girls giggling. A whole tribe of teens were on the back of a flatbed truck parked at the curb. There was a shriek as the dog bulleted past and then some cheery comments as we walked by at a more leisurely pace. "She scared me," one girl said

with a shy giggle. "She's really fast," a boy noted.

As we ambled on down the road, they resumed chatting with each other and we smiled in the dark.

It's summer, and a good time for an evening walk.

From the Bible

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. Deuteronomy 22: 1, 2

How will we ever pay this bill?

By January, the Kansas Legislature will be looking for ways to help pay for higher school spending.

The House and Senate, kicking and screaming all the way, put up almost \$286 million more for schools this year. No one knows for sure how the state will pay this bill.

The governor wants to add casinos and slot machines, but most estimates don't show that bringing in enough to satisfy the court.

Plus, a lot of backward-thinking Kansans just don't want a new casino on every block. Something about moral values and gambling, people who can't afford it losing their shirts, petty stuff like that.

But we already have gambling, at the corner bar, out at the race track, at Indian casinos. Morality's not the point. It's revenue we need, and lots of it.

It's just that slots and roulette wheels and crap tables wouldn't bring in enough bucks.

What's the poor state to do?

Here's a modest proposal:

Let's legalize prostitution.

Well, let's don't call it that. The churches won't like it. There'd be pickets out front, people taking pictures to send to your wife, you name it.

Let's call it sexually oriented lei-



Along the Sappa

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sure activity.

Make it local option, so communities could decide whether to opt in or opt out of the pleasure game.

Dodge City, which has quite a history, and which is hot for a casino or two, might be a good place to start.

An establishment called "Miss Kitty's" would be popular. Tourists could stop by for a sarsaparilla and a little entertainment, a quick trip upstairs, maybe a soak in the hot tub. All the bartenders and all the girls would wear period costumes. They could watch "Gunsmoke" reruns for hints on how to act.

Tax revenues should be spectacular. The state would never lack for money again, at least until nearby states caught on to the revenue potential.

The cities probably would want a cut. Wichita and Kansas City wouldn't mind having a house or two, I'd suppose. Some towns, of

course, might want to just stay out.

If the idea takes off, we might be able to find a use for all the abandoned school buildings out here in western Kansas. Instead of mail-order houses and flea markets, they could be ... well, you get the idea.

Recreation is a good, clean industry which can provide a lot of jobs, create cash flow and generate tax money like crazy. Workers would move to town. Their kids would fill the schools.

And if other states get into this, like they have with casinos, and the competition gets too tough, then Kansas could look around for still another opportunity.

Drugs, maybe. Lots of money in that. You could tax the bejebbers out of drugs.

And since the money would be for schools, it'd all be for a good cause, right?

Reader suggests Oberlin for casino

To the Editor:

Can we as a county and communities work collectively to determine our own destiny?

For many years, I have heard "we could have had," "we should have had" or "we tried that and it did not work." How can we move forward if we are always looking in the rear view mirror?

Our Kansas governor is trying to put in place gaming legislation that would allow for three destination resort casinos to be built in the state of Kansas. Why not Oberlin?

The east and northeast have casinos that compete with each other. We need something here to create jobs, and Oberlin is a perfect spot for one of the destination casinos.

The casino would create about 1,000-plus jobs with the median age being 36. Imagine how that would allow our county and surrounding areas to survive. Ponder for a moment the amount of kids it would put in our schools, and people in our

Letter to the Editor

community to utilize our businesses, medical facilities and churches.

The bill allocates 4 percent of gaming revenues to local jurisdictions. This could total as much as \$10 million dollars a year for each destination resort casino. Statewide, local governments could realize more than \$40 million a year. This money can allow the local governments to reduce property taxes, develop needed infrastructure or provide social services.

I would like to see all the residents of Decatur County work together on this. The letter I received in regard to Oberlin being a potential site is available at the Chamber of Commerce office. Please, pick one up and make two phone calls. Let our elected legislators, Sen.

Ralph Ostmeyer at (785) 296-7399, and State Rep. John Faber at (785) 296-7500, hear from you so our region can be included in the gaming bill. Two phone calls from each of our county residents just might create the golden opportunity we need to survive and prosper.

The key to all of this is that for once, we all need to work together. Oberlin is the perfect choice; let us convince Topeka of that. Please make the calls.

Shayla Williby Oberlin

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