

Schools need money, but so do other projects

In Topeka, everyone is set to throw another \$400 million into education to satisfy the Supreme Court, which is running the show.

Absolutely no one knows where the money will come from.

The state's economy is growing, but only at about half the national pace. It might produce that kind of money over a couple of years.

Or it might not.

Right now, the only way to get the money would be to raise taxes. In an election year, that's not likely.

Meantime, colleges languish as tuition soars.

Tougher new drug laws will send thousands more to prisons already full of minor drug offenders.

And we'll need to build more prisons.

A legislative report outlines how much the state will have to spend to boost school performance and meet the federal "No Child Left Behind" goals — up to \$400 million a year.

While the courts demand action, they're silent on where the money should come from.

Funny thing, though. Kansas schools are, by all accounts, doing quite well. Test scores are high. Most students graduate.

What is the problem?

Imbalance between districts rich and poor, big and small. The have-nots are never willing to let this dog lie.

However the current fight is settled, it seems certain that the dispute will go on for years. It has been going on, in fact, nearly since the state took over school finance forty-some years ago.

None of the goals, desires, suggestions and mandates in the Legislative Post Audit report is a bad idea, in and of itself.

The question we ought to be asking, along with "what do schools need," is "what can Kansas afford?"

Like any family or business, the state has only so much money. It has many needs, and schools are just one of them.

Like any family or business, the state needs to make some decisions about what to spend money on, what to put off and what it just can't afford.

It's the Legislature that must do that, not the courts.

Maybe we can't afford a "perfect" education system, not when highways, prisons, colleges and parks go wanting.

It's going to be an interesting year.

— Steve Haynes

Let local boards run schools

One thing no one is talking about, in all the anguished chatter about Kansas schools, is the one thing that might make them more innovative, more interesting, more successful and more adaptive.

And that is letting school boards and school administrators actually run their schools.

All sides in the school debate, in fact, want more control over local schools, not less. There is no "liberal" or "conservative" side here, only diverse groups, each of which thinks it knows how to run our schools better than we do.

As in most arguments where everyone "knows" the one and only right answer, it's likely that no one does.

In America, we're supposed to value diversity, but no one really believes all that hokey. "Just do it my way!" they cry.

The tax-and-spend crowd is sure the schools need more money. They want to shower schools with money with so many strings attached that every district will have to restructure, often cutting instruction budgets painfully, to spend it.

The so-called conservatives want to protect "traditional values," but their agenda is to dictate their religion, their social values, their idea of law and order to everyone through the schools.

Administrators at the so-called "medium" schools, typified by Salina and Dodge City, see surrounding rural districts getting more money for each student, and it galls them. The smaller districts, often in the same county, lack the crime and security problems that bedevil big schools. Parents often see them as a haven from drugs and violence, and send their students there.

And boy do the bigger districts hate that, especially when the state pays those smaller districts more



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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under the "low-enrollment weighting" formula than their home school would get to educate them.

The so-called conservatives say they want "competition" in schools, but where there is competition, schools — at least those on the losing end — hate it.

Then there's the "No Child Left Behind" Act, President Bush's big education initiative that declares that every child must be made competent in basic skills, though that is impossible.

The law sets expensive goals for local schools without providing any money to meet them. States are supposed to find the cash. For a supposedly conservative Republican administration, it's a remarkable intrusion into local affairs.

The theme that runs through all these things is more control at the top and less for school boards and superintendents. We have bright and capable people in charge of our schools, but because all sides think they know what is best, all want to dictate how schools are run.

Where are the classical liberals

who value constitutional rights and individual thought? The conservatives who put liberty and freedom of expression above all else? The budget-minding fiscal conservatives who want to see the best education for the least expense?

Gone, apparently, replaced by dictatorial types who issue mandates on a whim.

The competition idea might just be the key. Schools that produce better scores, a better environment and better learning, experience shows, will draw more students. They will get more money.

There's nothing wrong with that. It works. It promotes innovation and experimentation, and it promotes success.

It also draws the ire of the losers, if the whole sorry Kansas lawsuit experience is any measure. Be successful, and smaller, and your mediocre opponents will crush you like dust.

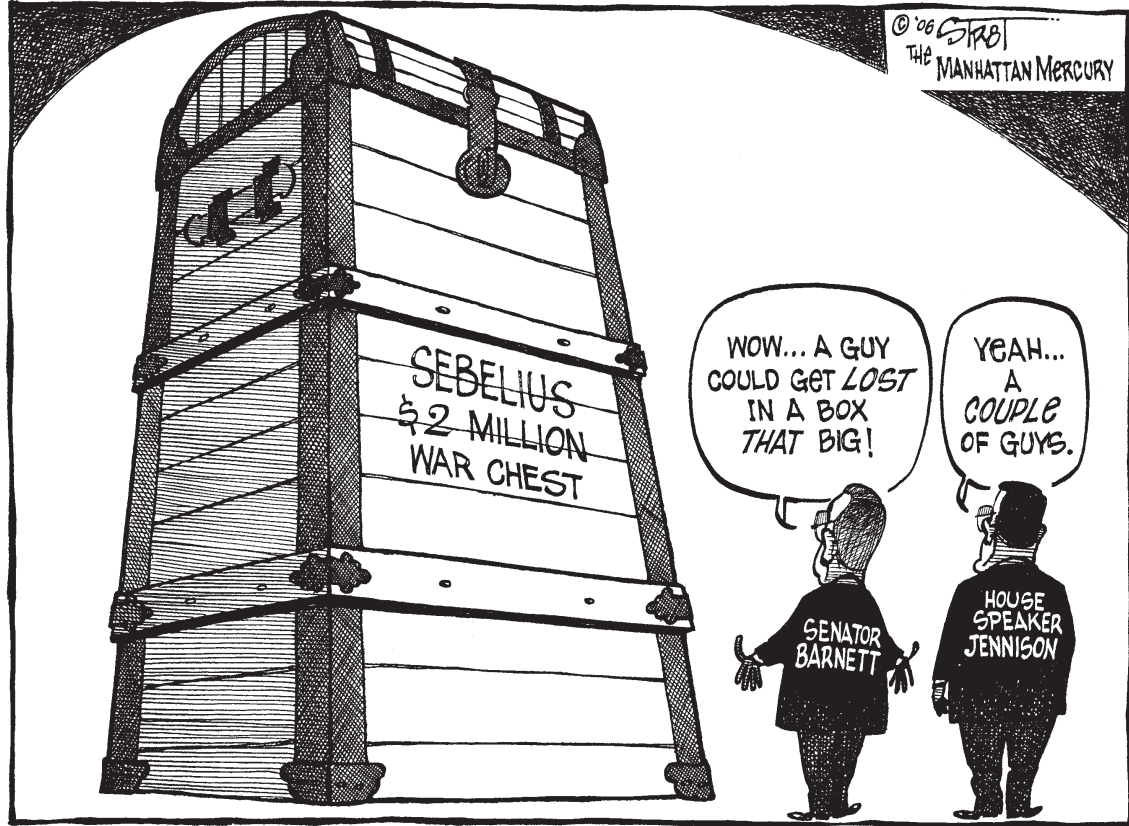
So much for diversity.
Get out the checkbook.
And the cookie cutters.

Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:

Oberlin: Jeff Magers, Donald Anderson, Tim Stallman, Dean Groneweg, Gary Orr, Terry Rush,

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Coat, purse zippers cause trouble



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Zippers are wonderful little devices, but they've started to fight back.

Now, I'm not talking about the proverbial joke about the barn door being open. This happens to both men and women these days, and most of us can take care of that little problem with a rueful smile and a little laugh of chagrin.

My problem is zippers in other areas.

The first was on my purse.

Actually, my purse has two zippers and a snap. The main compartment and the space where I keep money have zippers and the compartment where I keep my driver's license and credit cards has a snap.

One day, I paid for a small item at the grocery, put the change back into the money compartment and zipped it. As I was picking up my grocery bag, I noticed the money compartment was not zipped. So I zipped it. It still wasn't zipped. Running the zipper back and forth only resulted in frustration.

So far my money hasn't fallen out. I've moved the bills to another compartment and try to keep the purse upright to keep dimes and nickels from spilling everywhere, but I guess it's time to get a new purse.

Dang, I hate changing purses. I hate shopping for purses almost as much as I hate shoe shopping. It's

unfeminine, I know, but I don't like doing either.

Two days later, I was preparing to go home from work.

I put on my coat and started to zip it up. The zipper got halfway up and stuck. I looked down to see the zipper in the middle of the coat with the top and bottom undone.

Oh, I hate that! It's almost impossible to get the zipper back down, and when you do, it usually closes the unclosed section of zipper.

In this case I struggled and muttered and argued with my coat (out loud) until the zipper was down.

My coworkers were practically rolling on the floor. They thought it was hilarious that I was not only arguing with my coat, but losing that argument.

Two days later, I put a piece of tape over the zipper tab. I had twice grabbed my coat and tried to zip it with the same disastrous consequences as before. I was getting tired

of the coat winning all our arguments.

This is why when you see me walking along and its 20 degrees, I'm grabbing the front of my coat. I'm waiting for the spring coat sales.

My grandmother always said trouble comes in threes and sevens. I figured that was because you just waited for the third shoe to drop and then wondered who the heck was living upstairs.

Well, my third zipper isn't dead, but its pull is stuck sideways, making it hard to operate.

The third zipper is on a house shoe, however. If it breaks, the shoes are headed for the dump. I have a spare pair.

I suppose I should get a purse and a coat, but that just seems like too much trouble.

If you need me, just follow the trail of dimes and nickels to the crazy lady hanging on to both sides of her coat.

Broncos' loss causes sorrow



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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It was a sad day at our house Sunday, as Jim's beloved professional football team went down in defeat. We watched with friends who were equally passionate about "our" team. We were all disappointed.

But, the one benefit maturity has is to put things in perspective. A few years ago, Jim might have been devastated by the loss. Now he philosophically says, "Oh, well. They played a good game. Maybe next year. What's for supper?"

—ob—

Sunday marked the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision that endorsed legalized abortion in the United States. A speaker at our church shared how many million babies have been aborted since then.

She is involved with an organization here in western Kansas (www.rachelsvineyard.org) that helps women, and men, deal with the emotional damage they have suffered from an abortion.

No matter what side of the issue you stand on, you have to have compassion for the people affected.

—ob—

"Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, hola, and adios" are about the extent of my Spanish. However, that

is about to change. Jim and I are finally doing what we have threatened to do for several years now. We enrolled in a Spanish class last week and are busy drilling each other on how to say, "Where do you live, how old are you and what is your name?"

I still remember a few nouns from high school Spanish, but conjugating verbs was my bane then, and probably will be once again. That's not necessarily a self-fulfilling prophecy. I didn't understand past perfect, pluperfect and predicates in 1961, and I sure don't understand them now. I am, however, trusting that our teacher can help me see the light.

We have two motivating factors that led us to sign up for this class. First, we would like to be more conversant when we go to Mexico, and

second, we want to be able to relate more to the Hispanic men we meet in our prison ministry.

Friday night during our class at the local correctional facility, I tried out a phrase on one of the bilingual men. I asked him his name, and he said, "Muy bueno," so I'm trusting it was all right. Otherwise, his parents had a weird sense of humor and named him Very Good.

From the Bible

I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Jeremiah 17:10

Writer against intelligent design

To the Editor:

The Vatican recently reaffirmed its support for evolution, saying that "Intelligent design does not belong to science and there is no justification for the demand it be taught as a scientific theory alongside the Darwinian explanation." (1)

For students of theology, this rejection of intelligent design should not be much of a surprise. In 1943, Pope Pius XII's Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* on biblical studies stated: "For the ancient peoples of the East, in order to express their ideas, did not always employ those forms or kinds of speech which we use today; but rather those used by the men of their time and centuries." (2)

The Bible was not written to be a scientific document. Unfortunately, the proponents of intelligent design want to introduce their interpretation as a scientific fact. To scientifically test an expression of faith is not only impossible, it is also wrong.

The Bible can stand alone. It does not need scientific justification. At-

Letter to the Editor

tempts to provide that justification are misguided. A holy and most powerful God who could breathe life into dry bones can most certainly use a process we called evolution to do the same thing.

Any vain attempt to scientifically prove statements of faith can only place a barrier between people and Christ. As St. Paul wrote in the epistle to the Romans, "Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another." (Romans 14:13)

Intelligent design is an unnecessary stumbling block that undermines the spread of Christianity. We are saved by God's grace and not by human interpretation of His word. Tim Peterson
2015 Cedar Crest Monument

(1) <http://today.reuters.com/news/newsArticleSearch.aspx?storyID=203529>
(2) "Reading the Old Testament" by Lawrence Boadt, 1984, page 13.

Write

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