

Courts should step out of school finance fiasco

It's time for the Kansas courts to step out of the school finance controversy and let things settle down.

The Kansas Supreme Court has scheduled arguments later this month on the latest round in the school-money fiasco. No decision is likely until July, leaving school districts unable to draw up their budgets.

This just can't go on every year. The Legislature has thrown pretty much every dollar it has at the school finance "crisis." There isn't any more to give, not without robbing other state programs or the taxpayers.

It's not possible to draw up a school finance plan that will please every parent, every district and every administrator. Someone will be unhappy, whatever the Legislature does.

And someone will sue, even after the current lawsuit is settled. They always do, because in recent years, the courts have encouraged them.

It gives the judges more power and increases their influence when they take on cases like this. It's not what courts were intended for, though.

Under the state Constitution, the Legislature is supposed to set taxes and raise money. The Legislature is supposed to decide how that money is spent.

That's because we elect the Legislature, and its members are responsible to us, the voters. Judges are not. They are in office under what amounts to life appointments.

There's a reason the framers wanted those

with the power to tax and spend under the people's thumb: When you split that power from the vote, it quickly becomes abusive.

Kansans have shown again and again that they do not want higher taxes, yet state spending has more than quadrupled (in real dollars, adjusted for inflation) in 40 years.

Without a tax increase, there is only so much money. Every surplus penny in recent years has gone to schools, leaving colleges, roads and other programs to starve. Parents are forced to pay the price in higher tuition, while drivers find more bumps and fewer new roads.

The courts need to remember their place. Even though some groups may not be happy with the way the state's pie is divided, the Legislature has the power to tax, and the right and the responsibility to divide the income.

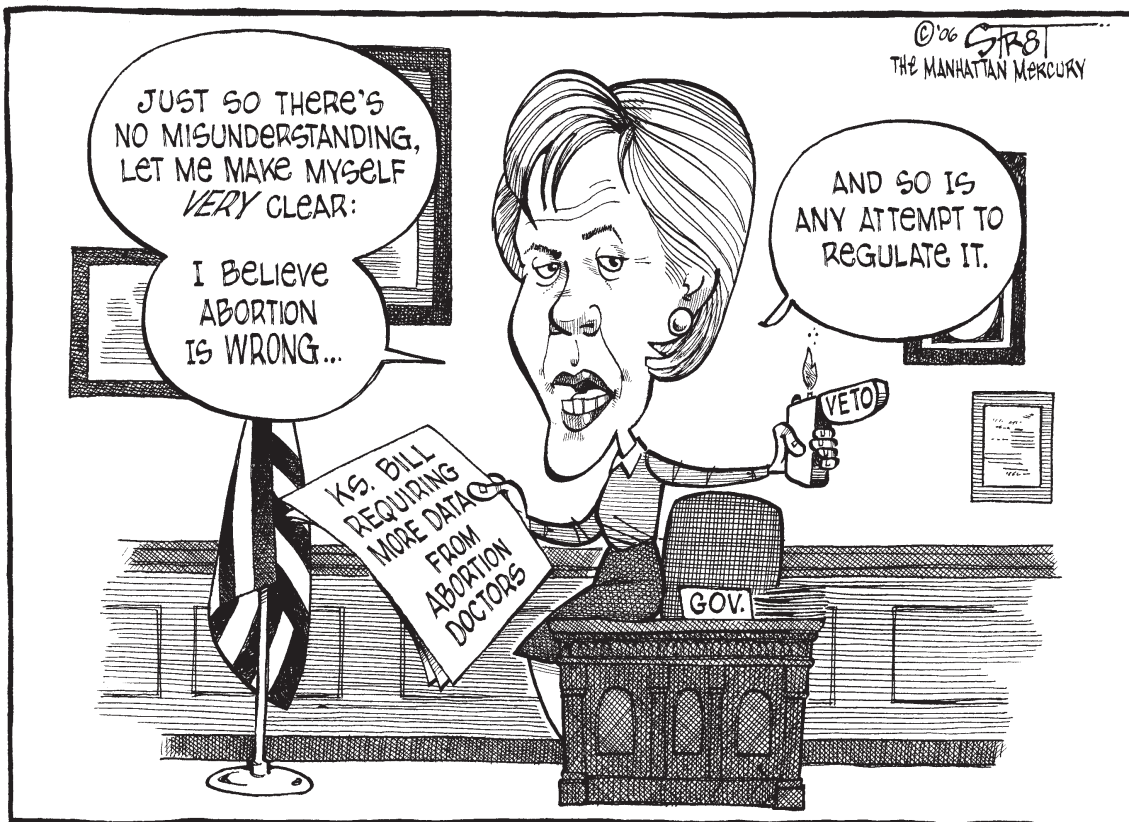
If some groups — a few school districts, or a few parents — don't like the result, they can go the Legislature and push for more. They can campaign for candidates who promise more. That's our system.

Even if you believe schools deserve more, though, it's wrong for the unelected courts to take power and make that decision.

It's time to put our system back in order. If the courts won't let that happen, then we need to change the way judges are chosen and retained.

The taxpayers can't raise more money just because an elite few, even an elite few judges, want it done. We have to go out and earn it.

— Steve Haynes



Live bed warmer found in attic

It's been a week of cats, weasels and snakes.

The week started out badly when April Alice disappeared.

Sometimes, some of our many felines spend the night outside. That's their choice, and I don't really care.

April Alice, the yellow tabby, however, loves to sleep with us. She heads upstairs as soon as she sees us getting ready to go after dinner. In our sitting room, she sits on my lap or lounges on the floor until I get up to go to bed, then she heads for the covers.

She sleeps at my back until Steve comes to bed, then moves over to the other side of me. There she stays until I get up. As soon as she's had a quick trip outside, though, she heads back to bed with Steve until he gets up.

So when she wasn't in bed and nowhere to be found the next morning, we started to worry.

I checked every closet and cupboard, knowing all cats love to explore small, dark spaces. No luck, and no April Alice.

I thought about the neighbor's garage, where Molly Monster got caught twice last year. However, the neighbors were home so there was no reason to suppose a cat was trapped in their garage.

I decided to ask them to keep an eye out anyway.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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She suggested we look around. She had been hearing a cat crying, but since the garage doors had been open, knew it couldn't be trapped.

We listened and looked. April Alice was in the attic of the garage. She was complaining like crazy, but could easily have walked down the stairway and out the open door. She was just being difficult. Still, it was good to have my bed warmer back.

The next day we met a ferret named Maxine, Max for short. She visited the office with her people, the Smiths. She was a friendly little critter and weaseled her way around the furniture, trying to make friends with Tigger, the office cat. Maxine may have been the world's friendliest ferret, but Tigger was having no part of her.

Later we went to Sappa Park to take the dog for a walk.

Annie loves to romp up the road, investigating every bush, tree and clump of grass. She also wanted to investigate the smashed snake on

the road. We vetoed that idea. She was scarring the flies, dozens of them. Ick.

We also vetoed her idea to investigate the very live snake coiled up in the grass next to the road.

There was a loud rattling sound and the dog jumped back. She tried to move back in, but Steve called her off.

As I held the dog, Steve investigated the angry rattling snake in the grass. It turned out to be a seven-foot bull snake making like a big, mean rattlesnake. I thought he was doing a pretty good imitation, but Steve saw through the masquerade.

We still decided that Annie didn't need to get a closer look. She's supposed to be a bird dog, not a snake, mouse and rabbit-chasing dog. We just have to convince her of that.

But, since the only birds we saw were buzzards and meadowlarks, she'll have to wait a little longer. Maybe by fall, she'll have that bird dog thing down.

Maybe.

Bible still withstands criticism

Jim and I are on the board for the hospitality house we operate in Norton for inmate's families.

As a fund raiser, we are planning an auction and are soliciting donations. That, of course, means we're looking around our own house for stuff to donate.

Jim asked me if I would like to get rid of a stair-stepper exercise machine that has been gathering dust for a couple of years. I said, "No, I think it would be kind of neat for us to have our own little workout gym in the basement of the house."

He said, "I think I'm going to be your workout Jim." And, then in what I perceived as a somewhat mocking tone, went on, "Work out here, Jim. Work out there, Jim. Work out everywhere, Jim."

—ob—

There's a huge hubbub going on right now over the movie, "The Da Vinci Code." I've watched the previews; I've listened to Gene Shalit and other critics; I've seen the actors and the author interviewed; and I'm still confused. One thing I am sure of: the Bible can withstand Hollywood's best efforts to discredit it.

Modern critics have nothing new to add to what has already been said. The Bible has been assailed for 2,000 years and it has withstood the opposition. It always has been and will continue to be the No. 1 bestseller. It's still here, and its opponents are gone.

The biggest danger is that uneducated people will see the movie and come away saying, "So, that's the way it really is." The best thing people can do is to actually get their



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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Bible down from the shelf, dust it off and study it.

I considered not going to see the movie, but have since decided that I can't say anything about it if I haven't seen it. Besides, my boycott wouldn't make Ron Howard stop and say, "Oh, my, Carolyn Plotts didn't come see my movie." My \$6 ticket won't make or break Hollywood.

—ob—

Last week, my oldest daughter, Halley, made the move to Dallas. Her sister, Kara, flew to Washington to help her move. The plan was to fit all they could in Halley's pickup. The rest she would leave.

I called them on moving day to ask how they were doing. Halley said, "Mom, we were born for this. The packing gene we inherited from Grandma Kelley is awesome."

The only thing they couldn't fit on the truck was Halley's cowboy hat (which she mailed to herself in Dallas) and one small box of books.

The "packing gene," however, did not include the "tarping gene," and they had some trouble keeping the load covered and protected from the rain they encountered several times along the way.

Kara said it got to the point where they would pull into a service station and say, "Hi, do you carry duct tape?"

From the Bible

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

Nahum 1: 7

Honor Roll

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

Julie Wurster, New Albany, Ohio; Dr. Shannon Addleman-

Gillund, Tinley Park, Ill.; Larry Nelson, Fredricksburg, Va.; Margaret Waldo, Roswell, N.M.; Frank Logan, Hanover, N.H.; and Dennis King, Chesapeake, Va.

Governor realigning parties

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius seems intent on remaking the political landscape of Kansas.

The governor returns again and again to the liberal side of the Republican party for recruits.

First, she named John Moore, a respected Wichita Republican and Cessna Aircraft executive, as her lieutenant governor.

She had Mike Hayden, the Atwood native and former Republican governor, continue as secretary of wildlife and parks. She held over Secretary Janet Schallansky at Social and Rehabilitation Services.

More lately, Sebelius and her Democratic party minions persuaded Paul Morrison, a Johnson County Republican and veteran district attorney, to switch parties and run against the conservative Phill Kline for attorney general.

Now she has named Mark Parkinson of Johnson County as her new running mate. Parkinson is a former Republican legislator and a former state Republican party chairman under Gov. Bill Graves.

What the governor aims at is nothing less than a realignment of Kansas politics, a return to the two party system. She might be doing us all a favor.

For decades now, Kansas has been dominated by an odd political system, more or less a three-party setup with the Democrats only occasionally a player.

The Legislature has been controlled by nominal Republicans for years. Most governors have been Republican. Only when the GOP could not produce decent candidates has the Democrat had a chance.

And then, only exceptional Democrats — the Dockings, father and



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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son; the maverick Joan Finney; the able and appealing Ms. Sebelius — have made the grade.

Because you had to be a Republican to play the game, many young politicians joined the GOP who in other states would have been Democrats. Mark Parkinson and Mike Hayden might just fall into that crowd, but they are legion.

The result was to reinforce the political paradigm: If everyone, liberal or conservative, became a Republican, then there was no future for the Democrats. There were so few of them in Topeka that no one paid any attention, save political reporters seeking to balance a story with a quote or two.

The liberal Republicans — euphemistically referred to as "moderates" in most news stories — have fought with conservatives in the way Republicans and Democrats fight in other states. Both groups allied with the minority Democrats when it suited their purposes. Each has had some success controlling the Legislature, but the liberals have produced more governors.

All that may be about to change.

No one should underestimate Kathleen Sebelius. This woman grew up in the Ohio governor's mansion. She has an outstanding political mind. Popular and virtually assured of a second term, she has

moved to seize the high ground and, perhaps, change the Kansas political landscape for all time.

If she succeeds in drawing off even part of the liberal Republican voters, making them Democrats or even independents, she might just restore the two-party system. And in doing so, she might restore a more "normal" look to Kansas politics.

Freed of its left wing, the Republican party could represent its core constituency, people who believe in economic freedom, smaller government, lower taxes and traditional values.

Both parties would have to play to the middle to win, of course, and it's not likely there would be a clear-cut victory for liberals or conservatives. Extremists on either side would stand little chance of becoming governor.

But Kansans would have a clear choice between parties, rather than dealing with a bloated, but divided, GOP.

It's the liberal Republican vote that elected Kathleen Sebelius last time, and the same voters will return her to office. The question is, can she and her party make the transition from one-time success to a permanent change?

The betting is, she'll have four more years to work on it.

Why weren't classes recognized?

To the Editor:

Thank you for recognizing the anniversary classes in bold print in your article covering the Alumni Banquet in last week's paper. I was very disappointed that the anniversary classes were not recognized at the banquet.

Perhaps the powers that be didn't realize that without the anniversary classes, they would not have much of a banquet. They did have a roll call, which was meaningless. I believe that a roll call requires a reply

if present and calling and recognizing the anniversary classes would not have taken as long as reading all the years present.

I sincerely hope that the future officers will consider reinstating a roll call of anniversary classes at future banquets and having them stand and be recognized.

Letter to the Editor

See you in five years.

Dwayne Jones
Class of 1946
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