

Group refuses to show how school money spent

The arrogance of the group which keeps suing to force Kansas to spend more and more money on schools apparently knows no bounds.

The group, which calls itself Schools for Fair Funding, has been suing the state for seven years. The case finally ended last week when the state Supreme Court said the Legislature had put enough money into schools to comply with its orders.

The court invited the schools to sue again, though, and the group's lead lawyer, Alan Rupe, is making noises about another case.

The group got nearly all its money from 18 school districts, which in turn got it from the state they are suing. In effect, the state had to pay for both sides of the lawsuit against it.

When Kansas newspapers asked, though, Mr. Rupe refused to say how he spent more than \$2 million in tax money.

The *Topeka Capital-Journal* asked for an accounting, claiming the group falls under the state Open Records Act since its all tax money.

Mr. Rupe offered to list where the money came from, but refused to say how it had been spent.

At least one Kansas editor, Tom Bell writing in the *Salina Journal*, commented that made him wonder just what they had spent the money on. Why wouldn't they want taxpayers to know? What do the school lawyers have to hide?

"I think they're playing hide-and-seek with the money," said Mike Merriam, a Topeka

First Amendment lawyer who filed the suit for the *Capital-Journal*. "What the ... public needs to know is how the school districts are spending money through this corporation."

It's bad enough that school districts spend taxpayer dollars to try to get more money — legislators have been grumbling about their heavy spending on lobbying for years — but the constant, expensive lawsuits are an insult to those of us who have to pay for them.

Voters essentially have no say in this process — the schools and the judges have taken school finance decisions out of our hands and put them in the courts, where those who pay the bills have little influence.

We're entitled to an accounting of how our money is being spent by this group and by the school districts that contributed to the suit.

Are the lawyers spending it on fancy dinners and greens fees? Trips out of state? Private ventures?

No one knows. Taxpayer money should never be spent in secret. It must always be accounted for in the open.

And the dubious nature of this effort to squeeze more money out of the state through constant lawsuits only makes the matter worse.

Shame on you, Mr. Rupe. Shame.

What are you hiding? Tell the taxpayers what you did with their money, and do it now.

—Steve Haynes

Granddaughter just beautiful

I stand corrected. Our newest grandchild is not "cute" — she is "beautiful."

Our daughter Jennifer's best friend, Debra, has been by Jennifer's side ever since she moved back to San Antonio. Debra, who has a nursing background, has been invaluable, offering her advice and practical help. She is the one who informed us that the baby is more than just cute.

Little Aniston Paige was born last Thursday, three days after my birthday. They brought her home the next day. Gone are the days of a three- to four-day hospital stay.

When my mother was having babies, she said, new mothers were kept in bed for 10 days. By the time I was in the baby business, that had been reduced to three days. Now, our kids are in for 24 hours. By the time our grandchildren are having babies, they'll probably have a drive-through lane.

Excitement over a new baby stays the same, though. Every gas station attendant, every waitress, and every clerk at every stop we made on the trip down knows we have a new granddaughter, her name, her birthday and weight.

Babies are like a clean piece of paper. It's up to us what gets written on the page.

Our trip south included an overnight stop in Dallas with Taylor and her parents. They have a pool in the backyard and Taylor asked her dad to go swimming with her that night. He is a volunteer firefighter and had just finished a lengthy training session. He begged off, so I piped up,



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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"Taylor, G'ma will take you swimming. I brought my swimsuit."

She was excited to hear that and went back to her father for one last attempt. "Dad, G'ma is going to go swimming with me. Will you come with us?"

Again, he said, "Taylor, not right now."

Her reply came right back: "What? You don't want to be seen with a 59-year-old woman?"

—ob—

Jim has taken Aniston's big sister, Alexandria, out shopping. They were to make a short trip to a grocery store first for eggs, lemons and whipping cream. I have been making a new dessert called "angel pie" and I promised it for dinner this evening.

The recipe says it should "sit" for 12 hours. So far, it has never lasted more than one or two. Jim absolutely loves it. It's easy enough, but a little time consuming. When I make it for us, I don't even bother giving him one piece. I just load his plate with three. It saves me time on the return trips.

You have to like lemon, though. I made it for Adam and Kara and she said it made her jaws hurt, it was so "lemony."

—ob—

I feel guilty taking a whole week off from work. We are short-handed and one person's absence really makes a hardship on the others. One thing is for sure, though. My co-workers will get even with me when they take a week off.

Write

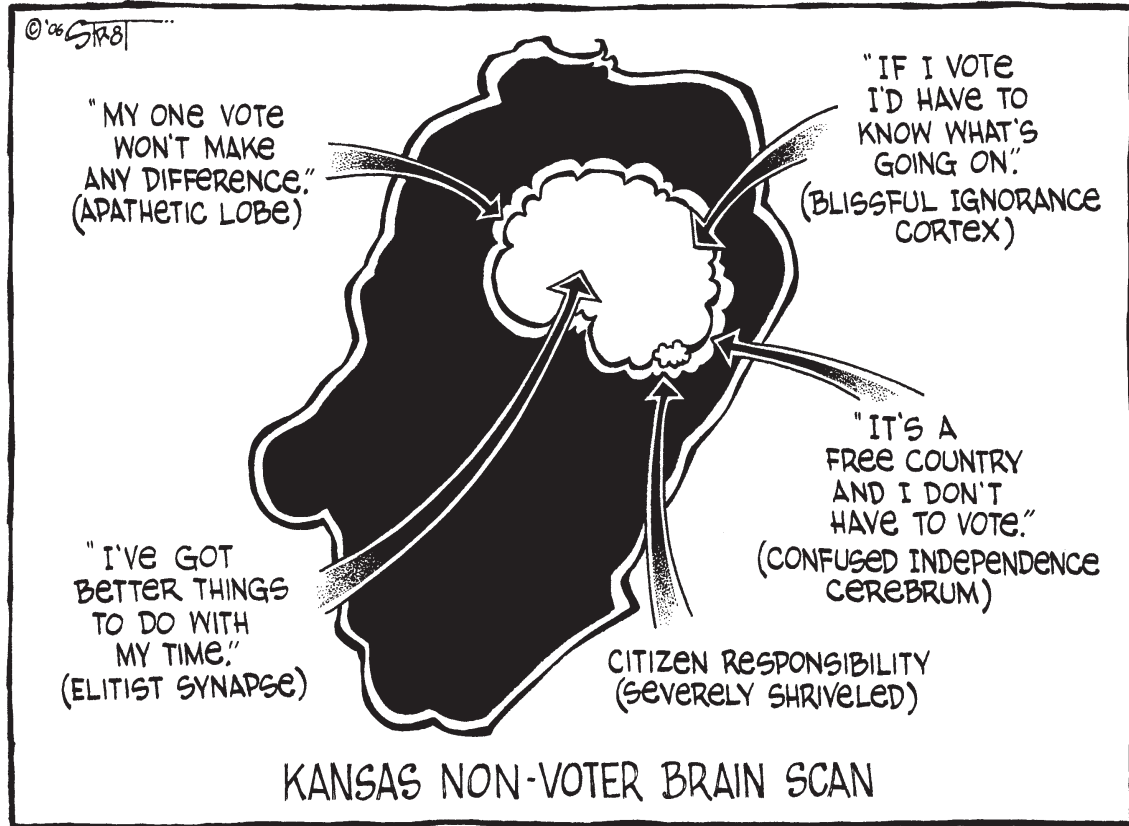
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We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous should go to the Want Ad desk.



Truck inadvertently borrowed

"Yep, we've had that truck for a couple of years, except for the time it was stolen," he said.

Stolen? It's a small town. We'd have known if this prominent citizen had had his truck stolen.

He could see the question in our eyes, so he grinned and explained.

It seemed a helper was taking a delivery to the nursing home and borrowed the boss' white truck. The delivery made, the helper came back out and got into white vehicle sitting at the curb — with the keys in the ignition — and drove back downtown and parked near the store.

When the boss went outside to go home, his truck was missing. He asked the helper, who said it had been parked in its regular place. He called the police.

It didn't take long for the officers to find his white truck, still parked in front of the nursing home.

The woman whose white car had been taken was still inside. She'd never realized her vehicle had been inadvertently "borrowed."

We all laughed about the mix-up but I had a guilty memory of getting into a white car more than once only to realize it wasn't my white car. Somehow, I figure, if it's white, a car and parked near where I should have parked, it's mine. Sometimes it is.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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Sometimes I jump out and hope nobody saw me.

I remember a similar thing happened with my parents back in Concordia when I was a teenager.

We had two copper-colored Buicks. They weren't identical but they were only a year apart and they were pretty similar.

One day Dad got into the new car and drove downtown to get a haircut. He had to park a block away and walk to the barber shop, which was a long way in Concordia.

Mom got into the older car and drove downtown to the city offices to pay the utility bill. It only took a few minutes, and when she came out she jumped into the copper-colored Buick at the curb and drove home, forgetting that she had parked around the corner.

Dad came out and his car was gone. He walked up and down the

three-block downtown — no car. He finally found the one Mom had driven downtown on the side street. He knew he hadn't parked it there, but drove it home anyway.

The missing car puzzle was sorted out at the supper table.

Now if I can just figure out why someone left their coffee cup in my car. Oops. Maybe, that's mine over there. It's white!

From the Bible

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

James 1: 2, 3

GOP writing off Hispanics?

You have to wonder whether the Republican party plans to marginalize itself or it just works out that way.

Despite six years of hard work by President George Bush and years before that in Texas and across the country, the Republicans are ready to write off the Hispanic vote forever.

The party is giving in to a wave of xenophobic anti-immigration fears, locking itself into positions that will brand it as anti-Hispanic and anti-immigrant for decades to come.

The Democrats are only too happy to sweep up those votes, clutching Mexican-American voters and other Hispanics to their bosom as they did the black vote in the 1960s.

We all know how that went. Even today, more than four decades later, the Republicans still get only a handful of African-American votes.

The city of it is, Mr. Bush, Karl Rove and their crew had this pretty well figured out. The president, as governor of Texas, knew how to talk to Hispanic voters. He speaks Spanish well enough to get his point across on the stump.

In Texas, you don't ignore the Hispanic vote. Increasingly, that's true across the country.

It's just good politics to include Hispanics. It's the right thing to do.



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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The immigration "crisis" is phony anyway. We're not being inundated by more workers than the economy can handle, no one comes here just to get on welfare, and no, there are not hundreds of terrorists streaming across the border, no matter what the scare-mongers claim.

The Republicans are shifting over to the thoughts of immigration nut cases like Congressman Tom Tancredo of Denver, who's talked about nothing else for years.

Even if we could build a wall clear across the continent, it wouldn't solve much.

Our economy would still need more workers. People in Mexico would still want to come here to make a living.

"But it's illegal to sneak across the border," someone will scream. "They're breaking the law."

They do that because there is no legal way for a Mexican worker to come to this country. The waiting list stretches for years. It's impos-

sible. All the rhetoric does is push Hispanics to the Democrats. Some of them have been in this country since the 1600s, longer than most Anglo families. Others came decades ago to work for railroads, mines and farms. Still more have come in recent years.

Those who stay — and many do go home — want to be Americans. They will vote. They will remember.

And make no mistake. They are not going to be voting Republican any time soon if this keeps up.

Still, the party seems ready to line up lemming-like and jump off the nearest political cliff.

It's stupid, foolish and wrong, but there you have it. A watershed in politics the likes of which comes along once or twice a century, a lost opportunity of immense proportions, a wrong that begs to be righted.

And probably won't.

Norton thanks firemen for help

Editor's Note: This letter was received by both the Norcat and Oberlin fire departments following a fire in Norton on Monday, July 24:

The City of Norton wants to express its utmost appreciation for your department's assistance in fighting the fire in downtown Norton on Monday. The city was very fortunate that nobody was injured in the fire, and the equipment and manpower which was provided through mutual aid was a key factor.

Letters to the Editor

The assistance that was provided from the surrounding communities was above expectations. Without the help from all of the volunteer firefighters, the city could have lost much more than two buildings. We are very grateful for the volunteers who went above and beyond all expectations in stopping the fire's advance.

Again, the Norton City Council, City Administration and Norton Fire Department appreciate all the mutual aid assistance you provided to our city. Thank you!

David N. Corns, mayor
City of Norton

Rep. Moran says vote law too much

To the Editor: Last month, this paper ran an editorial on the Help America Vote Act that Congress passed four years ago. This legislation was written in response to problems with Florida voters' ballots in the 2000 presidential election.

During my time in Congress, I have come to realize that when a specific problem or crisis captures

America's attention, the government tends to overreact and implement overreaching legislation without regard to the unintended consequences.

I did anticipate what would happen to small-town voters and was one of the 48 Members in the House of Representatives to vote no on this legislation.

This law is another example of the

federal government dictating burdensome requirements to state and local authorities. I agree with Mr. Haynes that this is "one more nail in the coffin of rural America." I do not believe in "one-size-fits-all" legislation and continue working hard to be the voice for rural America and, most importantly, Kansas.

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran
Haynes

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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, Norcat, 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, \$33 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$38 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$42 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in US dollars only) 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.)

