

Speed limit changes unwanted and outdated

Another great idea from those people back east who've never been west of Topeka:

Let's drop the speed limit on state freeways and expressways to 65 mph.

That idea came up in a list of ideas at a Kansas Energy Council meeting last week, though one member, state Sen. Janis Lee of Kensington, said that particular plan had no chance of passing in the Legislature.

It was in a laundry list of recommendations before the council for its annual report, but the idea probably came from someone who never ventured out of the eastern third of the state.

The council itself is heavily weighted toward the Kansas City-Topeka-Wichita axis, with only three members from the western half of the state. (Ken Frahm of Colby serves as co-chair, and Sen. Lee is one of two legislators from the west.)

The council staff estimated that dropping the speed limit on Interstates and expressways would increase fuel economy 7 to 23 percent and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Those estimates seem wildly optimistic at best. Twenty-three percent?

Roads affected would include the freeways, plus expressways such as U.S. 81 north of Salina.

The speed ban seems likely to get some traction, however, when you figure that most of those making the decision live in Kansas City or Topeka and seldom venture out into the hinterlands.

Many states east of Kansas still cling to 65 mph or lower speeds on Interstates, but distances are shorter and traffic heavier than out west.

We suffered under the yoke of similar do-

gooder thinking for a couple of decades after the "first" energy crisis, when gasoline prices soared over \$1 per gallon. Gasp.

Despite doubt, the council retained the idea on its agenda. Lt. Gov. Mark "I'm a Democrat now" Parkinson was quoted as saying, "I guess I'm going to vote for this just as a way of advancing the public discussion. Gas has never been \$4 a gallon before. We're in a different environment."

This newspaper stands for any legitimate way to reduce fuel consumption and oil imports. It's vital for our economy and our national security.

But we think it wrong to saddle westerners with this burden. Anyone who votes for it should be sentenced to drive to Goodland and back, nonstop.

Besides, conservation measures work best when they're voluntary. The speed-limit changes come coupled with a 50 percent increase in fines and a cut in the 10 mph "break" the law gives drivers before they get a moving violation to just 5 mph.

Estimates of how fast people are driving seem exaggerated as well. Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller said the average speed on highways posted for 70 mph was 78, and on two-lanes posted for 65 was 75.

When you're out there driving, say, 68 and 75, though, there just aren't that many people passing you.

This idea may be a nonstarter. We hope so.

But just to be sure, when the lieutenant governor next ventures out to Colby, we think he should leave the state plane behind and drive himself - both ways.

—Steve Haynes

Baby chicks create quandry

Before our granddaughter Taylor came for her summer stay, Jim "set" a laying hen in hopes of hatching baby chicks before she left.

It was Taylor's last day and still no hatchlings. The van was loaded and we were about to leave when Taylor asked if she could check for eggs "just one more time." We could hear her all the way in the house.

"G'ma! G'ma! There's baby chicks!"

Sure 'nuf, the old hen had come through. There, tucked under her wings, were four little yellow fluff balls, chirping their hearts out. Well, now what to do? Taylor hated to leave them, and we couldn't leave them in the nest alone. They would fall out and the rooster and other hens might not be as enamored with them as we were. There was also the matter of the remaining eggs that would be lost. We did the next best thing and called our friend Barbara to "chick-sit" for a few days while we were gone. With a cardboard box, a light bulb and some hard-boiled eggs to mash for food, the chicks were in good hands until our return.

It was late when we arrived home last Monday. Barbara brought the babies home the next day and, once again, the bathroom turned into a brooder house. The quartet had already grown significantly and seemed happy within the confines of their cardboard home.

The next day, as I was gather-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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ing eggs, I heard that distinctive sound of baby chicks. On closer inspection, I could see five new hatchlings in the nest. Not bad, since we had originally set ten eggs under her. Our flock had, effectively, doubled, but I was faced with the same dilemma as before: the need to separate the hen and her chicks from the older hens and rooster. Time to revitalize the brooder house Jim made last year where we raised the 26 chicks we brought home from the farm store.

Clean straw was spread, a watering bottle placed in the corner and chick mash filled the feeder. It was late before we were ready to make the switch from nest to brooder house, and I thought that would be the perfect time to reintroduce the hen to her first four offspring. The reunion went off without a hitch and she is happily cluck, cluck, clucking to her chicks; puffing up and acting threatening each time I check her and the little ones.

—ob—

School has started again. And I'm sure youngsters feel the same

way I do.

"Where did the summer go?"

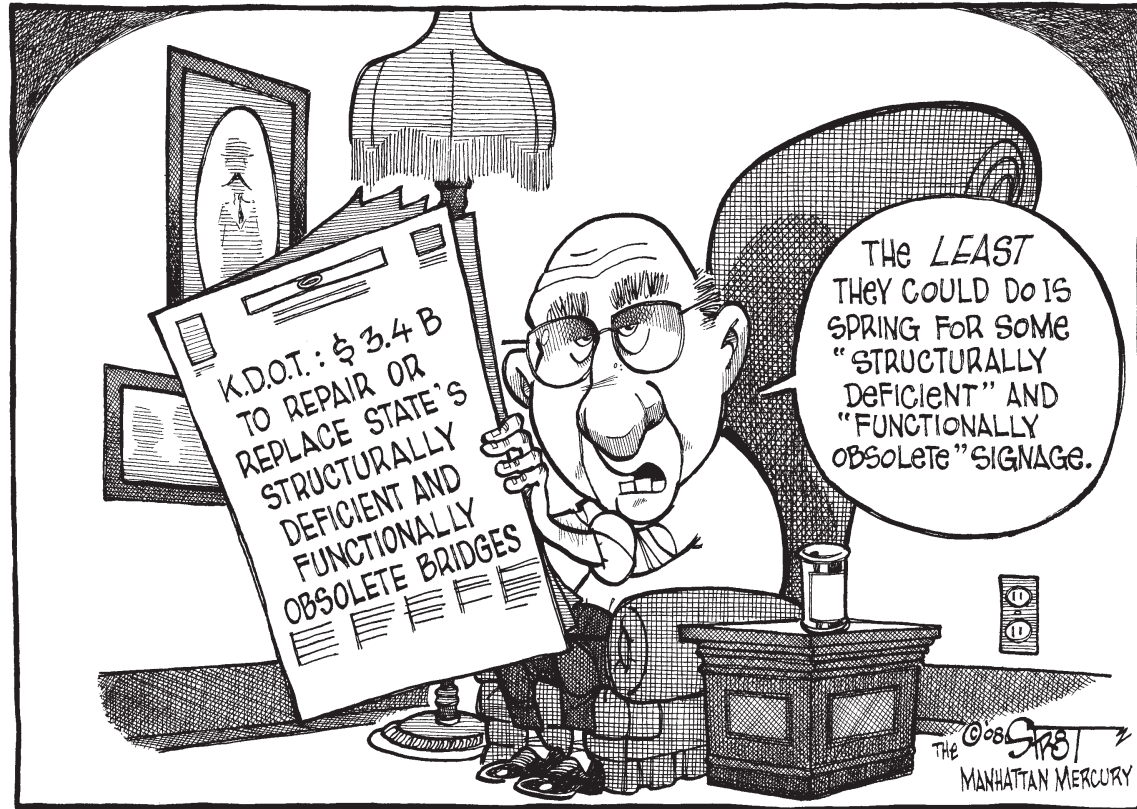
In May, the middle of August seemed worlds away, like a long, long road stretched out ahead of them. And now, it's no more late-night television. It's out of bed early and time to get ready for the bus or the walk to school.

Even home-schooling families have a routine to get back into. I really miss having kids in my house, but I'm also glad I don't have to go through that anymore. I can honestly say, "Been there, done that."

—ob—

Jim's dad continues the slow recovery process after losing his left leg as the result of a bizarre accident. He is in long-term care, where he receives plenty of attention and has daily physical therapy sessions.

All that points toward him getting back up on his good leg and resuming his independent lifestyle. He complains that the therapists are "killing" him, so we know it's working. It's going to be a long, hard road, but he's the only 91-year-old I know who could do it.



Cats will get your attention

I saw a cartoon last week depicting a cat's day. Each hour was shown in a tiny panel. Two panels showed the cat trying to wake up a sleeping human, two showed a food bowl and one showed a person's legs. The other 19 panels were black.

Being a cat person, I thought the cartoon was completely understandable, if not totally accurate.

Just last Saturday, April Alice decided that I was oversleeping, so she started to knead my chest at 7:30 a.m.

I was not amused. I gave her a shove and tried to turn over to go back to sleep. No such luck. When a cat really wants you up, you get up. Even if you got to bed at 1 a.m. and had hoped to catch up those lost zzzzs in the morning.

Now, I know lots of people who feed their cats twice a day. I don't. I don't even feed them once a day. I put out a huge bowl of cat food and check it about twice a week. When it gets low, I refill it. Yes, there have been a few times I've let it get completely empty, and let's just say, it wasn't pretty.

Now April Alice probably visits the food bowl a couple of times a day. Jezebel also is a once- or twice-a-day eater. Molly Monster, however, feels that she needs to be in constant communion with her source of nourishment.

Steve says he thinks she's bulimic. And, I have to admit there are a lot of times when she runs to the bowl, stuffs herself and then leaves a mess on the carpet.

The water bowl works in a similar



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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manner at our house. It is strategically placed near the sink so that I can fill it when needed. It has a handful of marbles in the bottom. When I spot a cat playing with a marble, I know I've forgotten to fill the water bowl.

The legs in the cartoon could mean either of two things.

"Pet me." Cats love to rub up against your legs. This is a signal that they will accept your homage and a good scratch.

"Oops! I was here first. Didn't you see me underfoot and just why are you lying there on the floor looking at me like that. No, I don't have fingers and I can't call 911."

The 19 panels of black represent sleep, which is what a cat does most of the time.

Actually, a cat doesn't sleep for long periods. The term cat nap seems accurate. A cat sleeps a lot in small intervals interspersed with movement — sometimes languid, sometimes frantic.

If you walk past a sleeping cat, it will generally open its eyes to look at you. That look is either annoyed, as in "Why are you bothering me?" or pitying, as in, "Poor thing. Can't you just relax and take a nap?"

Most of the time, if a human is in the horizontal position, a cat will feel it is its duty to lie as near to that human as possible. This is especially nice when the temperature is somewhere in the high 80s or 90s.

Which reminds me, Why do cats want to go outside when the thermometer hits 100 and refuse to go near the outdoors when it gets less than 50? They have fur coats. They should enjoy cool weather, not hot.

Oh, but in the winter, they find the hottest place in the house to sleep.

From the Bible

A man's pride shall bring him low; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.

The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Proverbs 29:23-25

House terrorists? No thanks!

Leavenworth as Gitmo West? What about Oberlin?

With increasing pressure on the administration to close the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, on a U.S. Naval reserve in Cuba, speculation arose that all or some of the prisoners from the "War on Terror" might wind up at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, a military prison outside of Leavenworth.

It's not been a popular idea in a state that usually welcomes new government jobs. Both Kansas senators spoke up against the plan, though the military never really proposed it.

Sen. Pat Roberts said the barracks lack the space and security features needed for high-risk inmates.

"We'd be placing Americans in harm's way," he said. "It would be a logistical nightmare, costing the taxpayer hundreds of million dollars to make Fort Leavenworth even partially compliant with standards at Guantanamo."

And, basically, that's true. The military basically built a new prison at the remote naval base, where escape would be next to impossible and visiting terrorists would stick out like a sore thumb.

The administration is in a bind, though, since the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the prisoners, classified as "illegal enemy



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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combatants," not as prisoners of war, can appeal to federal courts on their status.

As a practical matter, that means they'd have to be flown to a U.S. District Court on the mainland for hearings, or a judge would have to fly there. Either presents logistical problems, plus the Guantanamo base sits in the middle of a hostile foreign country.

Both presidential candidates have promised to close the Cuban location, so relocation for some of the prisoners is only a matter of time.

But what to do with them?

Only one has gone to trial. That man, a former driver for Osama bin Laden, got a five-year sentence, after which he'd presumably be released to go home. But many nations do not want these accused terrorists back, closing off one option. And American law might bar sending them anywhere they'd face torture or abuse, which includes most of the countries they come from.

If they are to be held in the U.S., they'd either have to be integrated into the regular prison system or the military system. But because of the possibility their friends might try to spring them, they pose a huge security risk.

And Leavenworth is the only maximum security site in the military prison system.

Which leaves the possibility of building a whole new prison somewhere to house these detainees, at least the ones convicted and sentenced to fixed terms.

Hum. Maybe Oberlin could offer the old youth ranch out at Sappa Park?

Or, remembering the problem with escapes the ranch used to have, maybe not.

Another suggestion was the Federal Penitentiary at Florence, Colo., near Cañon City, known as "Supermax."

Maybe this time we should let Colorado have a few jobs.

Patients need local dialysis

To the Editor:

I am very concerned about several people who have to go out of town to get kidney dialysis. Some people must have dialysis due to diabetes.

It breaks my heart, as I know several people who need to go out of town to get this therapy. They are sick people who need to have dialysis.

Some go at least 3 times a week out of town and the price of gas doesn't help their situation.

I mentioned my concern to the hospital administrator some time back — but she informed me she didn't have a nurse. Of course, she doesn't have a nurse. They can be

Letter to the Editor

trained in Wichita in a couple of weeks. Where there is a will there is a way.

I have some friends who are on dialysis and this is hard.

The county seems to be able to get money for other things.

This is a health issue and I am hoping in the near future that we will be able to help these people.

There are many diabetics in Decatur County so there can be a lot more who fill this need in the near

future.

Lets work together to help take some of the burden off of these people who need several hours of this procedure.

Having one here would definitely be a health need!

I believe it would be easier to get a grant for a definite health need then for some of the other things this county believes we should have.

Elsie Wolters
Oberlin

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