

## Government Motors set up for success story?

What's the problem with the government "rescue" of General Motors?

What's to like? Where should we start?

Bankers complain the takeover will disrupt financial markets by destroying investor confidence in corporate bonds. Restructuring the company is being given precedence in bankruptcy court over the rights of bond holders, who thought they had a mortgage on the company's assets.

So much for corporate bonds.

Worse yet, though, is that with the government and the United Auto Workers owning a big chunk of the reorganized company, and wielding even more influence, it's not likely that GM will ever be competitive again.

Some might argue that the company floundered because it was not competitive doing what it was doing, but that's only partly true. By and large, GM and Ford Motors, the other big American automaker, had finally learned the lessons of the market. They'd started making more cars people wanted at prices people would pay. Reliability came close to matching vaunted German and Japanese standards.

But GM, Ford and Chrysler Corp. all committed the "sin" of catering to the market. They built vehicles people would buy, not vehicles someone thought they ought to buy. That means trucks and large SUVs when Democrats thought they should be building electric cars.

GM and Ford built those too, but maybe too little, too late for the high gas prices we saw last year. Then, stuck with lots full of big vehicles, they had nowhere to turn.

What will happen with the auto workers union and the administration in charge, though?

Is the union going to want to lay off workers when the market calls for it? We're not betting on it.

And when people's tastes turn back to big pickups and big SUVs, will the government allow the automakers to build them and make money? Or will it force them to sell tiny cars at a tiny profit, ensuring that they will forever be irrelevant?

This is no small matter, because markets do not respond as we think they should, no matter what our beliefs, but as they will. People buy what they want and drive what they want. That may mean "green" vehicles one year and SUVs the next, with no logic involved in the switch.

The models for government-run enterprises set by the Soviet Union and the British socialists after World War II do not suggest a bright future for government-run carmakers in this century. Maybe our leaders know better how to run an enterprise than the Brits, but we doubt it.

Lastly, the end result of the Chrysler and GM restructuring will be a strengthening of the European auto industry at America's expense as Italy's Fiat takes over not just Chrysler, but also GM's European operations, including Opel and Saab.

For a nation that has lost so many of its basic manufacturing industries, including steel and clothing, electronics and so many others, this could be a bitter pill to swallow.

How many of Detroit's jobs, in the end, will we export to the Continent or the South?

This reorganization may be slightly better than nothing, but in the end, it blows an ill wind. Little good can come of it.

— Steve Haynes

## Legislature winding down

Here is an update on things in the closing, or "veto," session of the Legislature:

**Senate Bill 311 – State General Fund and Special Revenue Fund Expenditures:** This bill amends existing law by reversing the current allotment process used by the governor to reduce the approved state General Fund budget when the projected ending balance is less than zero.

If the projected ending balance is deemed insufficient to cover the authorized expenditures and demand transfers by the director of the budget and the director of legislative research, the bill authorizes the governor to seek state Finance Council approval for across-the-board reductions in all accounts with the exception of debt service, Kansas Public Employees Retirement System school employer contributions, and School District Capital Improvement Fund payments.

The bill allows the governor to issue an executive order to make targeted reductions to authorized expenditures and demand transfers if the projected ending balance will be above zero but less than 3.5 percent of total authorized expenditures. Again, the reductions could not be made against debt service payments, school employer contributions and the School District Capital Improvement Fund. Passed 24-16 on Friday.



**Letter from Topeka**  
By Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer  
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**Senate Bill 336 – Legislation Reconciliation:** This is the revised reconciliation bill for the 2009 session. Passed 40-0 on Friday.

**House Bill 2099 – Kansas Open Records Act:** This bill adds to an existing exception in the Kansas Open Records Act that a public agency is not required to disclose the name, address or other contact information of an alleged victim of stalking, domestic violence or sexual assault. Passed 40-0 on Friday.

**House Bill 2195 – State Records:** This bill directs the state archivist to prepare recommendations to the state Records Board for preserving and maintaining the authenticity of electronic records; provide that electronic records are maintained in accordance to the preservation process and certified with the archivist's signature; and allow for reasonable fees to be charged for retrieving electronic copies.

The bill also amends several statutes to include an option for

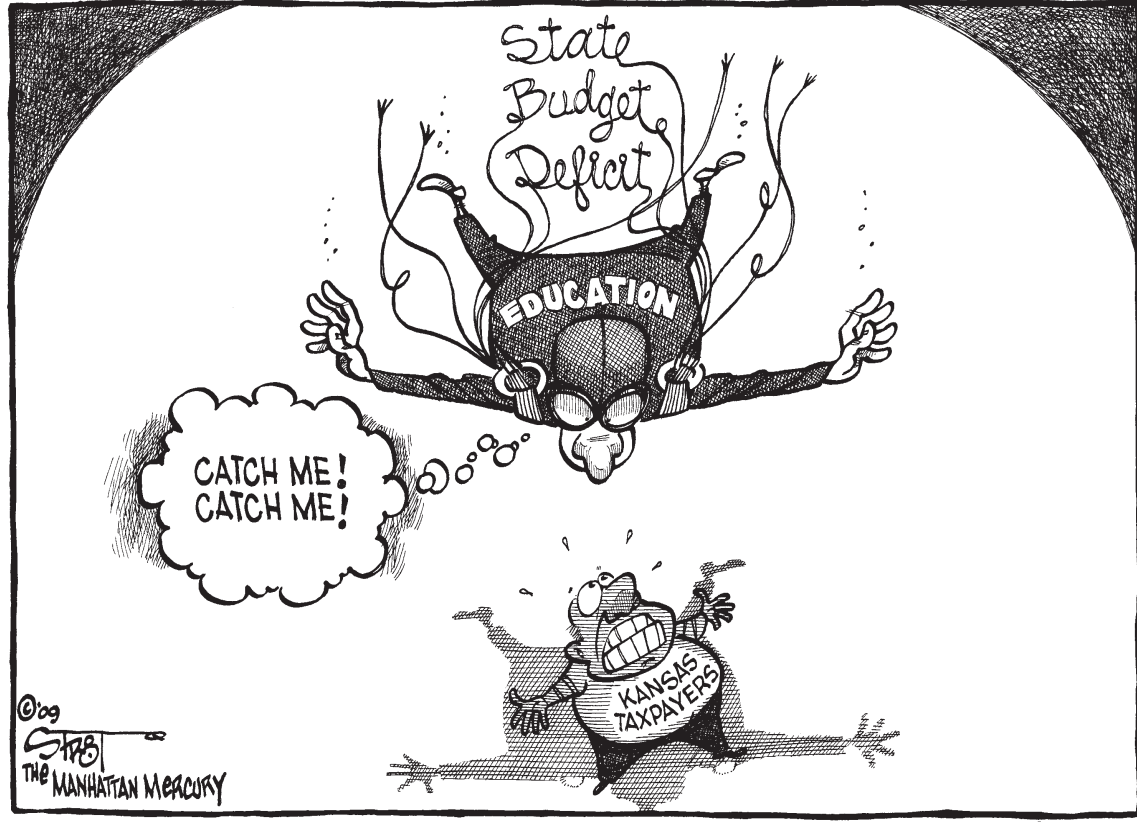
document transmittal via e-mail and other electronic means. Passed 40-0 on Friday.

**Consideration of Appointments:** The Senate approved the following appointments:

- Col. Alexander Duckworth to brigadier general, Kansas National Guard.
- Jeffrey E. Lewis to the Kansas Human Rights Commission.
- Michael Braude and Rachel Reiber to the Kansas Public Employees' Retirement Board.

**Conference Committee Report for HB 2060:** On Friday, the Senate failed to approve the conference committee report for HB 2060. The bill contains several changes to crime and criminal procedure statutes; it remains in the conference committee for further work.

I can be reached by writing to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kan., 66612 or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is ralph.ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov.



## Everyone pleased with rains

Recently, conversations everywhere in this part of the country have started with, "So, how much rain did you get?" Answers vary from "20 hundredths" to "an inch-40."

Doesn't seem to matter. Everyone is pleased with the slow, soaking rains that have saturated the ground. Trees love it, grass loves it, flowers love it – and weeds adore it.

Even though the rains have brought on weeds by the bushel, it also makes them easier to pull. And that's how I've pulled them – by the bushel.

The chickens love them. When I throw an armload of weeds over the fence, the old hens get right in the middle of them, scratching and pecking to their hearts content. The young chicks like the weeds, too, although, they still prefer chick mash.

Speaking of the chicks, they are growing so fast, they will soon have to be moved into their new "digs." Which, by the way, are presently occupied by the three calves I am still bottle feeding. As soon as we can have the calves' pen across the alley ready, we'll move them into it.

Jim will replace a side panel on the calf shelter, remove the covering over the in/out door for the chicks and they can move into their new home.

I was working in the back yard over the weekend and heard an awful sound coming from the chicks brooder house. It sounded like one of them was being strangled. Upon inspection, I observed all was well – it was just a "teenage" rooster



**Out Back**  
By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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trying out his crowing technique. Apparently, his "voice" was changing.

— ob —

Much is being said about the economy. We're advised to cut back on our lifestyle and simplify our lives. An insurance company even has an ad on television reminding us that a family picnic is better than a gourmet meal at a restaurant, and that their coverage is affordable, will protect your family and make you good looking. Well, maybe not the good-looking part.

My question is: How do you cut back on your lifestyle when there's not much style in your life in the first place? Our big extravagance is groceries. Granted, we have more food on our pantry shelves than most stores, but hey, I like to be prepared. When you don't have a grocery down the street, you have to keep a supply of everything.

We don't take fancy vacations – we go see our kids and hope they'll feed us. We don't buy fancy clothes. I'm a thrift-store shopper and Jim keeps it simple, with khaki pants and knit shirts.

I guess what irks me is people who complain they can't afford to buy their kids Christmas, birthday,

Easter, Bar Mitzvah or whatever presents. Your time doesn't cost a thing. Give them a coupon you made yourself, good for a special outing.

How much does it cost to spend the day with your child? That's what they really want anyway – your time.

Homemade clay is a simple recipe that takes about 50 cents worth of salt and flour. Make a quilt with old blue jeans, decorate a T-shirt, make a picture frame from scrap wood, paint a rock, make a scrapbook, the possibilities are endless.

Your child will be better for it – and so will you.

## From the Bible

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.  
Psalm 61:1-3

## How the paper really runs

I get enough messages and letters about "putting an ad in the paper" or "running our public service announcement" that I think it's about time we should have a little chat about how a newspaper runs and what we do.

First, let me say that many people assume "the newspaper" knows everything, or should, and therefore there is no need to tell us what's going on. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

The world is large, we at the paper are few and our knowledge is limited. We appreciate it when you let us know. We appreciate it even more when you call or e-mail in time for us to plan to cover an event, sell supporting ads and take a few pictures. Really.

Beyond that, though, here's a short course on how a newspaper runs.

Nearly every newspaper has two major departments, news and business. The news department fills about half the space with stories and pictures. News people live in a world of deadlines, writing, story telling and readership. They worry about filling the paper each week with something people will want to read, because that's what they do.

The business department handles the money. It sells subscriptions to readers and advertising to businesses and ordinary people with something to sell. Advertising is valuable only because people read the news, but that's about the only connection between the two.

Ad people worry about sales and marketing. They want their customers to be happy and sell lots of merchandise. They know that advertisers pay most of the bills at any newspaper (about 80 percent most places), so what you pay for the paper only pays to get it printed and delivered.

Advertisers pay for the news, and without news, their ads would be a lot less valuable. It's an interesting relationship, because while they pay for it, advertisers have little influence over what goes in the news. It has to be that way, or no one would trust the newspaper.

One mistake people often make



**Along the Sappa**  
By Steve Haynes  
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is assuming that because they told someone at the newspaper about an event or cause, everyone at the newspaper knows about it. In practice, news people and ad people, even at a small newspaper, live in different worlds.

An editor might be able to tell you what happened last night at the football game or who got arrested for drunk driving, but likely has no idea what the Ford dealer is advertising this week. Nor will an ad person be able to tell you what is on Page 1 of tonight's paper.

So if you buy an ad for a soup supper, the news department might hear about it. Might not. My advice is tell both. Buy an ad in the paper and send the editor a press release.

Oh, what is an ad, anyway?

Ads are messages in space sold by the business department, usually on the lower right half of a page. You pay for the space, and you decide what goes there – words, art work, design.

News includes stories and pictures, usually placed on the top half of the page. The reporter writes a

story and an editor checks it. The editor decides what stories go where and how they are displayed. Even if you buy an ad, you don't get to tell the editor how to do a news story. That's called freedom of the press.

Many people call the paper, asking us to "advertise" their event or sale. What they mean is do a news story for free, and for most community events we're actually glad to do that. It's free, no charge, but the paper gets to decide how big, where the story runs, how it's worded and how many times it runs. (Usually, we have room to run any story just once, by the way, and the timing depends on how many other stories come in that day.)

If you or a group you belong to has something going on, by all means, tell the newspaper. Send the editor a press release or an e-mail, and if you're making money at the event, consider buying an ad. This is how we make a living, after all, and if no one buys an ad, we can't pay the reporters.

There's more, of course. Plenty for the next column, so stay tuned.

## Photo Policy

The Oberlin Herald wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we

cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture.

Laser proofs of photos which have run in The Herald are available, first come, first served.

# THE OBERLIN HERALD

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