

Should taxpayers foot bill for half-million gala?

Plans by the League of Kansas Municipalities to spend nearly a quarter of a million dollars to commemorate its centennial should come as a shock to Kansas taxpayers.

It's their money, after all, but they won't be invited to the party, planned for the group's annual conference this October in Overland Park.

This is just one small example of the cavalier manner in which some public officials spend your money.

On top of the \$240,000 budget, the league is asking cities to donate \$1,000 to \$5,000 to help sponsor this "gala celebration" of the anniversary. This must be some party they're planning.

With many Kansans out of work and others just scraping to feed and clothe their families, throwing a quarter-million-dollar celebration might be seen as excess, and indeed, the league says so far, no cities have signed up as "sponsors."

A report in the *Lawrence Journal-World* noted that the league provides many services, including training, lobbying and legal expertise, to member cities. It also provides a forum for city officials to gather, network and exchange ideas.

All of this is done as taxpayer expense, however, and taxpayers should demand that it be done with frugality. The legal says it already has spent \$66,000 on preparations for the gala, with \$174,000 in the budget for this year. Part of the money will go for television commercials extolling the league's history.

And this at a time when cities across Kansas have lost their state money and have to scrape to pay expenses — or raise taxes.

Any city that makes a donation to this event would seem to be risking the wrath of its taxpayers. Taxpayers ought to question officials about the dues they pay to this organization.

It's not that cities shouldn't have an association. The league performs many useful functions, helping to train city officials and guide them through legal issues.

Its lobbying function can be another matter. Sometimes, the league takes taxpayers' money and uses it for causes that many citizens might not agree with. These have included undermining the state's public notice and open government laws.

Cities have not sued the state over money as some school districts have, and that's a plus. However, we feel public officials need to be careful to take the interests of everyday citizens, and not just public officials, into account when they go to the Statehouse and spend tax money.

Sometimes those two are not identical. Officials often want to see more secrecy and more freedom to spend money than many citizens would like. That creates a duty for those spending taxpayers' money to influence public affairs to be sure they're working for the taxpayers, not just those who spend tax money.

Atax-financed gala in the middle of the Great Recession, with thousands out of work?

It's not a tasteful use of our money, frankly, not when taxpayers are outside looking in.

Send it back to the cites for tax reduction, we say, knowing full well it's just a drop in the bucket. Every tax dollar, taken from someone supposedly for the public good, should count. Every one.

— Steve Haynes



It was deja vu all over again

It was like deja vu all over again, as the comedian says.

We were on our way home from the radio station after working a shift as DJs for the annual Rotary Radio Day fund raiser on Sunday when we got the call.

"Daddy, my water broke. We're on our way to the hospital."

Youngest daughter, who's due date was April 1, was about to become a mother more than three weeks early.

We weren't surprised. Lindsay is just 5 foot tall, and she'd already looked like she swallowed a beach ball when we saw her in December.

After her doctor's appointment last week, she had called to say the baby weighed almost six pounds, was head down and ready to go.

Since she is a small person, I had been worried she'd have a nine- or 10-pound baby, if she indeed carried it until the first of April.

Not to worry. This kid was ready to go and had March 7 marked as her date for getting out into the world.

As we waited for word, Steve reminded me of oldest daughter's arrival almost 36 years ago.

That was a Sunday afternoon, too. Steve was at work; his days off were Tuesday and Saturday. It



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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was springtime and I was working around the house, mulching my irises and cleaning up the yard. My water broke. I wasn't sure what to do, so I called Steve.

"That's nice," he said. A pause. "What!"

He rushed home and I waited for the contractions to start while he cleaned up around the house, then we headed for the hospital.

Oldest daughter wasn't as accommodating as our first grandchild. She was not head down and ready to go. But come she did, exiting into the world rear-end first.

I was happy that Lindsay didn't have that to worry about.

In fact, according to her sister, the obstetrics nurse asked her for her shoe size since women with small feet will usually also have a small pelvis.

The nurse was worried when the answer was 4 1/2. (I told you she

was small.)
But a quick check of her hips proved that this mother-to-be is my daughter.

If there's one thing my French Canadian ancestors gave me, and I passed on to all three of my children, it's wide hips and an adequate butt.

With her sister and husband coaching, urging and generally doing their part, Taylor Madison Blake made her entrance into the world at 10:15 p.m. Sunday night.

The new arrival is small just like her mother — just 6 pounds, 2 ounces and 18 3/4 inches long — but has lots of dark hair and long fingers and toes, just like her dad.

Mother and daughter were doing well and oldest daughter proudly announced that neither she nor Bradley had fainted.

And me? I just can't wait to get to Georgia.

Little ad stirs his a big debate

The power words have.

One simple little want ad has stirred more complaints than we've had in years.

"God, what is your problem? Are you asleep, deaf, on vacation or dead? Are you incapable, indifferent or just plain cruel?"

Someone paid to put that in the Colby paper and the *Country Advocate* for two weeks. I'm not sure who; I haven't asked, and although I presume the person who took the ad wrote down his or her address and phone number, I don't want to know.

As a Christian, I suppose, I'd like to offer whatever friendship and solace I could. One pastor wrote a column outlining a possible response. Someone else paid to put a "reply from God" in the want ads last week.

As an editor, I've fielded calls from angry readers who wondered why we would print such a thing.

"I don't like it," was a common thread. "I don't think you should print it."

In America, that's a scary sort of demand. I'm glad these people aren't in charge.

In America, we have free speech and freedom to worship because we live under the First Amendment, the first and greatest of the 10 amendments known as the Bill of Rights.

The first is not only the bedrock of our freedom, it's a marvel of spare and ingenious writing, only 44 words and barely a half dozen



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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lines of text:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

There you have the things that make us free, freedom to worship as we please, to speak our minds, to publish as we want, to assemble and to petition our republican government. No other nation has quite the full package.

And many Americans would throw it out the window tomorrow.

"Is it legal to run that?" one caller asked.

"I think it's blasphemy," another shouted. "You shouldn't run it."

But if the only newspaper in town won't print unpopular writings, even an anguished attack on the Lord, then what good is freedom of speech?

No, it's not illegal to rail against the Lord, your God. Many have done it before; read your Bible.

Yes, it might be blasphemy, but

don't you think the writer had some reason to arrive at a place where he or she felt that way?

You callers claim you're Christian, but where is your charity? How would Jesus answer this person?

How did the Lord answer Job? Or his Son, on the cross at the hour of his death:

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mark 16:34, 21st Century King James Version)

I wouldn't pretend to have all the answers for this person — I have enough trouble keeping my own life in line — but I do back his right to his lament.

I'd hate to see America come to the point where someone couldn't print something unpopular, especially about religion. These freedoms are at the very core of what this country stands for.

The Founders left us neither a Christian nation nor a state religion. They made it possible for us to believe and to speak as we wish. No greater gift could have been given.

Life is full of air pockets

The last few days have been a blur of trying to make travel arrangements. My daughter Halley's surgery was scheduled for Tuesday, and everything has been focused on getting me to Dallas while at the same time getting Jim ready to make a Mexico mission trip without me.

Travel arrangements were what I called "fluid." In other words, they changed from moment to moment just like the tide.

Our daughter Jennifer spent hours on the phone with me while she searched the Internet for flights, train schedules, fares and connections. She was so patient with me because plans kept changing. We considered taking the bus and even a train.

At first we thought I would drive and Jim would fly, then we came up with the idea that I would fly and Jim would drive.

When I asked my brother Bob, who lives an hour from a sizable airport, if he would drive me to catch a flight, he said, "Oh, why don't I just drive you to Dallas."

Since I couldn't think of a good reason why not and because it would solve all our problems, it was



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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agreed. The icing on the cake came when a friend who lived close to my brother volunteered to drive me to his house.

I tried to write this Sunday night on Bob's computer but it didn't want to cooperate. When I hit "send," the entire e-mail disappeared, which brought to mind the not-so-old saying, "To err is human, but to really foul things up takes a computer."

So I'm writing this out in long-hand as we're driving down the Interstate. When we hit a bump, it's like the lady trying to put on lipstick in the bathroom of a plane when it hits an air pocket. Oops!

Some thought perhaps I shouldn't have written about Halley's surgery. When I asked her how she felt about it she said, "Oh, it's OK. I'm used to it."

People have been so kind. I can't count all the folks who have passed on words of encouragement both for me and Halley.

We have every confidence the surgery and recovery will be fine. The next Outback installment will be coming from Texas with updates and pictures of the incision. Just kidding. I think that's where Halley might draw the line.

From the Bible

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

Psalm 77:14 NIV

Senator opposes health reform bill

To the Editor:

One doesn't have to look very far to find a glaring example of why I oppose the so-called health care reform bill before Congress.

The *Telegraph* newspaper in London recently reported that the British government declared that it will not pay for a new drug proven to extend the lives of patients suffering from rare cancers of the blood and bone marrow, including two forms of leukemia.

Authorities are prohibiting the nearly 700 patients a year who are eligible for the treatment from

Letter to the Editor

getting the drug because it's too expensive.

This disturbing news is further evidence for why I oppose the "reform" bills. If the government is allowed to take over even more of our health care, I fear it will further ration care in America, just as is happening in England under government-controlled medicine.

The *Telegraph* quotes a patient advocate who says "Azacitidine is just one of the many drugs for rarer

cancers to be rejected by (the government health system) in the past year. The current system is failing people with rarer cancers. It's time for a more flexible approach — one that doesn't trile you out if you have the wrong kind of cancer."

Doctors should make treatment decisions based on what is best for the patient, not based on the cheapest option for the government.

Pat Roberts, Dodge City U.S. Senator

Write

The *Oberlin Herald* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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We do not publish anonymous

letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

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

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on

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