

State program cuts opposed by supporters

The wailing and gnashing of teeth has begun.

Supporters of state programs about to feel Gov. Sam Brownback's budget ax have begun whining, and the wail will reach epic proportions before the spending bills are done.

Every program has its supporters, of course. Usually, they're organized by the people who work for the programs. Thus, a couple of years ago when Republicans proposed changes (not cuts) in spending for federal lunch programs for senior citizens, cards were passed out and speeches made at senior lunches. Congress dropped the change like a hot potato.

On the block in Kansas, where the state faces a \$570 million revenue "shortfall" next year, are the budgets for the state arts commission and public broadcasting. Supporters already are howling. However, it's hard to make a case for a real need here.

Performing arts and broadcasting are not in short supply. Mass-appeal providers saturate the markets with material, some of it pretty good, a lot of it pretty awful. People pay to see both kinds.

Public support for the arts and broadcasting tends to buy the type of show people won't pay

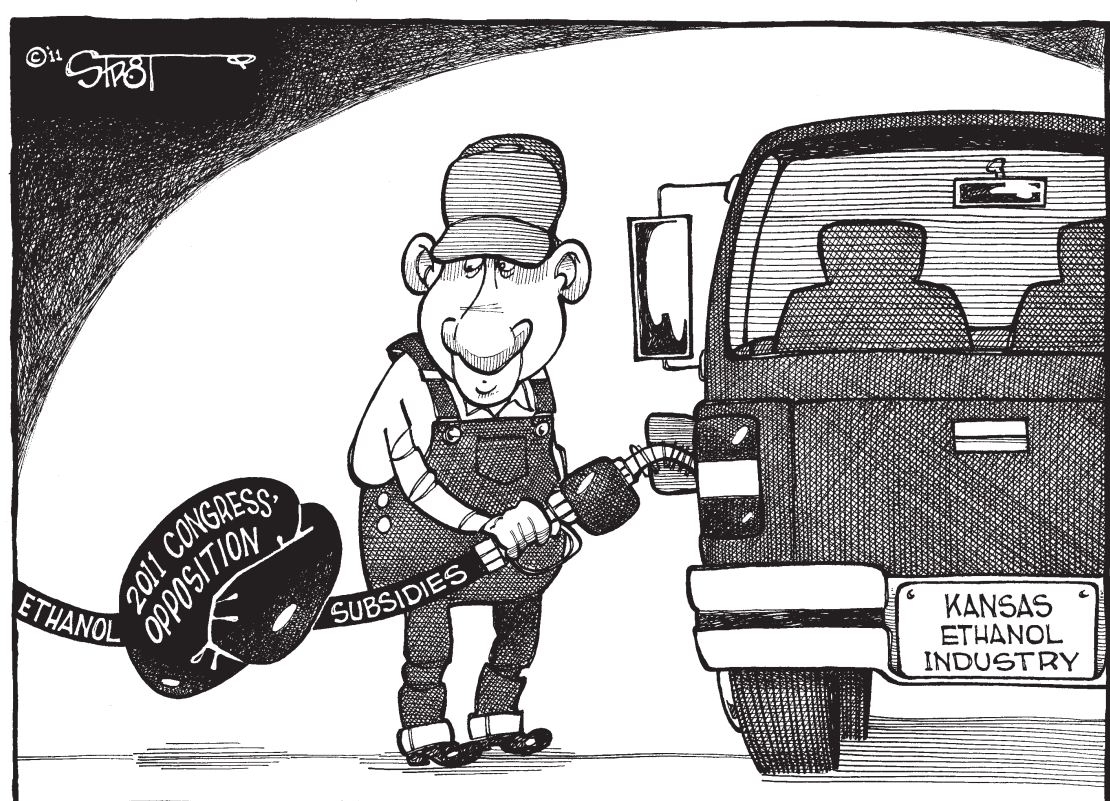
for. We sympathize with people who might miss some of these programs, but it's hard to make a case for spending tax money on programs, live or broadcast, that few people want to see.

Tax money, after all, is not freely given. It is taken from people by force of law, and if necessary, by force of arms. If you do not believe that, try not paying your taxes.

That means government has a special responsibility to see that tax money is spent on things most of us agree on. For state government, roads, public safety, schools and colleges, health, welfare and a few others meet that definition.

It's hard for us to put performance, live or broadcast, into the same category. These programs tend to appeal to a minority, most of whom could afford to buy their own tickets. The morality of taxing poor people to finance programs for such an elite minority is questionable, to say the least. Especially when the state has no money.

These programs have produced some good work, but it's time for Kansas to let them go. It's also the right thing to do. — *Steve Haynes*



Senator receives appointments

I am pleased to announce my appointment to two new Senate committees. I will be chairman of the Natural Resources Committee and serve on the Reapportionment Committee representing western Kansas.

I look forward to the challenges of these two additional committees. I continue on Agriculture, Federal and State Affairs, Local Government and the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules and Regulations.

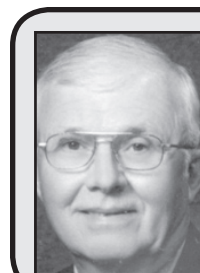
There are many new faces in the Legislature this year, and I want to mention a few: Rep. Rick Billinger, a Goodland Republican from District 121; Ward Cassidy, St. Francis Republican from District 120; and Dan Collins, Plainville Republican from District 110. They are excited and determined to serve our great state.

I want to acknowledge and thank Rep. Johnson and Rep. John Faber for their years of service.

I am sharing with you a tribute to Rep. Jim Morrison. This is a difficult time for the Morrison family, and I ask that you remember them in your prayers.

Jim was a dear friend and colleague who will be missed. He strongly believed in open government and effective use of technology.

Jim used his talents as a radio engineer to produce daily shows for



Letter from Topeka

By Sen. Ralph Ostmeier
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stations in our districts. He always had everything ready to go as we discussed the latest issues.

Jim arranged for proponents of various bills to appear and explain why their ideas were important. His goal was transparency so Kansans would know what was going on in Topeka. Our constituents were well informed and asked questions because of his daily program.

Jim was an innovator in the use of technology. After I arrived in the Legislature, he told me that everyone was going to have a laptop computer and his Health Committee meetings would be broadcast on the Internet. He made both of those things happen.

He would tirelessly help train any legislator of either party on how to use the computers. His efforts and leadership in the use of technology to improve government in Kansas and nationally will make a lasting difference. His service on the Joint Committee on Information Technology made many positive changes possible.

One of my favorite memories was

Jim in the House speaker's chair, presiding over a session. When he had the gavel in hand, he ignored House procedures and did it his way. As he left the podium, Speaker Doug Mays said, "That won't happen again," and Jim said, "I know," with a smile.

When Jim walked by my desk, he simply said, "with another smile, 'I had always wondered what it was like to be Speaker of the House.'"

I will never forget Jim's love and respect of his wife, family and community.

Students who would like to serve as Senate pages should contact my office. Dates are Monday, March 14; or Monday, March 21.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeier

Sen. Ralph Ostmeier, a Grinnell Republican, represents the 40th District of northwest Kansas in the state Senate. Reach him at (785) 296-7399 or Ralph.Ostmeier@senate.ks.gov.

Remember to use disclaimer

It's pretty bad when your kids have to issue a disclaimer at the end of a conversation. But, I guess they know me pretty well. Absolutely anything is fodder for this column.

Following a recent conversation with my oldest daughter, Halley, about a humorous occurrence in her life she ended it by saying, "Mom, you can't put that in the paper." She probably sensed that my mental wheels were already turning on how to phrase her particular incident. But, out of respect for Halley, I won't print it. At least, not now.

-ob-

Weather, of course, is the topic of most conversations. Followed closely by the rising cost of gasoline. I can't explain either one. Weather is what it is. Nothing to be done about it except to prepare for it and endure it. Gasoline, however, is another matter. I suppose we have to endure the prices or stay home. Which, in our mobile society, is not possible. I'm foreseeing that the pressure of out-of-sight gas prices will force some innovative inventor to develop a vehicle that runs on water or air.

At the very least it will probably force our government to reconsider the moratorium on drilling in the Alaskan "outback". It doesn't ap-



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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pear that wildlife suffered too much when the pipeline was built. With the proper controls, drilling can be safe. I would much rather buy petroleum products produced in America than imported from who knows where.

-ob-

Our little town is now totally "wired". A local communication company completed wiring the town for high-speed internet access, cable television and telephone service. It's my understanding every home in town subscribed to at least one of the offerings.

We got the whole load. And, do we love it. Dial-up internet access was okay because that was all we had. But, oh my! The pleasure of instant internet is wonderful. We didn't even subscribe to the fastest access possible but, it's plenty fast for us. Before, watching a video or opening pictures was impossible. It

would, literally, take hours to load. Now, snap, and we have pictures. Someone sent me the cutest video of a two-year-old little boy singing his heart out in church. Another is of a four-year-old pretending to conduct an orchestra. Foolish? Perhaps, but they certainly brought a smile to my face.

-ob-

Last week I shared that Jim had a woodworking project in the living room. He made a shelf to hold stemware and bottles for a new Mexican restaurant. It was completed, delivered and installed. The restaurant owner and his wife were delighted. When asked if it was what they had in mind she replied, "More better." That's what I say too, when he completes a project for me. It's "more better" than I could have imagined.

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.

Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

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

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

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Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Nor'West Newspapers
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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, \$38 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$50-\$250 (in U.S. dollars only) extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.



Join us at lobbyists' meetings

Before I update you on Capitol happenings, I would like to encourage anyone coming to Topeka for a meeting, or just to visit, to contact me.

We are invited to many lobbyists' meetings each evening, and it is fun to go to the ones with people from back home. Monday, Jan. 24, I went to the electric cooperatives' meeting and there were some wonderful people to visit with from northwest Kansas. Last Wednesday, Jan. 26, I spent the evening with Mike Proxmire from Atwood.

Committee meetings are going fast and furious. I believe we are approaching 70 new pieces of legislation so far. I had another interesting Corrections Committee meeting. We will introduce a bill making Sudafer a prescription drug. Law enforcement tells us that meth is still a gigantic problem in the state.

After visiting with some friends from Norton, I brought up in our meeting today a discussion on the theft of copper wiring in the state. Our revisors (lawyers who work with a committee on language for bills) are looking at the current laws and seeing what could be done to slow down this problem.

I listened to our new head of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Robin Jennison, discuss the merging of his department with tourism. The governor is promoting initiatives to encourage rural development. One initiative advances the state as a destination spot for outdoor sports and activities, with plans for increased use of Kansas state



Letter from Topeka

By State Rep. Ward Cassidy
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lands and parks. Any ideas from the northwest should be sent to me or directly to Secretary Jennison.

Economic development is on everyone's mind, and Secretary Pat George has been given the job of leading the Kansas Department of Commerce. I like his goals of encouraging job creation, retaining existing businesses, recruiting out-of-state companies and expanding sales to international markets. He has been contacted by seven companies in his first week.

There are many proposals that have the state stirring, none more so than the proposed cut of 7.5 percent to all state employees pay. The Senate and House versions are quite a bit different. Next week, the proposals should be better understood. "E-verify," a proposal for checking identification for new hires, is being pushed.

What I found very amazing this week was that I am in committee meetings all day, then walking back to my office. I received a call from Norton County about the proposed 7.5 percent cut to state employees and I had not yet heard anything about it. News travels fast into today's world.

Personally, I will take my first bill to the floor tomorrow hoping to revise a statute that will help a firm in Phillipsburg. I have talked to the governor about changes in the state fire marshal's office that are affecting our area. He has promised to look into the problem. I have also been invited to the governor's home, Cedar Crest, for supper and a meeting.

These are difficult times, and all I hear is cut, cut, cut — just not what a group is involved with. There is a lot of stress in the Capitol halls. Please pray that everyone here can work together and make good decisions.

From the Bible

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.
Timothy 2: 1-3

Mother reflects on town's support

To the Editor:

It has been six weeks since Serena's accident, and yet it seems like only yesterday. It has been a difficult yet most blessed time for our family. I have been pondering how I can ever convey my deep love and appreciation for all of you who lifted us up in prayer, sent words of encouragement or gave so generously to help out financially.

The only thing to do is give our amazing God the glory for putting

each of you in our life at this particular moment in time, in this particular place, to meet our every need!

Many people have exclaimed how lucky Serena was that cold December night ... but when recounting the events that occurred before, during and after ... it was not luck, it was not chance ... it was the very hand of a loving God who

orchestrated perfectly His purpose on this night.

Serena is doing amazingly well and is expected to recover without any lasting effects. Again, I thank God for all of you, and Oberlin, our sweet home town!

Lisa Paulson, Oberlin

Letter to the Editor