

# Watching first bill go through process exciting

Early in the session, I introduced a bill to help an accounting firm in Phillipsburg.

The process was exciting to watch: write the bill, introduce the bill in committee, must pass out of committee; introduce the bill on the Chamber floor, needs 63 votes; goes to a Senate committee, talk to the bill in the Senate committee; pass out of Senate committee, get 21 votes in the Senate; and finally gets signed by the governor.

Now, my bill is in front of the governor and he has promised to sign. I will definitely get a signed copy and frame that bill for my office.

Committee work is completed, and we spent three long days of debate on the floor. There was no regular session Thursday or Friday in order to allow conference committees to meet and reconcile House and Senate positions on issues. The Legislature then came back for a final week of debate, which will include conference committee reports and the big Budget Bill. There is a break on April 1 and we then return to Topeka on April 27 for the Veto Session, and to finish the 2012 budget.

Immigration has become a hot topic in Topeka. A representative made an off-the-cuff comment in committee, suggesting that Kansas use the same tactics to control illegal immigrants as are used to control feral hogs: shooting them from helicopters. This has been in the headlines worldwide for the past week and it appears that it will slow all work on immigration because it is now tainted with a bigoted ring.

The Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee failed to endorse the Community Defense Act. This proposal would restrict sexually oriented businesses from opening within 1,000 feet of a school, park, church, library or home. The measure passed the House, which makes



## Letter from Topeka By State Rep. Ward Cassidy ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

it eligible for discussion during conference committee meetings, but at this stage, it doesn't look like the Senate is interested in spending any time on the measure.

Last Friday, Gov. Sam Brownback announced the launch of a website that allows Kansans to submit laws and regulations they believe should be repealed. When an idea is submitted to the website, repealer.ks.gov, the Office of the Repealer will run a cost-benefit analysis on each law or regulation. Kansans who submit proposals will receive a status report within 30 days.

Here is an attempt to explain the House's March to Economic Growth (MEGA). The "Mega" bill would reduce the corporate and individual income tax with a trigger based on growth. If state tax receipts increase over the preceding fiscal year, then a corresponding reduction will be made in both taxes.

The overall goal is to shift more to taxes consumption (sales tax) and less on work or production (income taxes). The House is committed to collecting Kansas tax revenue by growing the economy rather than increasing the tax rate.

By providing a consistent and less complicated tax structure, this bill limits the role of state government and fosters business growth and investment. We know that states without an individual income tax experience population and revenue growth at a higher rate than states with high income taxes.

During debate on this bill, an amendment was approved that will lower the state sales tax to 5.7 percent beginning in 2013. There was also an amendment approved that steps down the corporate income tax rate to 3.5 while working to eliminate the personal income tax completely. Remember that the Senate still has to concur.

There is a proposal in appropriations to save \$10 million dollars by doing away with Kan Ed. I feel that Kan Ed, an Internet network for schools, libraries and hospitals, is invaluable for western Kansas and have talked to everyone I can to gather support to keep it.

The Kansas Employees Retirement System is now my leading e-mail question. Next week, there should be an agreement between the House and the Senate, and we will be able to see how we are going to attack this major concern.

The budget proposals and budget cuts are becoming more and more difficult as we move along in this session. A few of my new legislative friends were discussing life in the Legislature, and we have likened it to the following example: we all know that the state of California is drowning 60 feet down under water. Kansas is six feet underwater, but either way, if the problem is not corrected, we drown.

It is going to hurt, but we have to quit spending more than we bring in.

# Are all problems solved?

To the Editor:

After reading Rep. Tim Huelaskamp's letter to the editor (Justice gets slap in the race) in the March 30 *Oberlin Herald*, I am in awe.

A freshman Congressman, only on duty since Jan. 3, has apparently been able to address and solve the most serious problems facing America today. Those issues are defined in several polls as being, in order of greatest concern:

- The economy and jobs.
- The budget deficit and the national debt.
- Health care.
- Education.
- Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Letters to the Editor

Immigration appears in some polls; not in others. The budget deficit trades positions with health care in some. But these are the recurring issues identified as being of most concern to Americans.

At least I must assume all these issues are solved, because Congressman Huelaskamp has brought his considerable energies to bear on the next logical target: Who we sleep with.

I can't image he would choose to attack this issue without solving all of the issues that Americans identify as being real problems.

Thank you, Congressman Huelaskamp. We can all rest easier in our beds - depending, of course, upon who is sharing our beds - knowing that you are on guard.

Gary Shike, Oberlin

# Stray cats should be neutered

To the Editor:

In response to Steve Haynes' solution to the feral cat problem in Oberlin, I say this is the 21st century.

We animal lovers call it "spay and neuter." Hiding behind his sense of "humor" is a mentality of why there is a problem: Pet owners who do not care for their animals responsibly are the reason there are

so many strays.

How about a program in our town to catch, spay and neuter and release these cats, or better yet, trying to find people who would like a pet in their home.

Since moving to Oberlin 2 1/2 years ago, I have out of pocket paid for spaying and/or neutering eight cats, some I found homes for, and two that are now my wonderful

pets.

I'm not wealthy.  
Caroline Sulzman, Oberlin

**Editor's Note:** The editor helps care for four cats, all spayed or neutered. All were adopted from the "wild." Our spayed dog is a rescue, also.

So, amen, sister.

# Nex-Tech chief gives rebuttal

To the Editor:

Broadband construction activities of Rural Telephone and its wholly owned subsidiary, Nex-Tech, came under criticism recently as Gary Shorman, President of Eagle Communications, a cable television provider in Hays, testified at a congressional hearing.

Mr. Shorman made exaggerated claims before the House subcommittee and to the press in an effort to distort the facts of our broadband stimulus construction initiative, in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the funding. In one such claim, Mr. Shorman stated that while the government was using taxpayers' money to fund an overbuild in Hays, Eagle's own broadband stimulus fund application, for truly unserved areas, was denied.

The following are facts that cannot be disputed:

Fact: Rural/Nex-Tech is bringing \$101 million to western Kansas that would have gone to another state.

Fact: \$51.6 million of this money was a loan that must be paid back to the federal government with interest.

Fact: These funds will be used to bring new and improved broadband service to 21 communities, 26 remote rural areas and 335 anchor institutions such as libraries, hospitals, health clinics, law enforcement, schools, senior centers and

disability centers.

Fact: Hays is included in the 4,600 square mile project, but is only 8 square miles, which is less than one-half of 1 percent of the project. Including Hays protects the taxpayers' investment, providing a feasible, sustainable project, serving a wider rural coverage area.

Fact: In one of Eagle's broadband stimulus applications (Round 2 Application ID 7603), they proposed service to 12 communities they claimed were unserved. Seven public responses were filed on their application indicating that in fact, seven communities were already served by broadband, in some cases, with speeds up to 100 Mbps.

Fact: Rural/Nex-Tech's broadband initiative will provide free broadband connections and free Wi-Fi to 30 libraries in rural communities, providing Internet access to those who would not otherwise have access.

Fact: Rural/Nex-Tech's broadband initiative is creating hundreds of jobs in western Kansas.

Fact: Over 2,000 remote, rural customers have already been connected to the new service and are enjoying the benefits of high-speed broadband service.

Fact: Over the past 60 years, Rural/Nex-Tech has invested \$149 million in loans and \$140 million of equity capital to improve telecom-

munication services in rural western Kansas.

Fact: Since 1998, Rural/Nex-Tech has been investing loan funds and equity capital in broadband facilities in western Kansas, creating economic opportunities and jobs.

In the first year of the three-year initiative, Rural/Nex-Tech has already completed 35 percent of the project. When completed, broadband service will have been made available to over 39,000 residents and businesses in over 9,300 square miles of some of the most remote rural areas of Kansas.

This project means more jobs for the local economy. Many residents will be able to create and build their own businesses, as we have already seen as a result of new high-speed broadband services. It would be impossible to overestimate our project's dramatic, positive impact on the commerce, public safety, and quality of life for residents of western Kansas. This is about tapping the power of the American spirit through job creation, wise investment, innovation, and risk taking, powered by capital and financial accountability.

Now, you know the rest of the story.

Larry E. Sevier  
chief executive officer  
Rural Telephone/Nex-Tech  
Lenora



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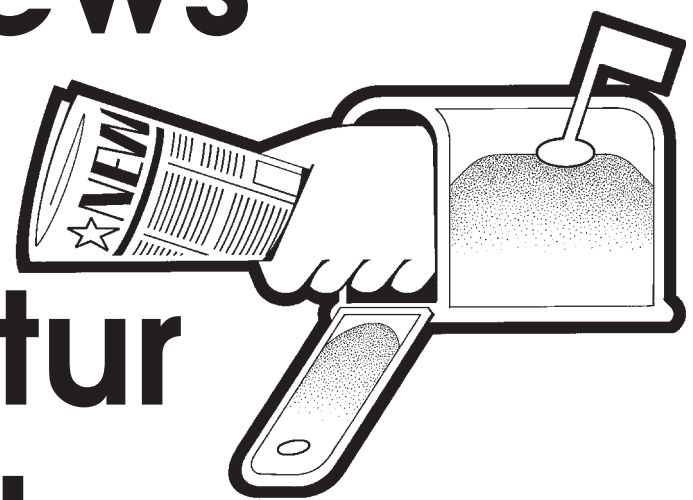
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