

Holding on to balance will take some real effort

State Rep. Ward Cassidy struck a cord Saturday when he told a “town-hall” meeting crowd that the big issue at the Legislature this session may well be defending the state’s growing income stream and preserving the 7.5 percent ending balance required by law.

While the state’s revenue is recovering after more than three years of recession, he said, and cash is coming in ahead of official projections, nearly every state program and agency has been cut in the last few years.

That means that nearly every program and agency wants more money. Some, like schools and support for the disabled, have huge blocks of backers who depend on them. These groups won’t just ask for money; they’ll demand it.

Most agencies, Mr. Cassidy said, probably need and deserve more, but even with its newfound income stream, the state won’t have enough to satisfy every need. Far from it.

Rep. Cassidy said the ending balance is important, not just because the law requires a cushion against tough times or unexpected need, but because it should help prevent a repeat of the deep cuts the state had to make during the late recession.

If the state had that kind of reserve, he said, it might not have had to cut so deeply or so broadly as it did. Cuts hit nearly every agency, from education to transportation, and most in between. When big, well-liked programs like roads and school take cuts, you know things are tough.

But in the years leading up to the recession,

Kansas had been spending nearly every penny it brought in. One reason for that was the fact that the Legislature caved in to the state Supreme Court and threw money at education after losing a court case on school finance.

When the recession came along, the state had spent most of the “ending balance,” its reserve or “rainy day fund.” It had no cushion to fall back on.

Deep cuts needed to balance the budget affected everyone, but were especially tough on schools. Now the group Schools for Fair Funding, an alliance of districts formed to sue the state and lobby for more school spending, is in court once again. It claims the cuts violated the terms of the previous decision and the agreement worked out to satisfy the suit.

Never mind that the courts should never have ordered the Legislature to spend more than the state could afford, or that most of us thought spending decisions ought to be left to our elected representatives.

Never mind that the school districts involved were spending state money to sue the state, something most Kansans probably think is wrong. At heart, the issue is a power grab by the courts which the Legislature chose to cave in to rather than to fight.

That battle will have to be waged some day, and the time may come sooner rather than later. Defending that ending balance will be tough indeed. Mr. Cassidy has called this one right.

— Steve Haynes

She tries out state politics

This weekend, Jim and I dipped our big toes in the waters of the political pool. I thought it was kinda fun, but Jim doesn’t want to try it again.

We were our county’s delegates to the state Republican convention, and if you want to talk about a couple of county bumpkins, that was us. We were the brown suit in a room full of black, the white socks at a prom, the tennis shoes in a room full of oxfords. It was like everyone knew every other person there—except for us. You know us, though. We got acquainted real quick.

The governor was there, and listened as we made a plea for the prison program we’re involved with that prepares inmates for life on the outside. He said he is aware of the program and has spearheaded a major fund-raising effort to keep it alive. One of our state’s U.S. senators also pledged his support.

The senator’s lovely wife, who I interviewed once, remembered me (or at least said she did) and we shared a laugh about being supportive wives. She said her husband remembers names, while she never forgets a face. I told her what I said to someone who asked me what I did as part of my husband’s prison ministry: “I take the roll and remember names.”

No matter what party you belong to, the process is probably the same. It’s no secret that I’m a conservative, so that’s the direction I’m going to lean. Both sides probably bend the truth a little, I just like the conservative “bend” a little better.

We heard some things we want to check out a little more, some things



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts65@gmail.com

we really approve of and some things we didn’t like at all. It was a good experience—one I might like to repeat, now that I know a little more about how things work. It’s doubtful I’ll get Jim to go along, however.

—ob—

Part of this little excursion involved seeing two of my brothers, their wives and friends along the way. Our first night on the road took us to Bill and Betty’s. We finally had to make ourselves go to bed.

This might not sound like fun to most, but we stopped by the state correctional facility where the prison program we are part of is based. Had a chance to see several men we’ve sent there and heard nothing but good comments about the program.

The second night out, we stayed with Jim and Linda. I would tell you what we talked about, but I forget. That last comment was for Linda’s benefit. She took great delight at my loss for words when we were discussing Alzheimer’s and never missed an opportunity to rub it in.

Our third night was in a motel and, without a doubt, the worst mattress I have ever slept on. Sleep may be a euphemism, because that was the

last thing I did. Anyway, I only had to deal with it one night, because we decided we would drive back after the convention Saturday night. We left a little early. I drove halfway while Jim slept, and he took us the rest of the way while I slept.

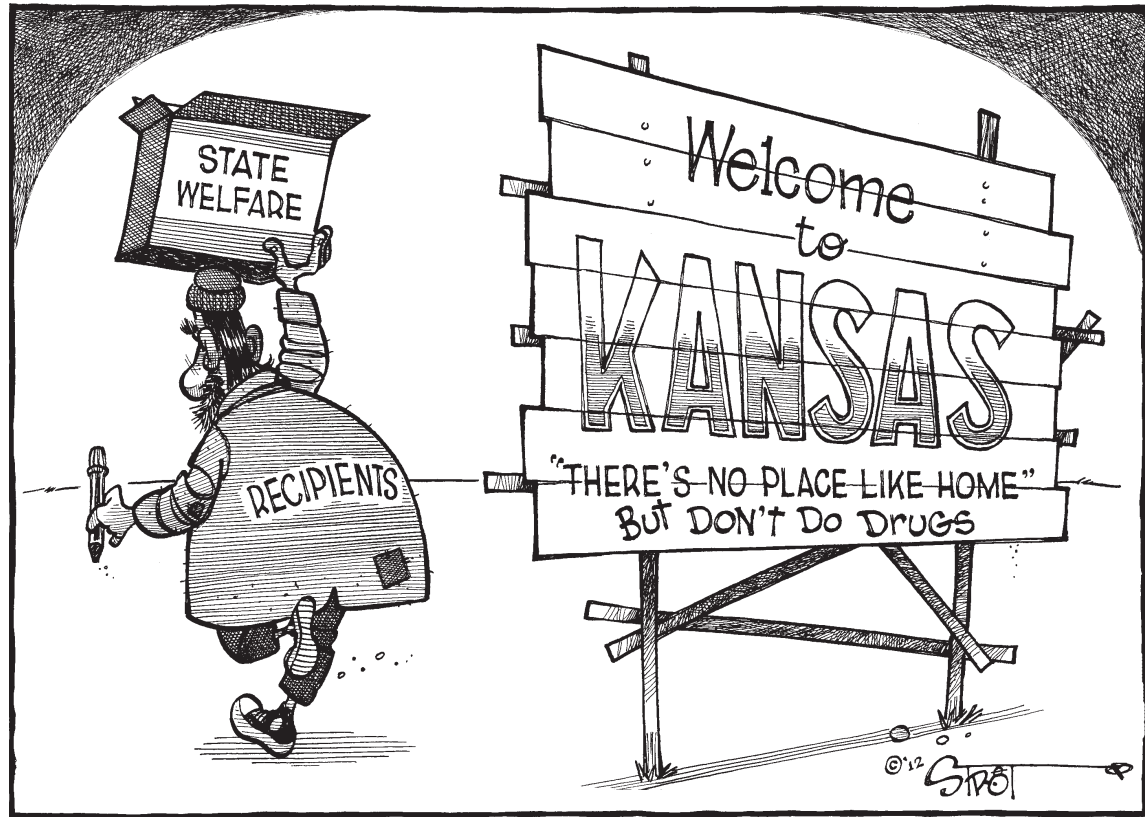
—ob—

My mother always said if you had three of anything it was a collection, so I’m not calling the box full of address labels on my desk an accumulation. It’s now officially a collection.

It’s getting ridiculous, though. I will never live long enough to use all those labels. Even if I did a mass mailing every week to my Christmas-card list. OK—I don’t really have a Christmas-card list, but if I did, I would use those address labels.

If you don’t have address labels and would like some, all you have to do is send \$5 to some charity, any charity will do. Soon, you will be receiving address labels along with a plea for financial support. Your name will then be sold to other charities until you have amassed a mountain of address labels.

I told Jim we could never move. What would I do with all those labels?



Cat takes hike; mom worries

Where, oh, where has little Frank gone. Oh, where can he be?

We returned from Lawrence last week to find ourselves a feline short.

Molly was at the vet’s. April Alice was in the kitchen looking for supper, and Jez was upstairs on her chair. But Frank was nowhere to be found.

We’ve gone through a lot of cats since we moved to Kansas in 1993. I can count 10 that we used to have but don’t anymore and only three of those died of natural causes. The other seven just disappeared.

So, we’ve gotten into the habit of counting noses, especially when we return from a trip.

Our cats are in-outs. They can go outside anytime they want, either when a servant opens the large back door or by using the small pet exit in the basement. The problem is they can’t get back in without someone opening the big door in either the back or front of the house.

We put the pet door in with the idea they could come and go, but turned it into a one-way device when we started finding strange cats in our house.

One night as we were going to bed, Steve looked down and asked me if we had a black cat. Let’s see, one white and gray, two sand and a tabby. Nope, no black cats.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
c.haynes@nwkans.com

This fellow turned out to be a friendly little tom from across the street. A nice cat, but not ours, and a) we really didn’t need another cat and b) really, really didn’t need a tomcat with a full set of claws around the house.

Mr. Tom got tossed outside and the pet door turned into a one-way ticket to the outside for the resident felines.

But this can present a problem when we are gone. Our young caretaker knows that the cats have the right to go in and out, but he’s only here once a day to cater to their whims as he feeds them and brings in the papers and mail.

If they go outside then or any other time, they will be out until he comes back the next day. This is normally not too much of a problem.

But, it was cold last week. Really cold. Freezing cold. And Frank was not waiting for us.

Frank was nowhere to be found

the next morning when I got up early to get Molly from the vets. (Molly has to have insulin shots twice a day, so she gets to spend our time away from home at the vets.)

When it was time to leave for Goodland for a funeral, there was still no Frank. We called, but we couldn’t leave the door open with the temperature hovering around 15 degrees.

All we could really do is worry. When we finally returned late that afternoon, sand-colored cat shot out of the garage like his tail was on fire. He was at the back door before we could get out of the car, and he hit the food bowl in the house like he had never, ever eaten before.

My only guess is that he took refuge someplace warm, maybe in a neighbor’s garage, and couldn’t get out right away.

Whatever the reason, Frank has returned and we are once again more than maxed out on cats.

Daffodils first sign of spring

The green shoots were unmistakable from the second-floor bedroom, though I hadn’t been expecting them.

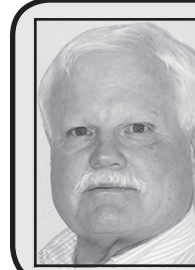
The daffodils always poke their little heads out of the ground in mid-February, and they always surprise me.

It’s still winter, after all, and it’s usually cold outside. Makes no difference whether the groundhog or woodchuck or whatever saw his shadow, February hews to winter.

Except, of course, for the daffodils and that other harbinger of spring, baseball. For spring training kicks off at mid-February each year as pitchers and catchers report for duty.

That both would come the same day—Friday—is no surprise. What’s surprising is that we’re so mired in winter by the time that February rolls around that we can’t see it’s nearly over.

Nearly over doesn’t mean we’ve seen the last of winter weather, especially in this country. We often see more snow from spring storms driven by big lows that sweep across the nation in February, March and even April than we do in the dead of winter. January can be dry and



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
s.haynes@nwkans.com

sunny here.

But March. March can be a bad time to be on the road. This year, however, it’s warm enough, I suspect we may get more rain that ice.

Spring is a time of eternal optimism. The days get longer, and Daylight Saving Time makes them seem longer yet. All baseball teams start out even, and managers talk about how much better they’ll be this year, even in Pittsburgh and Kansas City. Especially our own Rockies.

Outdoors, the grass will start to green up and those first tender shoots will yield to bright yellow blooms in the yard. They’ll be followed by crocuses, and eventually, by May, the irises.

Green grass will lead to green shrubs, and eventually, but not to late April, green trees. The cedars

will turn from red to green again. We’ll have to start mowing, but first there are flower beds to rake and leaves to pick up.

It’ll be time to drag out the hoses and water the grass before you know it.

Not this week, though. Right now, it’s still winter. But there’ll be baseball games on the radio by Saturday. And hope in the air. We know now we can survive a few more days of cold, a few more storms, a few more icy blasts. Because we know it’s almost over.

And spring bring the promise of renewal, of baseball, of summer days.

But for now, it’s still basketball season. And we’ve got a few weeks before blizzards yield to thunderstorms and tornadoes.

Proposal would attract more vets

To the Editor:

As a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, president of the Collegiate Veterans Association at the University of Kansas, a proud Decatur Community High graduate, and someone who will always call Oberlin “home,” I want to tell you about a bill introduced in the Kansas House of Representatives that will ensure that Kansas remains the best state for veterans seeking an education and a return to civilian life.

Despite the benefits provided by the new GI Bill, veterans from other

states who want to make Kansas their home during and after college are left in a difficult position. Because the bill only provides an amount equal to in-state tuition, out-of-state veterans are forced to compete for limited supplemental money through the Yellow Ribbon Program, and many are left out in the cold. While several other states have closed this gap by allowing all veterans to attend college at in-state rates, Kansas has not.

This leaves Kansas colleges at a competitive disadvantage when recruiting hard-working, mission-focused veterans with four years of guaranteed tuition money. Not only are Kansas colleges and universities missing an opportunity for many new students, but the Kansas economy is missing out on a potential windfall of college-educated workers with unique experiences and perspectives.

To help us make Kansas a wel-

coming new home for our returning veterans and ensure that our rebounding economy has access to some of the best and brightest young men and women this country has to offer, please contact Rep. Ward Cassidy and Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer today and let them know that you support HB 2652.

Jake Robinson, Lawrence
jake.robinson@kuveterans.org

Letter to the Editor

From the Bible

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

II Corinthians 4: 3-4

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.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkans.com.

We do not publish anonymous letters.

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

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkans.com

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

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Kimberly Davis managing editor
Mary Lou Olson society editor
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts proofreader, columnist
Joan Betts historian
Cynthia Haynes business manager
Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
Crista Sauvage advertising makeup

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Kimberly Davis, assistant publisher

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.

