

I am writing this with one official day left before the Legislature is to adjourn. It has been a long week, with hours spent in meetings and debating on the floor of the House.

No one seems to be able to tell when we will be done, but I will have a summary article following the end of the session.

Some good news for northwest Kansas – after fighting all year for home-owned carnivals, I carried the bill on the House floor, and it passed 114 to 7. It had previously passed the Senate and is on its way to the governor's office.

All of the negatives were taken out of the original bill. The only stipulation will be that our home-owned carnivals will need to send proof of insurance to the state Department of Labor.

Recognizing that these home-



Letter from Topeka

By State Rep. Ward Cassidy
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owned carnivals are a different type than the traveling carnivals, and not a Worlds of Fun-type amusement park, should free us of negative legislation for years to come.

I am sure everyone is aware also of the good news that most all of our small-town post offices will still operate. Sen. Jerry Moran has worked hard in Washington to help with this issue.

I would like to thank Lynn

Doeden, hospital administrator in Oberlin, for organizing a meeting of many area hospital administrators and other health agencies with the head of the state Board of Healing Arts.

Kathleen Lippert agreed to come to Oberlin and address our concerns with certifying health-care workers needed for northwest Kansas.

In a move that was both shocking and historical, the House rushed a

Senate tax bill to the governor. I will not attempt to tell you of all the behind-the-scenes political maneuvering or the parliamentary procedures used to get it through.

I will tell you that I could not vote for a tax plan that was not debated and that shows a tremendous negative balance in just a few short years.

I just pray that we do grow jobs and the economy. I would love to cut taxes, but I would like to have a chance for debate to fight for our area.

There is not much time left, and I have not updated news about the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System. There is still a conference committee meeting today, and I am hoping we can at least start some good legislation to help with this critical issue.

Re-districting makes for ugly politics

By REP. WARD CASSIDY

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What a second year in the Legislature! I have got to see firsthand how ugly politics can be. And it's still not over.

The whole issue of the re-districting process has amazed me. It amazes me how people can have \$100,000 to \$200,000 in their campaign fund for an \$88-a-day, 90-day job.

I am sure most of you have read how there is a strong move by the governor and the conservatives in the Senate to move out the moderate Republicans. That has caused

important issues, yet to be solved, to be put on hold.

We did get a compromise from the House and Senate on the important issue of reforming the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System. I feel I will be able to vote for the compromise, as it is at least a good first step.

I have felt all along that by allowing new hires to remain in the current program, we are just adding to the fiscal concerns. Many of the concerns my constituents in the 120th District have expressed to me have been addressed in the compromise, other than putting a large chunk of

money into the program.

More than \$40 million of casino money will go into the system this year. The projections do show that the program is safe for 30 years and should improve after that. There will not be a cost-of-living adjustment in the future. I will have the final compromise on my website after the session.

How is this for a predicament? Last week, I voted against the Senate tax plan because of my fear of the negative fiscal projections showing it would run the state out of money in just a couple of years. The bill passed, however, and the governor

has said he will sign it.

He says he would prefer that the House and Senate conference committee develop a different plan. The conference committee came up with a plan that I still don't like for northwest Kansas. If I don't vote for this plan, though, the governor will sign the Senate plan that I really didn't like.

Friday morning, most of the representatives will wake up and have to move out of their apartments. There is a big race for rooms in Topeka, and all the available beds are sold out. That should help move things along. Who knows?

Senator had long, distinguished career

Last month, Indiana Republican primary voters retired six-term U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar.

Ordinarily I don't mind when an octogenarian senator of either party is forced into retirement. The Founding Fathers didn't intend for elected federal office to be a lifetime job. But in the case of Sen. Lugar, I feel conflicted. It's worth taking a look at some of the highlights from his distinguished career.

I first became familiar with Sen. Lugar while working on Capitol Hill shortly after my college graduation. One of the preeminent foreign policy issues of the day was the drive to place economic sanctions on the apartheid government in South Africa.

I was particularly sensitive to the matter, having taken an undergraduate class from Dr. Peter Walsh, one of the country's leading African specialists at the time. Walsh had gained notoriety for his public efforts to push the Notre Dame administration to sell the university's investments in companies that did business in South Africa.

President Ronald Reagan consistently opposed economic sanctions on South Africa, and regarded Nelson Mandela and his banned African National Congress Party as nothing more than communist sympathizers.

Lugar, who then chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, led the drive to pass the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, which imposed economic and political sanctions on South Africa. The bill became law when Congress overrode President Reagan's veto. Prior to the override vote, Lugar issued a memorable statement pointing out the many times he had supported the president, and then explaining why he couldn't on that occasion.

During his first trip to the United States following his release from prison, Mandela personally thanked Lugar for his work on the bill. In 2011, South African Ambassador to the U.S. Ebrahim Rasool presented Lugar with the Mandela Freedom Award for his "exceptional contribution to the struggle for the attainment of a nonracial, free and democratic South Africa."

Other highlights of his career are testaments to his ability and willingness to work across party lines. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (1992) established by a bill which came to be known as Nunn-Lugar, was the first post-Cold War measure that dealt with the need to



Smoky Hill Observer

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control and reduce stockpiles of nuclear weapons. His Democratic partner, former Georgia Sen. Sam Nunn, issued a statement following Lugar's defeat saying "There is no doubt that the world is a safer place thanks to Dick Lugar."

Other more recent examples of Lugar's willingness to work across the aisle include his support for auto bailouts and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that passed the Senate in December of 2010. It would be hard to argue that he frequently betrayed his conservative principals. The American Conser-

vative Union gives him a 77 percent lifetime voting record.

Lugar's primary opponent, and Tea Party favorite, State Treasurer Richard Mourdock turned the senator's statesmanlike demeanor, friendship with President Obama and willingness to seek bi-partisan compromises into political liabilities.

After the primary results came in many commented on Lugar's remarkable career. Former Nebraska Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel, who served with him for 12 years in the Senate, was effusive in his praise.

"There is not one senator in the Republican Party today who is in Dick Lugar's universe..." Hagel said. "He's the kind of public servant and elected official the country expects and deserves."

Sen. Lugar made a gracious concession speech, but later issued a more pointed statement regarding his opponent. He said he hoped Mourdock would prove to be a good senator, but went on to say that to do so "will require him to revise his stated goal of bringing more partisanship to Washington."

I'm not in a position to give advice to residents of the Hoosier state for the upcoming general election. But surely a majority of Indiana voters don't agree with Mourdock that the answer to Washington's problems is more partisanship.

Alan Jilka of Salina is vice president of Jilka Furniture, former mayor of Salina and a one-time Democratic candidate for Congress in the Kansas 1st District.

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