

## Battle over Legislature just the tip of the iceberg

The gridlock that enveloped Topeka at the end of the legislative session is just one outcropping of a battle being fought around the country as emergent conservative forces flex their muscles at the statehouse and within the GOP.

As we've found in Kansas, this process isn't always pretty and it's not always constructive.

Across the country, results have been mixed, the Associated Press reports. In Nebraska, Gov. Dave Heineman called an angry press conference to announce several vetoes after the Legislature gutted his tax plan.

In Missouri, newly dominant Republicans fought over spending and over the definition of a true Republican. In Oklahoma, Gov. Mary Fallin saw her plan to cut income taxes defeated.

Here in Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback's tax-cut plans stalled in the more liberal Senate. After negotiations ground to a halt, somehow the Senate voted to pass a House-backed plan that even the governor thought was too much. It included most of his cuts, but few of the "adjustments" he proposed to even out revenue.

As a result, the state faces either big budget cuts on top of years of budget cuts, or the House and Senate will have to change the plan next year.

In Wisconsin, meanwhile, Republican Gov. Scott Walker survived a union-backed recall vote which left control of the state Senate in doubt. The bitter fight pitted neighbor against neighbor and friend against friend.

A common thread in all these states is a push by conservatives for lower taxes, lower spend-

ing, a more pro-business attitude and more attention to social issues such as abortion.

Beyond that, though, is a nationwide drive to elect even more conservatives, a drive which sometimes has backed more liberal or "moderate" Republicans into a corner. With heavy hitters arrayed to eliminate them, they have little to lose and no choice but to stand and fight.

That happened in Kansas, where moderate senators who have controlled the upper chamber suddenly faced primary challenges by popular incumbent House members with promises of financial backing from the state Chamber of Commerce's political arm, among other sources.

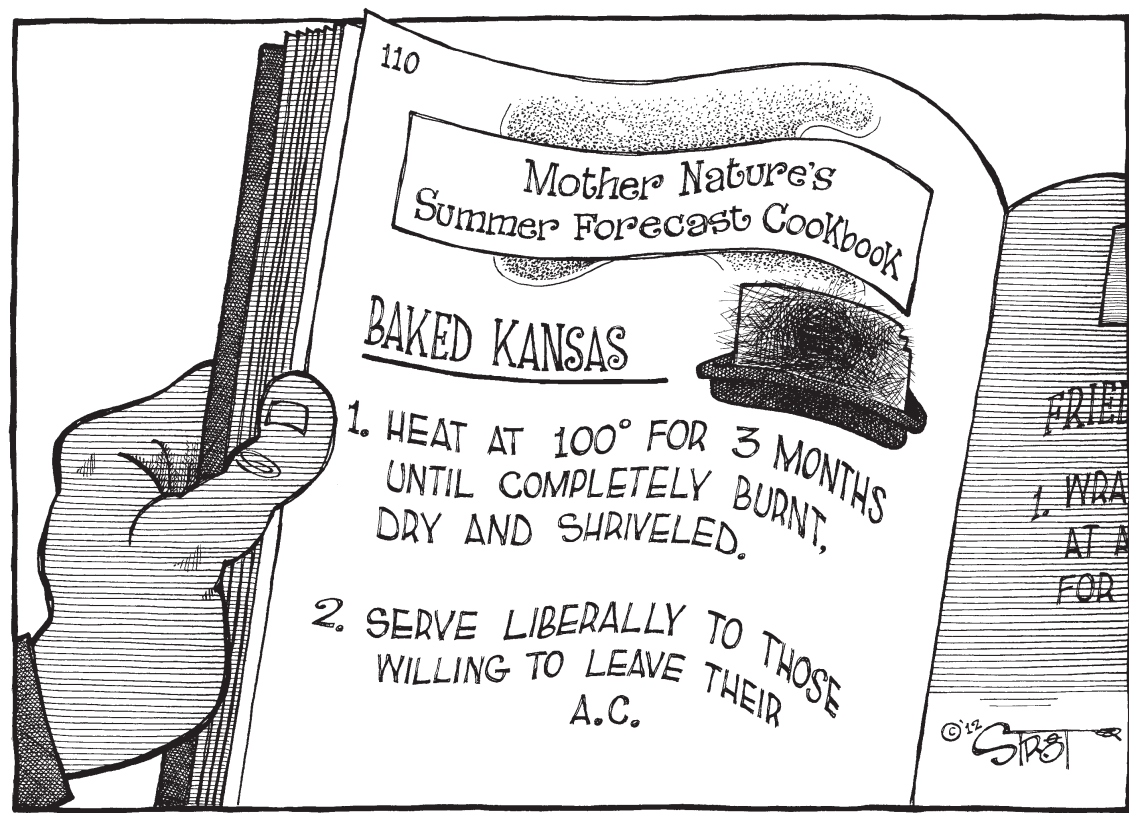
Some claim national conservative groups, backed by the billionaire Koch brothers of Wichita, are out to take over state Legislatures for the conservative cause.

The impact of that initiative remains to be seen. By forcing the federal courts to draw district maps for the Legislature and Congress, however, the conservatives may have shot themselves in the foot. Some observers say they, not the moderates, will come out as the big losers.

This fight is not just in Kansas, and it's not going away. Everyone, conservative, moderate or liberal, has the right to state their case and run for office, of course. Voters may find some of the tactics offensive, though.

In the end, they'll decide who they want running the states, not the money guys or the national groups. And that may surprise a few people.

— Steve Haynes



## It was a really, really bad day

As the old comic strip Pogo would have said, "Friday the 13th done come on Wednesday."

My mother died on June 13, 2011. I will always remember the date, not because I'm especially good at that sort of thing but, because it was the day before her 65th wedding anniversary.

So last Wednesday started out sadly and then things really started to go wrong.

When I got to my office in Oberlin, my writing program wouldn't work and I started getting calls from Colby and Goodland that they couldn't use their fax machines.

A simple restart and update fixed my problems. The fax problems were more complicated. The machines would receive faxes and could fax documents in town but couldn't send things out of town. A quick check showed that St. Francis was also suffering from the out-of-town fax bug.

I made a few phone calls and basically shoved the problem onto Evan's shoulders. And he got it fixed. God bless him.

That was before lunch. After lunch, I saw friends coming out of the courthouse. They had just been to hear our U.S. Rep. Tim Huelkamp speak.

We had completely missed the e-mails, which go to three of us, that he was even going to be in Oberlin. We didn't have his visit in the paper nor did we attend the meeting.

We all felt like fools and, worse, we hadn't alerted other people who might have been interested in going to his visit.



### Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes  
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Then I called my sister. My sister had visited our mother every day for the eight years she was in the nursing home. In the last year before Mom's death, she went two and three times a day.

I was the daughter who showed up every month to six weeks. It took me a full day to drive to Concordia to see Mom for a couple of hours.

Sis was her rock. The one who was always there making sure she had the best care possible, fixing her fingernails, bringing her treats, running her errands.

Wednesday was tough for her. Then I got the news of another death.

April Alice had been hit by a car. She was dead in the alley behind the house. We called her a sand cat, because her fur was the color of sand. Apparently, she'd been a little too well camouflaged that day.

Her death came just a couple of months after her son died of unknown causes on our bathroom floor.

She came to us in April of 2002, when we were looking for a cat for our son.

She was living in a shed and jumped in my arms and started to

purr the minute she saw me. Steve noted that she was pregnant, but our son said he'd take one of the kittens.

April Alice loved to sleep with us in bed. When the kitten our son took came back to live with us, she wasn't any more pleased than any other mother whose adult offspring has come home to live. Especially because Frank liked that same spot on the bed.

For the last few months, however, she's ruled the bed. Now it feels sort of empty even when we're in it.

Do cats go to heaven? I don't know, but Mom always had a soft spot in her heart for April Alice.

### From the Bible

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: For we walk by faith, not by sight: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.  
— II Corinthians 5: 6-8

## Chicks move to new home

The chicks have graduated from the box in the bathtub to their new home for the next couple of months.

We had to get the chicks moved out because they will be having some cousins hatch this week and they will need the box in the bathtub. The chicks have moved into an elevated coop Jim made which sits right outside our back door by the porch. It's a nice little two-room condo with a heat lamp to ward off the chilly night air and fresh wood chips cover the floor of the living area. The outer courtyard is enclosed by (appropriately) chicken wire and a secure latch provides security.

At first, the three surviving chicks kept huddled in the back corner of the coop and seemed anxious about stepping outside into the open part. I'm not sure I'm qualified to assess whether or not a chicken is "anxious," but they were certainly hesitant to leave their corner. It didn't look like they had drunk any of their water, so I moved it into their compartment.

We use an old-fashioned waterer. It has a glass base. After filling a quart jar with fresh water, you quickly invert the jar over the base. It keeps the water level constant as the chicks drink. Same thing with their feed. They both operate on gravity.

After a few days, though, the chicks seem to be comfortable in their new "digs."



### Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts  
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I'm sure our friends think we're Ma and Pa Kettle.

Last week, I was hostess for my ladies club. With Jim's help, I was ready and it came off without a hitch, although I warned the women not to look in the oven. I was afraid one of us might have stuffed some dirty clothes in there.

My mother was a charter member of this particular club. It began in 1934 as the result of several women in two separate neighboring school districts wanting to help a young couple about to have a baby.

It was during the Great Depression, and nobody had any money, but this young couple had less than nothing. The women gathered monthly and each brought what they could spare: perhaps a single diaper, perhaps a blanket, maybe a little T-shirt or some diaper pins. Finally, they had a layette put together to welcome the new baby.

They all agreed it was so much fun they wanted to continue meeting. In the bylaws, it is written that dues can never be raised. Dues were

50 cents a year, and if a member needed to pay their dues in installments they could. In its heyday the club numbered about 20 women. Of course, their children came, too. So imagine 20 women with probably that many more kids, and it becomes a wild scene.

Another bylaw stated that the club's sole purpose was to have fun. Farm wives were more isolated then than they are now. Back then, some didn't know how to drive and even if they did, they may not have had a car. One thing was certain: if it was club day, a member's husband knew his wife would be gone for the afternoon. He better not expect a big supper that night because she would stay the entire two hours, 2 to 4 p.m. that was the time these women set aside, once a month, to dress up a little, use the good dishes and catch up on the lives of their friends.

Times were different, but people stay the same. These women, some mothers of my old school mates, are my dearest friends in the world. We would do anything for each other and value each other's friendship.

## Train ride nets a great story

Riding home from Chicago the other night, we enjoyed dinner in the diner as we rolled along through the corn fields of Illinois and Iowa.

One of the quaint customs of dining on the train is that unless you have a party of four, they seat you with others to fill up the car. We wound up across from a couple from California, both born in Vietnam.

Across the aisle were four friends, all chattering away in Vietnamese. Turns out, they were all members of the Class of 1978 at Da Nang High School, together on a cross-country reunion. They'd flown east and been to New York and Washington; now they were taking the train across the country, soaking up the sights of the Heartland.

At their high school, they said, each grade had about 800 students and classes averaged 40 students. They were expected to have a major which they would pursue in college.

Three of them had left Vietnam at various times; three of them stayed and had flown over for this trip. And they were having quite a time.

Over dinner, I asked An how long she'd been in this country. She said she'd come over in 1986 and had gone to college here in electrical engineering. Now she and her husband are software engineers for Cisco Systems.

How did she get here? "You've heard of boat people?" she asked. "That's me."

She said she'd been lucky. Some boat people didn't make it. Some disappeared at sea. Some spent weeks on overcrowded boats and were lucky to be fished out in time.



### Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes  
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She and her older sister left Vietnam with the boat's owner, who took only his family, plus her and her older sister.

"Sixteen people, that's all we had," she recalled. "Three days later we were in Thailand. We went to a refugee camp. I was very lucky."

The camp was on the beach, she said, and that was nice, but the beds were right up against each other. Some of the others had been there for months; some told terrible stories of their escapes.

Officials told her that, since she did not know anyone in the U.S. to sponsor her, it could be years before she'd be allowed to immigrate. They told her she would need to go to a new camp in the Philippines, learn English and American culture, and make herself ready.

"I had to sign a paper," she said. "I signed."

The new camp was much nicer, she said, even if it wasn't on the beach. Each family had a little house, only five or six people together.

Then, after a few weeks, the news spread that President Carter had relaxed the quota restrictions on Vietnamese immigrants. They'd be able to go to the U.S.

"The whole camp stayed up late that night," she said.

She and her sister located a distant aunt in Tulsa who would sponsor them. They flew to Oklahoma. In the summer when they arrived, it was hot, but in the winter, the cold was too much. A friend told them about California, and a few weeks later, they were on a Greyhound bus bound for the Golden State.

There they went to a community college, then the University of California at Davis. She met her husband and got into computers. She still thinks she has been lucky, even if Vietnam has changed some.

We talked a little about what we'd seen in our one trip to Vietnam and the differences we saw even today between north and south. And the stories our southern friends had told of how their families had been persecuted after the war.

"You heard true stories," she said. "You heard true stories."

Today, she and her sisters, all except the youngest, live in the U.S. Their parents and the younger girl stayed in Vietnam.

No one said anything about going back.

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## Couple offers Constitution class

To the Editor:

American families are standing on a cliff as they try to envision their country's future, this Presidential election year. Citizens must educate themselves! They are invited to attend a series of four short recorded lectures on an introduction to the Constitution by Larry Arnn, president of Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Mich.

### Letter to the Editor

Please be our guests at 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 3, at the Sunflower Cinema.

Jerry and Marcia Lohofener, Oberlin

