

Who speaks up for us when governments lobby?

A bill in the Kansas Senate this year that would have prohibited lobbying by public agencies and local government apparently has gone nowhere fast.

While there are interesting arguments on both sides of this issue, it's hard to believe that lobbyists from cities, counties and school districts always represent the interests of "their constituents" when they gather at the Statehouse.

They represent the interests of their employers and/or members as public officials and public agencies, and that can be a far different.

Public officials often want to spend more taxpayer money, for one thing, and their constituents may or may not agree with that. But when a city or county hires a lobbyist to argue for the ability to spend more on something, or make it easier to borrow money or raise taxes, there's usually no consulting the voters first.

In fact, the taxpayers' interests seldom come to the fore in these discussions — and may be diametrically opposed to the interests of public officials.

A lot of public-agency or local-government lobbying is conducted by associations which owe no allegiance to the voters. These associations, and their staffs, are beholden only to the municipal, county and school officials who elect them and hire them and keep them in office.

Their interest is in keeping their jobs and representing *their* constituents, the public officials who pay and hire them.

That doesn't make these groups bad per se, but it doesn't make them representatives of the voters, either. And while you'd think the legislators themselves would represent the voters, many of them are former city, county and school officials who see things much the

same way these groups do.

When the lobbyists for local government come to the Capitol seeking a change in state law or to block a bill that might make it more difficult to raise taxes, it's hard to see them as representing taxpayers.

The same goes for state agencies that try to influence legislation. The Department of Revenue, say, may have an interest in increasing the tax take by changing certain rules. Who represents the taxpayers then?

Another thing local-government associations often want is more secrecy. These groups typically oppose changes in open meetings and open records acts to make information more accessible to taxpayers. They push to ease requirements for publication of public documents, reports on public spending and the like, and back proposals to allow local government to hide their "publications" on obscure city or county websites.

Voters pretty clearly need and want more information, not less, and these "public" lobbyists are not representing them in Topeka when they do this.

The idea of SB 109, which would have banned use of any public money to lobby the Legislature, may seem a little harsh, but in the current system, taxpayers' needs generally get lost among the wants and desires of their elected officials.

Democracy is best served by open government, a free flow of information and a regard for the voters' and taxpayers' interest that is largely lacking when local governments spends taxpayer money to lobby. It's a system that should be changed.

There should be severe limits on how a government agency can spend money taken from taxpayers in ways they may not approve.

— Steve Haynes



Bringing home the bacon

Steve's sister and brother-in-law gave us bacon for Christmas.

This was a great gift. We really love bacon, especially from the small meat-packing plant they get it at in Emporia. And, besides food is a wonderful gift that you never have to dust or worry about what to do with it — you eat it, or take it to work and let everyone else eat it.

We gave them a ham for Christmas. I'm pretty sure they ate it.

Anyway, we ate a lot of the bacon, but they gave a whole lot of bacon, and some of it was really thick cut, like a quarter-inch thick cut, like pie-dough thickness cut. Little sister said to just cook it longer. That's what I was planning to do, but then I got another idea.

Back in the summertime, when we were in Colorado, I bought some sausage a cousin of mine made at his grocery. He called it baconlicious. And it was. He mixes bacon with his traditional sausage mixture and the result is really, really yummy.

I brought several pounds home, but by February, it was all a long-ago memory and here I was with all this wonderful thick-cut bacon. Maybe, I thought, I could make some baconlicious sausage of my own.

Now as much as I love my cousin's baconlicious sausage, his regular sausage isn't nearly as good as what they make at the local grocery.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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So I trotted down to Raye's and bought several pounds of their best homemade sausage and froze it down.

It took a month or so to get around to finding the time and assembling all the pieces needed to make my sausage.

My mixer has a meat-grinder attachment. In the 30 or so years I've had it, I've never used that piece. In fact, I've got all kinds of parts to that mixer, from dough hooks to a food processor, that I've never used.

It took a little while to figure out how everything went together, especially since the meat grinder goes on just opposite of how the mixer sits on the motor housing.

Eventually, I got it all figured out. Now I just had to decide what proportion of bacon to sausage I needed. I eventually decided that a 1-to-2 ratio of bacon to sausage would be best, since I wasn't adding any extra seasonings and I

didn't want the bacon to completely overshadow the wonderful sausage flavor.

I ended up with about three pounds of funky looking meat which I carefully mixed together and made into patties.

Then I fried all them up, setting all but one aside for later.

I got rid of most of the grease in the skillet, added two packages of sausage gravy mix, plus the required milk and water, and crumbled my saved patty into the pan. Soon I had biscuits and gravy on the table for supper and 15 cooked baconlicious patties in the freezer for breakfasts.

They were all gone within a couple of weeks. After all they were baconlicious, too.

Next time, I may have to buy my own bacon. Or maybe, if I talked right to Steve's sister, she'd get some in return for a cut of the product.

Time to throw in the, er, towel

A dear friend was laid to rest today. She was so faithful and stuck with me through thick and thin, but she simply wore out.

In fact, she was so thin you could almost see right through her when you held her up to the light. She was my favorite blouse, and today was her last day.

One of my girls gave her to me for a birthday present several years ago, and I doubt there was a week went by that I did not wear that blouse. It was coral with yellow and turquoise patches, plus bright embroidery. Sounds gaudy, and maybe it was, but I loved that blouse. It always seemed to fit, even if nothing else did.

After several seasons, I had to retire it from my "good-clothes" wardrobe and hang it with my everyday, work-at-home clothes. The hem is frayed, a button is missing, the "patches" faded and the top-stitching worn through. Today, when I pulled it off the hangar, the collar almost came off in my hand.

So it ends. But that blouse's useful days are not entirely over. She'll end up in the rag bag, and next time I see her, she'll be dusting furniture or wiping up a spill.

-ob-

The baby calf has officially been named by Ani, our 6- (almost 7-) year-old granddaughter. She was the only one of the grandchildren who



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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had never named a calf, so I texted a picture of the little heifer to Ani's mom and asked her to have Ani come up with a good name.

The reply came back, "Cocoa."

I like it. A perfect name for a little Black Angus. There's only one problem. I will have to send Ani another picture, because her PaPa went to the sale barn and bought a little friend for Cocoa. Since the two calves look like twins, I'll be anxious to hear what other name Ani might come up with.

In the meantime, I'm fixing bottles of milk for the little girls and feeding three times a day. Jim wants me to start them drinking from a bucket, but I have several friends with little kids who want to come feed them while they're still on the bottle.

I don't know what is more fun: watching the calves eagerly take their bottles or the children as they delight in feeding them.

-ob-

This was the week for planting trees. We keep a "nursery" right outside the kitchen window for baby trees. Some we buy (after they've been discounted), some come up volunteer, some are given to us. They stay safe in the nursery, where I can water and weed them until we decide where they need to be planted.

Last year, we talked about where to put trees. This year, we transplanted several of the larger ones: a maple, an oak, two flowering plums and about six cottonwood trees we transplanted from a friend's pasture. It might take a lot of water this summer to keep them alive, but a tree in Kansas is worth whatever it costs.

We may not live to see shade from the ones we planted, but as my mother used to say, "Plant a tree for the next generation. Someone planted these for you."

End may be in sight for polio

One of the most amazing public-health efforts of our lifetime has been created, pushed along and financed not by governments, but by a private organization, Rotary International.

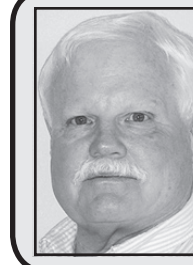
Starting in 1985, Rotary saw the need and the potential to wipe out this dread crippling disease. Those of us who grew up in the 1950s remember the fear that gripped the nation each summer, the television footage of children in iron lungs, the crippled classmates who'd survived.

Rotarians decided to do something about it. The world had by then vanquished smallpox. Why not polio?

By 1988, the group had succeeded in making an end to polio a top international health concern. In the 25 years since, Rotary has raised more than \$1 billion from members and fund raisers. Millions of children have been vaccinated around the world, and the picture has changed radically — and for the better.

In 1988, polio was endemic in most of Europe, south Asia and Africa and in much of Latin America. The anti-polio coalition has succeeded in driving the disease out of all of Africa except parts of Nigeria, however, and completely banished it from the Americas.

The only big concentration of



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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polio today is in the mountains of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Much of this area is wracked by war and dissension. Volunteers sometimes face death from radicals convinced that their work is a Western plot to kill Muslim children, or worse.

Here I must point out, I have been a member of Rotary clubs for more than 30 years in Kansas and Colorado and have contributed in my own small way to this effort. I can't claim to have done much, mind you, just a little, but this effort requires the participation of many. I've tried to do my part.

In the 1980s, we thought polio would be gone by now. Under the original timetable for Polio Plus, it would have been just an unpleasant memory. It's not gone yet, but the end may be in sight. And the delay in its eradication does not diminish the luster of this international effort one bit.

Polio just turned out to be a little

tougher than we thought. The battle is being won, yes, but it's not over yet. And it won't be for a few more years.

No one is planning to give up. Rotarians all over the world remain committed to this cause. The Oberlin Rotary Club alone has given more than \$10,000 to the effort in recent years, though that is just a drop in the bucket. It will give more.

It's safe to say that none of the partners in this effort will quit until the last case of polio is recorded, the last unprotected child is vaccinated and the last campaign closed out. It's been more than 60 years since we stood in line for that first round of vaccine. A lot has happened since then.

Polio's history will be written later, but already, millions and millions of children sleep safe from the disease that once sent a chill of fear through the world's mothers each summer.

It will be a triumph of medical science, yes, but also a triumph of the best of human spirit over an enemy that is more resilient than we first thought.

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 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.

