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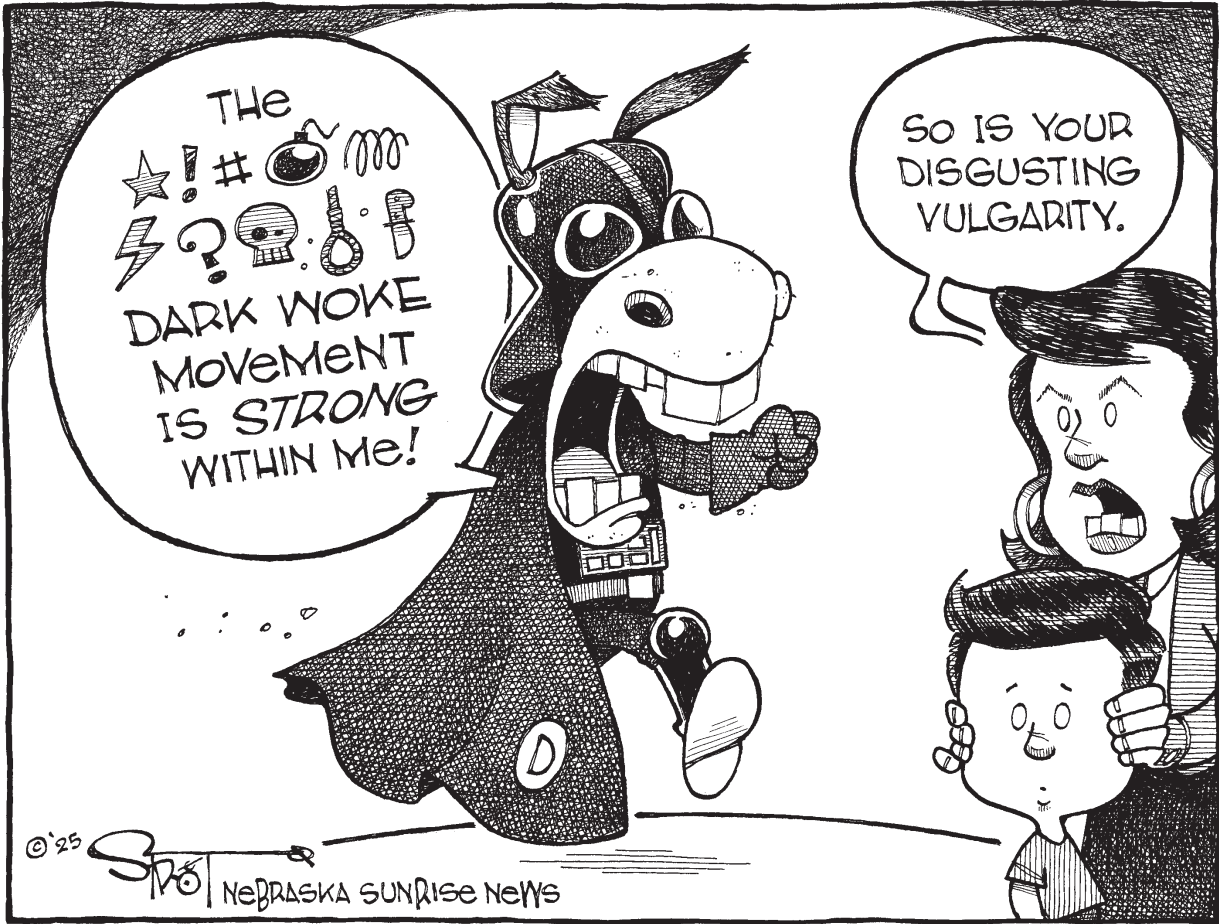
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The 3rd Rail



Letters to the Editor

Priorities in education

Dear Editor:

In response to James Weeks's letter of April 17, I agree that public education has many concerns. To quote James, "It is all about priorities."

Many great classroom teachers are doing a fantastic job of educating our kids. They should be respected and given the benefit of

doubt on how they do their jobs.

Learning how to be a good citizen is part of the educational process. Students should come to school prepared to learn and follow reasonable requests while at school. This is the number one priority parents should instill in their children.

There may be problems in this process. Teachers must be trusted to make the right choices to solve problems. Some parents want to believe their child's side of a problem and then go on the offensive

to correct the teacher. Supporting teachers to do the right thing is the second priority that will help keep them from leaving the profession.

Financial support to education is the third priority that is essential. It begins with school district patrons and ends with state and federal legislators. Competitive compensation keeps teachers in the profession!

You want better teachers and schools? What are your priorities?
**Larry Clark
Burlington**

Legislative Update

(April 25) — Even though the 2025 session ended a couple of weeks ago, several bills were recently signed into law. After a bill



Caryn Tyson

*State Senator
12th District*

passes the legislature, there is a 10-day time frame to get it to the Governor. The Governor then has another 10 days to sign or veto the bill, if not it becomes law without the Governor's signature. This week my update focuses on tax policy. All legislation can be found at www.KSLegislature.gov.

No Personal Property Taxes on electric wheelchairs, ATVs (all-terrain vehicles), snowmobiles, off-road motorcycles, golf carts not operated on the highway, motorized bicycles, trailers 15,000 pounds or less used for personal use, and watercraft. A couple of years ago a constituent called and said she paid more property taxes on her ATV than on her home. Coincidentally, the president of the Kansas County Appraisers Association (KCAA) called me and suggested exempting certain items from property taxes, such as electric wheelchairs, ATVs, and such. It took a few years, but we got it into law.

Property Tax Increase Notices, (CCR 2125) sometimes referred to as notices to exceed revenue neutral, printing and postage will be paid by the state for 2025 and 2026. A few local officials will complain about the cost of the let-

ter, but the state has offered reimbursement since the law passed. It is the only advance notice of proposed property tax increases that taxpayers receive. Last year, over 60% of the over 4,000 property taxing authorities remained revenue neutral, they did not collect more in property taxes than the previous year. That would have never happened without the revenue neutral process in law. The format of the letter will also include totals and a couple of other changes.

Property Tax Statements that county treasurers mail are now required to be mailed by Dec. 1, instead of Dec. 15. Payments will still be due on Dec. 20.

Local Government Budgets will be due to the county clerk by Oct 1, or the clerk will use the previous year's budget and amount of property taxes to be levied. Currently, local government budgets not exceeding revenue neutral are due Aug 25, and the rest are due Oct 1. Why? Because it wasn't changed when another statute was repealed, so I worked to make the change.

Filing Fees for the Board of Tax Appeals (BOTA) will be good until the BOTA case for that parcel is heard. It didn't make sense that taxpayers had to pay the fee each year until the case was heard.

Property Tax Freeze for Seniors and Disabled Veterans was expanded by exempting Social Security from household income. It was the only expansion we could get passed by both chambers. I will continue to work on ad-

ressing the broken property tax system so more people are able to stay in their homes.

Head of Household and Disabled Veteran income tax filers will have an increased personal exemption. Last year we increased personal exemptions and exempted Social Security from state income tax. At a legislative coffee, I was thanked for my work on this. It was very kind to hear, because I have worked diligently in leading this effort to get these and other tax cuts into law.

Countywide Sales Tax Apportionment will keep the current sales tax distribution of the countywide sales tax. You may remember, county sales tax must be shared with municipalities unless specified differently. That distribution is based off mill levies. By keeping the current distribution until December 2026, this will allow counties to lower mill levies without decreasing sales tax apportionment for a year. This should give the legislature time to change the equation so that counties attempting to lower property taxes will not receive less sales tax.

Sales Tax Exemption on Custom Meat Processing was passed into law last year, but the Department of Revenue was requiring a form be signed by each customer claiming the sales tax exemption. This form will no longer be required. The customer will be responsible for paying the sales tax if it is not custom for their own use.

Pioneer lessons

As the end of the school year is quickly coming into sight for my children, the end-of-year activities are beginning to ramp up. State assessments have been completed, countdowns have begun and field trips have picked up.

Insight



Kim Baldwin

*McPherson
County farmer
and rancher*

I recently joined my daughter's elementary class as they expanded on their classroom lessons about pioneers and experienced a different time period for a day. Students dressed up as pioneer children, wrapped their lunch in parchment paper, packed it into metal pails and headed to Wichita to participate in a day of experiential learning.

Their earlier lessons truly came to life as these students experienced multiple aspects of what life was like for a child in Kansas more than 150 years ago.

For a portion of the morning, the students entered a restored farmhouse and learned about a variety of chores required to churn butter, fire up the kitchen stove, wash dishes and make toast. Afterwards, the students moved outside to learn about some of the tasks they would have helped with had they lived on a farm. From cutting grass using a scythe, tossing hay using pitchforks, utilizing pulley systems to move heavy objects to planting rows and rows of seed on foot, the kids soon realized that there was a lot of work involved in running a farm back in the day.

While walking by some antique farm machinery that was being explained to the kids, I couldn't help but think that I sure was glad I live in 2025 and can utilize advanced technology and practices from planting seeds to harvesting crops.

I was soon reminded that while there have been major advancements in technology, some things still remain the same.

As the students wrapped up their lesson about all of the work required of a pioneer family to prepare for planting to harvest, we rounded a corner to discover a large display board with pegs.

The students were asked what was one thing completely out of their control that still needed to happen to increase the odds of growing a successful crop to harvest. While there were some interesting answers presented by these third graders, the main answer was rain.

The students were then each handed a hockey puck and one by one they were prompted to select a space on the peg board to release their puck. Where the puck would land would determine the crop they would have, ranging from a bumper crop all the way to a total failure.

Students cheered one another on as each child would approach the board and chose where to place their puck before releasing it to watch as it bounced from peg to peg before arriving at its final spot.

High fives and cheers were given when a puck landed on average or bumper harvests and audible sighs were heard when a puck would land in the zones deemed below average and crop failure.

You could actually see some students were quite anxious as they approached the board to find out the results of their crop. Sometimes a student would second guess their initial placement of their puck and quickly select another area of the board before releasing hoping their luck would be better by making an adjustment.

Overall, there were more successful harvests than crop failures with this group of students. Nonetheless, the exercise allowed students to briefly experience the feelings and concerns a farmer living in the late 1800s would potentially have as they grew a crop.

The day I spent with a group of pioneer kids is one I will soon not forget as it was a great reminder of the realities and concerns of farmers back then that are still present for us today.

Sometimes it takes a day in third grade to help me realize that while there have been major advancements, there are still plenty of areas that impact the success of our farms today just like those from years past.

— "Insight" is a weekly column published by Kansas Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm organization whose mission is to strengthen agriculture and the lives of Kansans through advocacy, education and service.

County

Continued from Page 1

still needs \$18,646.55 by mid-June. County Counselor Wade H. Bowie II plans to partially fund the request with diversionary funds, which is funded by eligible criminal offenders, not taxpayers.

Zoning Administrator Heidi Harris briefed commissioners on the pending comprehensive plan. She recommended participation from the planning board chair, planning consultant Russ Ewy and the commission in a future kickoff session.

Commissioners revisited and rescinded several motions made or seconded by former commissioner Hugunin after his resignation was submitted March 21. They reapproved a set of change

orders related to the construction of the Coffey County Law Enforcement Center, including adjustments to parking, ductwork, and sprinkler systems. The changes did not alter the project's guaranteed maximum price of \$25.7 million.

Resolution No. 751-Da was passed to cancel and reallocate county checks issued prior to January 1, 2023. The board also scheduled a public hearing for April 28 to consider a special-use permit for an animal clinic in the A-1 Agricultural District.

Additional topics included a report on unfunded state mandates delivered by Commissioner Steve McCurry following a SEK Road meeting, discussion of landfill pricing for out-of-county waste, interest in the former Marie Belle's building in Burlington, and the former Bailey home.

Submit News

The Coffey County Republican welcomes submission of news items of interest to the community. All news items are subject to editing and will be published at the discretion of the newspaper, based on timelines, newsworthiness and available space. The newspaper cannot guarantee publication or confirm publication dates of submitted news items.

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