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Republican

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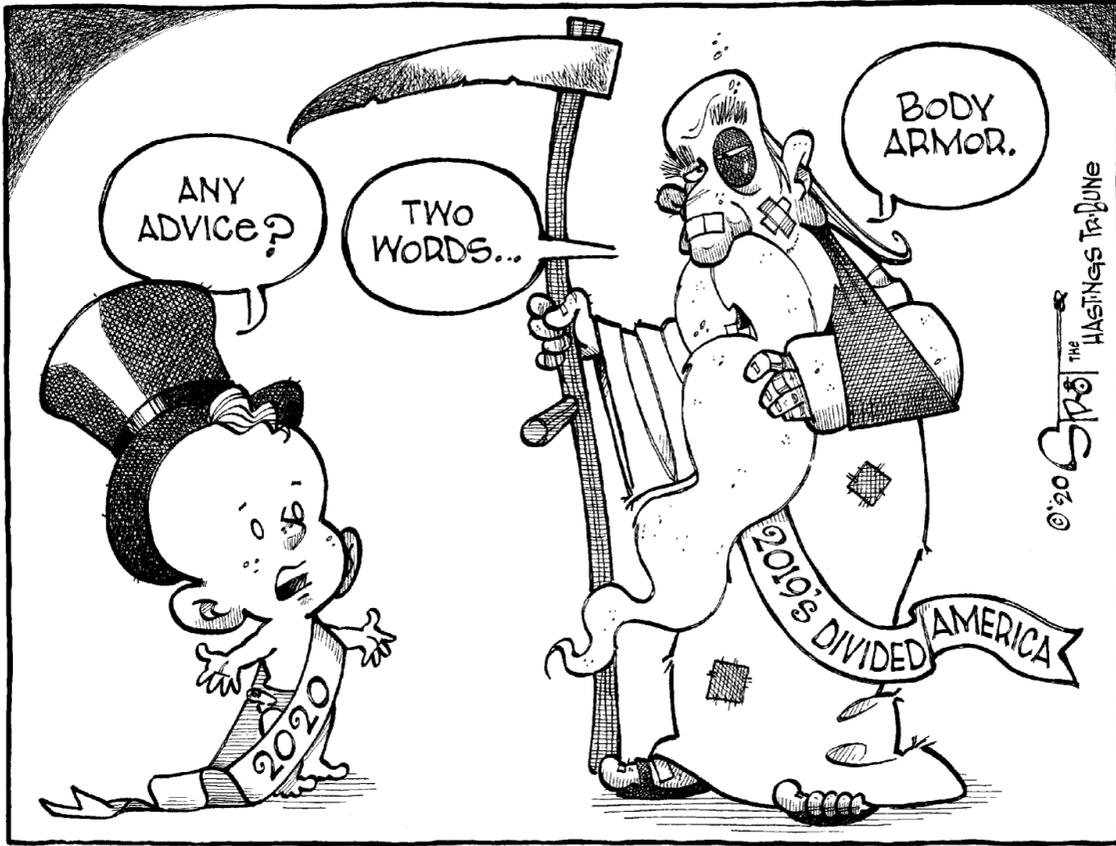
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Letters to the Editor

Burlington USD 244 BOE members leading for success

Dear Editor:

January is School Board Recognition Month, a great opportunity to say thank you to the Burlington USD 244 Board of Education, who are committed to the success of every student in the community.

USD 244's board of education includes Shane Fejfar, president; Monique Hart, vice president; Lucas Allen; Stacy Augustyn; James Higgins; Selena King; and Michael Thorp.

These seven community leaders vol-

unteer hundreds of hours attending meetings, reading reports and discussing plans and programs to support educational achievement.

Our board members develop policies and make complex decisions that shape the future of our education system. They are accountable for an annual budget of \$20 million, 830 students, 260 employees and three buildings.

A board member's responsibility goes far beyond the monthly meeting, however.

They also meet with legislators and other policy makers to advocate for our schools to make sure every child has access to an excellent education. We are grateful to have this opportunity to formally say "thank you" to each of them.

Burlington USD 244 encourages the entire community to thank a school board member, not only this month but throughout the entire year.

Craig Marshall
Burlington USD 244
Superintendent of Schools

Seize the day

A few days after Christmas my husband came home with a sack from the local grocery store. In the bag was a combination of noise makers, paper eyeglasses and crowns. All items had 2020 somewhere on them. He immediately put the bag on one of our kitchen shelves that we generally use to hide things from the kids. I forgot about the items until my husband brought them out of their hiding spot on the evening of the last day of the year.

The kids immediately gravitated toward the noise makers and put their full gusto into kicking off a celebration. After a dozen seconds of the incessant squawking, which sounded more like sickly geese honking, we encouraged the kids to put the noisemakers down and choose some other items to quietly wear to celebrate the coming of the new year.

My daughter, who very much enjoys accessories, donned herself with both the 2020 eyeglasses and tiara, and she immediately began dancing around the kitchen and then took off through the house. She quickly ditched the eyeglasses, but absolutely embraced wearing the tiara. As the evening progressed, we enjoyed

playing a card game that we had spent a lot of time playing together since acquiring it Christmas morning. As we sat around the kitchen table drawing cards and trying to slow down our opponents, the distant noise of the television in the other room offered New Year programming. It was a calm and simple and lovely evening together with my family that all too often is missed because of busy schedules and distractions. We had nowhere we had to be, and nothing needed immediate attention on Jan. 1. The evening allowed us all to simply be. We were present, and close, and enjoying each other's company.

As the East Coast prepared to ring in the new year, so did my family. The kids didn't need to stay up until midnight Central Time, and I was not willing to explain time zones to them that night. We wished each other a Happy New Year and settled down for the evening.

The following morning, a chipper and well-rested crew appeared from their rooms. My 4-year-old daughter, Isannah, emerged wearing her new year's tiara centered on her head. It's a paper item that surprisingly did not break after its first wear the night before. Isannah emerged as royalty, ready to seize the day with her headpiece. And she and her brother did just that – seized the day – and enjoyed the final hours of their break before returning to school the next

day. For the next two mornings, although the calm and relaxed mornings have subsided, Isannah has continued to wake from her slumber and immediately place her paper tiara on her head before joining us at the table for breakfast.

She walks into the room with her crown centered on her head ready to seize the day, and despite her brother's attempts to distract and unnerve her by helping it fall off, she calmly places it back on her head of curls and continues on with her morning. She doesn't allow her brother's attempts to impact her morning. She is present, and sits close with the family, and continues to enjoy her time with everyone over breakfast before she carefully places her headpiece back on her desk before leaving for school to seize the day.

May we all approach this new year like my 4-year-old has with her delicate paper tiara these last few days. May you enter each day this year intentionally with a crown centrally placed on your head. And may we all brush off those distractions and other instances that would impact how one wears the crown. And may we all re-center our headpieces quickly in order to seize each day!

—*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.

Democracy not universally accepted

Current unrest in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon contradicts the American expectation that bringing a democratic governmental system to a country will convert the population to democracy. Now there is research that shows a population must itself grow from its own history to develop its own form of more democratic system. Any attempts to impose democracy from outside are likely to fail.

This conclusion comes from a major study just published December 2 in the science journal Nature Human Behavior: "The cultural foundations of modern democracies." The analysis was conducted by Damian J. Ruck and his team from the University of Tennessee.

They base their analysis on the fact that each person's cultural values develop during their first decades of life and do not change thereafter. They therefore conducted surveys, using the responses of younger and older citizens to assess cultural values over several generations.

Ruck's team used surveys of a person's values to determine the extent they respected individual rights or had confi-

dence in governing institutions. They analyzed responses from over 475,000 adults in over 100 countries gathered over 25 years. Aligning the range of ages surveyed, they determined cultural values back to the early 1900s. They then compared any changes in collective values to their country's changing status between democracy to autocracy.

They found that any assumption that we can impose democracy on a country is wrong, and will usually fail unless citizens had already adopted democratic values. In other words, we cannot simply export our democracy to other countries. It may take up to 30 years for a population to become more open to diversity, become comfortable with others from different ethnic groups, or accept others with differing beliefs. But forcing a country to first form a democracy did not generate these democratic values.

Researchers also discovered that a lack of confidence in government institutions often led to a change in government. And democracies could just as readily change into autocracies.

Although not mentioned in this study, these findings become worrisome for other countries, such as India, where the world's supposed largest democracy is suffering massive protests and a drift toward theocracy. They do point out that

their data explain the back-and-forth political shifts in countries such as Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina.

Lessons from this extensive study may not change American policy, where the United States has a long history of not only interfering in other countries' affairs militarily, but also ties diplomatic aid to a country conforming to our Western values. With a few exceptions, the U.S. has treated most of Africa and Central Asia as beyond help. But China provides aid without demanding change.

From its inception, China has forbidden itself from interfering with the internal politics of other countries. Their "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" basically states that China will work with other countries economically but without any coercion to change their political system. There is the belief that as a country rises out of poverty and achieves a higher level of education for its populace, that country will itself evolve from its historical base to develop a better governmental system.

In 2014, President Xi Jinping spoke at the commemoration marking the 60th anniversary of China's proposition of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" and explained the current attitude

Attractive issues

OK, we saw the first year of Gov. Laura Kelly's administration, and it was ... well ... businesslike, if not thrilling.

At the Rail



Martin Hawver
Columnist

She's got almost all of her Cabinet confirmed and made scores of appointments to various state agencies, boards and commissions that most of us never heard of.

Us Statehouse hangers-on are waiting with whatever is one less than baited-breath for her Jan. 15 State of the State Address where she tells the Legislature just what she wants to get done in her second year of office, the year that will bear her stamp—unlike last year's warm-up stretching.

This year's legislative session is going to be about the Legislature, or, more precisely, legislators getting re-elected, and challengers to those incumbents finding an issue or two that they can tout as reasons to send the incumbents back home.

Oh, that "good of the people" and "representing my constituents" and those catch-phrases are of course going to be at the top of those campaign brochures but it's all about getting re-elected. We all know that.

Kelly's role? Primarily to run the state in a businesslike manner and make her key issues attractive for Democrats and moderate Republicans who might just vote across the party line and remake the governance of the state.

Which comes down to issues that Kansans care about. That's the real key.

Is it taxes? Nobody likes them, but everyone wants better roads, better schools, health care for the poor, either because it is a moral obligation or to make those poor people less of an inconvenience for those who aren't. Tough, but that's some of what taxes pay for.

Ever notice that candidates who just want to concentrate on cutting taxes—again, that's always good—rarely have a bullet point on their campaign literature that says just what services or programs they will do away with if taxes are reduced? Just wondering ...

The major fights this session are already pretty well defined:



Count on expanding Medicaid (or KanCare as we've labeled it here in our state): The governor's for it, the conservatives in the Legislature generally oppose it unless it provides some benefit for the voters who have never had to ask a health-care provider if they can make payments instead of just sending the bill to their insurance company. The conservatives believe people should work somewhere to get that health care and aren't convinced that the 90 percent federal/10 percent state financing of the program is a good deal.



Last month, the so-called "red flag" issue popped up. That's convincing a judge to order law enforcement officers to seize the guns of people whose spouses, or others in a relationship with a gun owner, fear represent a danger to them or others. There's a little-used provision in state law now that allows that judge-approved order to go the police, but already gun fanciers are locked and loaded to make sure that the seizures don't happen. The governor supports "red flag," conservative – at this point mostly male – lawmakers are against it.



The Kansas Supreme Court? Issue there goes a couple ways, legislators, mostly the Senate, want to confirm gubernatorial appointments to the state's highest court, the governor doesn't. She'll have made two appointments to the court before lawmakers, if they can gin up a constitutional amendment and get it passed by voters this fall, learn whether they will get to OK future appointments.

A second court issue is whether the Legislature has unlawfully not fully-funded the constitutionally independent branch of government.



Those issues, and probably a few others, may tell us who comes back to the Legislature in 2021 ... to hear Kelly's third State of the State address.

—*Syndicated by Hawver News Company LLC of Topeka; Martin Hawver is publisher of Hawver's Capitol Report — to learn more about this nonpartisan statewide political news service, visit the website at www.hawvernews.com.*