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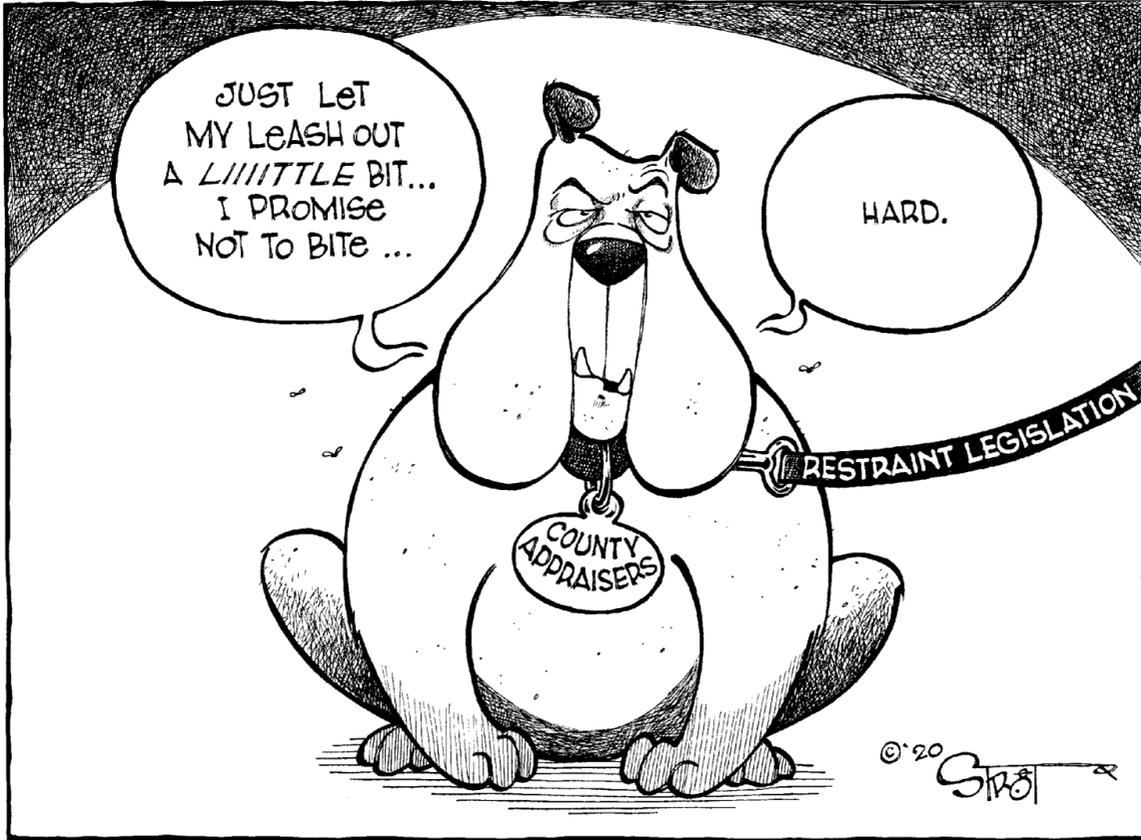
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Epidemic of science illiteracy

The absolutely outrageous claims by some broadcasters that this coronavirus COVID-19 is just the common flu would be laughed at in Germany where the average citizen has learned enough about their anatomy and diseases to refer themselves to a specialist when ill. Citizens in developed Asia and Europe, receive three times more science education. Such broadcasters there would soon be out of a job.

Education Frontlines



John Schrock
Educator

An educated citizenry knows to ask specific questions about any emerging disease threat. How likely is an infected person to die? That is the "case fatality rate." Sure, far more people die from the common flu than from this emerging virus, so far. But 30,000 deaths out of 40 million infected is a <0.1 percent chance of dying. COVID-19 kills between 2 and 3 patients per hundred.

Some cancers may be 100 percent fatal — but not contagious. So the rate of contagion (expected number of new cases likely to be caused by one case in a population where all persons in the population are susceptible) is important. This factor of contagion is called the basic reproductive number R0. This number also depends on whether other people in the population are immune due to prior exposure or vaccination. So how contagious is COVID-19 compared to other con-

tagious diseases? The average number of new cases that will arise from one infected person (R0) varies for the following agents.

Ebola (outbreak in Congo 2014) ...1.5-2.5
SARS (outbreak in China 2003) ...2-5
HIV/AIDS (arose 1980s)2-5
Mumps4-7
Measles12-18

Compared to the above levels of contagion, COVID-19 appears to infect at a rate of 1.4-3.8. But the Influenza epidemic of 1918 that began in Kansas and spread worldwide had a rate of only 2-3 but killed 675,000 in the United States and 50 million worldwide. So this R0 measure alone does not predict how fast the infection spreads or how fatal it will be.

There are other important questions medical researchers are working on answering. To what extent are there silent carriers who show no symptoms but who spread the infection? How long is an affected patient infectious? Does the disease agent travel as an airborne virus, in airborne droplets or by other contact? How long can the infectious agent survive in the environment?

The number of casualties that COVID-19 will cause will also depend on many cultural factors, including how willing a population is to "stand in place" to limit the transfer. But it likewise depends on each general citizen's intelligent understanding of these many factors.

We do not have to know about R0 values, but we need to understand different rates of contagion are important. We don't have

to have a degree in biochemistry, but we need to recognize that measles viruses spread readily but N95 masks can keep out the droplet-borne viruses like COVID-19.

Well-educated civilians in Korea or Germany ask more questions, understand more of the disease they are facing, and act to keep fatalities as low as possible. But a brief online article or a short talk with your doctor cannot replace two semesters of schooling in how your body works and how diseases spread. When it comes to science illiteracy, the U.S. can claim the title of being Number One!

Why does the American population have one of the lowest levels of science literacy of developed nations?

Some of the blame lies with our science societies themselves. For decades, the American Association for the Advancement of Science has advocated "less science, not more" despite scientists pointing out that "less science is less science." The NCLB, Common Core, and Next Generation Science Standards have kept science trivial. State Boards of Education water down science requirements by substituting computer courses; learning to code is not going to help anyone in this coming epidemic.

Aside from the brief post-Sputnik panic, America has discounted science as a necessity for students not aiming for a science career. As a result, we will face unnecessary deaths from science illiteracy.

Just ask your doctor if more science education is right for you.

Washington County's new Second Amendment Sanctuary status

We affirmed our constitutional right The Washington County Commissioners made a statement in support of our local priorities with the designation of Washington County as a Second Amendment Sanctuary on Jan. 18. The status would make us one of just a few counties in the entire nation to have both state and county-level sanctuary status.

In 2013, Governor Sam Brownback signed the Second Amendment Protection Act, which has similar intent on the state level as the Second Amendment Sanctuary vote has on the county level.

Since the sanctuary effort is generally an affirmation of the Second Amendment rights bestowed on us as a result of the Constitution, we really shouldn't have to pursue the effort of attaining this status. Gun rights are embedded in the

fabric of our nation.

But here we are.

We've seen an ongoing attack on the Constitution by the liberal left in this country. If they don't like something, they attempt to get their way regardless of the established laws of our country. But whether or not this sanctuary effort ultimately has teeth, at the very least a message has been sent from Washington County that we will not willingly give up our rights.

Not now. Not ever.

The sanctuary designation is supposed to serve as a both a safeguard to protect our Second Amendment rights locally, and a reminder to our state and country that we value those rights.

In essence, sanctuary status is supposed to prohibit or impede the enforcement of

gun control measures that would violate the Second Amendment, like universal gun background checks, high capacity magazine bans, assault weapon bans, and red flag laws among others. It doesn't really change anything that is currently happening locally, but the world is changing fast and we need to plant our flag of freedom now, before the nation tries to take it.

Washington Countians consider our Second Amendment rights to be part of who we are. That message should be remembered and heeded by anyone representing us or challenging us. It is better for us to be proactive in retaining our liberties, rather than reactive while losing them.

—Dan Thalmann, Washington County News

Embrace your own style

I was recently out of town for a week traveling to multiple locations in the country. My family stayed home to continue the day-to-day routines.

While I was gone, our community's Daddy Daughter Date Night took place. The event had been added onto our family calendar the day the flyer was sent home from school. It was the important topic of conversation during many breakfasts and dinners in our kitchen for weeks leading up to the event.

My 4-year-old daughter, Isannah, obsessed over the idea of a Daddy Daughter Date Night and all of the glamour associated with it. Her voice would instantly rise to an excitedly high-pitched squeak every time she'd mention the words "Daddy Daughter Date Night." She'd straighten her posture, walk on

her tiptoes and prance around the house exclaiming she was going on a fancy date. She also made sure to routinely remind my husband that he, in fact, would be available to take her, and it was going to be fabulous.

Both of my children have benefitted from hand-me-downs over the years. With multiple older cousins who grow fast, we've been able to add many outfits into the kids' closets for a new lease on life. Isannah has especially benefitted from having an older, stylish girl cousin who routinely sends beautiful clothes to be worn again by my girl. We have established quite a collection of holiday dresses, party dresses and princess dresses thanks to this wardrobe sharing agreement.

When my daughter first presented the handout detailing the Daddy Daughter Date Night event, I knew we wouldn't need to go dress shopping because we have plenty of options at home.

As the special night approached, I was

out of town. I worried I wouldn't be home to do my daughter's hair, let alone help her pick out her dress for this clearly momentous event in my little girl's life. Nonetheless, my girl proved she didn't necessarily need me to be there to help when I received a text message from my mother-in-law with an attached picture.

The image showed my little girl sitting on her daddy's lap with a bright smile before leaving for their date night. She had selected her dress and all of the accessories, and you could tell she was proud to have personally selected her date night outfit all by herself. You could tell she knew that she was going to be the fanciest little girl at the dance.

The dress she chose to wear was not one of her cousin's fancy, princess-like dresses I had anticipated she'd choose. Instead, it was a beautiful black dress with red ruffles and polka dots I had purchased for her while I was in Madrid, Spain, last

Powerful rules

Sometimes it is the little amendments offered up by a House or Senate member that don't get adopted that have you thinking, well, why not?

At the Rail



Martin Hawver
Columnist

Both the House and Senate have rules committees that, if asked, consider whether an amendment proposed by a member really relates to the subject of a bill being debated. It's called being "germane" to the topic of the bill which is being debated.

We guess the idea is that most of those amendments offered during debate have been considered and rejected by the committees, which pass the bills to the House or Senate for debate and rejected by those committees. Or ... maybe they just weren't thought-up until the bill is ready for full debate. Or ... maybe it is to bring to the full House or Senate an idea that leaders in each chamber would prefer go nowhere.

Last week, those rules committees grew pretty powerful.

In the House, the rules committee said that an amendment to expand Medicaid to thousands of Kansans didn't really relate to the insurance bill being debated. That bill dealt with health insurance and health care, but not specifically Medicaid. So, the amendment was ruled not germane, and the House adopted its committee's ruling. Medicaid wasn't debated or added to the insurance bill. It'll be tried again but didn't work last week.

And by not letting those amendments to go a full vote, legislators don't have to leave footprints on issues raised, just the procedure. Might look better on a campaign flyer to have voted to sustain the decision of a rules committee than to have voted against ... say ... Medicaid expansion.

In the Senate, there were a couple amendments that sounded pretty good when their authors explained them ... before they were ruled not germane and discarded.

One of them that sounded pretty logical, and heart-warming, didn't get added into a bill that related to a simple change of terminology referring to forced prostitution. It simply changed the term from "sexual relation" to "sex act."

Pretty simple, and women and young girls forced into prostitution really don't have a relationship with those who abuse them ... just performing a sex act.

The amendment by Sen. David Haley, D-Kansas City, proposed to add to that pretty logical bill to make sure that women, often victims of forcible sex trafficking, do not wind up with their names on court records.

It's called "vacation," that erasing the name of the victims so that it doesn't follow them for the rest of their lives and damage their chances of getting regular jobs and living the lives everyone wants.

Sounded like a good idea, a reasonable way to protect those abused women.

Or ... would have been if it hadn't been ruled not germane to the base bill.

Might be another way to get that "vacation" into law, but an apparently simple one was rejected last week.

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Yes, this legislative procedure can be tricky, and the rules are pretty solid so that nobody sneaks into a bill something that isn't good public policy. You need clear rules so that legislators aren't tricked into passing a bill that does things they don't want. That probably over the years has prevented some bad laws from being innocently passed.

But every now and again you see something relatively little, with no major effect on the operation of state government, or on most Kansans, get derailed by those rules.

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Practically, we'll see whether some of those amendments get on bills in the opposite chamber during committee hearings in the House or Senate-passed and in the Senate on House-passed bills where there's a chance to have full committee hearings on those amendments.

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