

# OPINION

## EDITORIAL

### Politics on display with choice for state fair board

lected officials helping out their friends and political patrons is nearly as old as politics itself.

But being a long-held tradition doesn't make the practice any less repugnant, and it doesn't wash away the fact that it weakens the function and faith in government that is designed to serve the people, not the people in government.

Yet even a government board for something as cheery and light as the Kansas State Fair isn't insulated from the practice of political patronage. A story in Sunday's Hutchinson News highlighted Matt Lowen, a politically connected businessman with light agricultural experience who won an appointment to the fair board over West McArthur, who has years of engagement with agriculture, 4-H and Kansas State University's Office of Research and Extension.

Kansas statute states that for this position "such persons nominated shall be actively involved in agriculture production or agribusiness," and under that legislative directive, McArthur was the clear choice for the fair board.

In the world of politics, however, the law be damned. Legislative intent and the letter of the law

can't hold a candle to the weight of political connections and the time-honored tradition of quid pro quo.

It might be one thing if this appointment stood out as a rarity in the Gov. Sam Brownback administration, but it's much more the norm. He has consistently looked to his stable of friends and patrons – or those of his political allies – to fill appointments. In some cases, questions about the eventual nominees have been met with silence, and the governor's office has been sued on more than one occasion in an effort to force his office to reveal the names of all the candidates under his consideration.

And while such practices are largely accepted with a shoulder shrug, a sigh and perhaps with a mentality that you can't fight city hall, they should always be questioned and challenged. The result of such action is a weaker government that doesn't fulfill its purpose as well as it could, or should.

Qualifications, not connections, ought to determine such appointments. To do otherwise reveals an administration dedicated to surrounding itself with like-minded, malleable people in key positions, and it is a gross disservice to the people of Kansas.

## WESTERN FRONT

### Vote for Terrell in November

Jan Pauls is one of Gov. Sam Brownback's top helpers in the Kansas House of Representatives. This has led to depleting our high-way fund, not properly funding our schools, and hurting our credit rating and our reputation.

Pauls is doing everything Brownback wants her to, but she isn't representing we, the people of the 102nd District. We want good highways and bridges. We want good schools. We want a good credit rating and reputation so that good businesses will come to Kansas. We can't have these things as long as Brownback has a good little soldier like Jan Pauls voting his way instead of ours.

In November, vote for Patsy Terrell. Patsy will work for us instead of the Brownback/Koch/Pauls agenda. Patsy will work to make Kansas a place to be proud of.

We need Patsy Terrell.  
**DUSTIN MILLER**  
Hutchinson

### Don't like it here? You can leave

The "old white men" who created the United States and Europe must have done something right because minority groups from around the world risk their lives to get to the countries they created.

I haven't seen any Mexicans or Syrians storming the beaches of Cuba or China. If "Black Lives Matter" thinks the United States is so bad, try the paradise of Mozambique or Angola and see how that works out for you.

European people have done more than any other group to bring equality, prosperity and stability to the turbulent world of humanity. That is why the world wants to be in the countries that they created.

Anytime you think you have it so bad, remember you are always free to find someplace better.

**GREGORY H. BONTRAGER**  
Hutchinson

## Join the conversation

Letters should be limited to 500 words. Poems, consumer complaints, business testimonials and group-written letters will not be accepted. Letters written in support of candidates and issues during election seasons should be limited to 150 words. Please sign your name and provide your address and a phone number so we may call to verify the letter. We strive to publish letters within one week of verification. There is a 30-day waiting period

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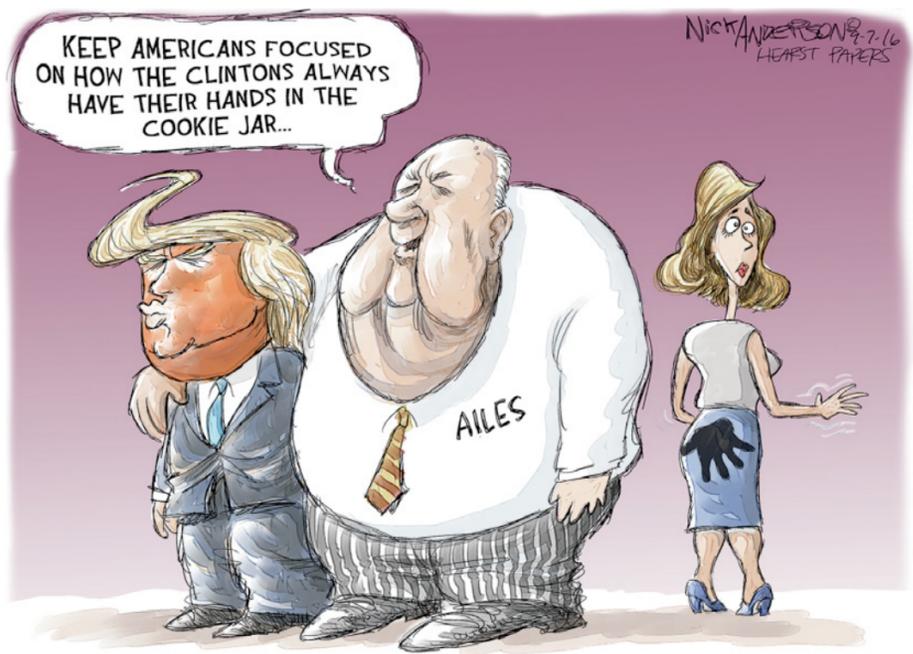
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## COMMUNITY COLUMNIST

### Let the Kansas State Fair's 104th year commence

The Kansas State Fair opens Friday for the 104th consecutive year.

Since its inception in 1913, the nation has endured six wars and twice that many floods, droughts, depressions, and the worst terrorist attack in our country's history, but nothing has prevented the state fair from its scheduled opening date.

The official Kansas State Fair was established during the 1913 session of the Kansas Legislature, with Hutchinson's Sen. Emerson Carey leading the way.

Then, like now, there were unfunded mandates established by legislative bodies.

The legislature designated Hutchinson as the fair's permanent home, but failed to appropriate seed money for the event's operation – facts that failed to deter the city's leaders. Soon, a special sales tax was passed to fund startup costs, coupled with an acquisition of 300 acres of land on the north edge of the city – and, as they say, the rest is history.

It has been my good fortune to attend 52 state fairs, and be assured my first was as a mere child in 1957.

Much has changed in the 59 years to follow, but a few things remain constant. It is my recollection that the root beer stand west of the Encampment Building is still in business in the same spot, and I have remained a customer all these years.

And KWCH (formerly KTVH) Channel 12 hasn't moved during the same period of time.

Fairgoers, then and now, arrive in Hutchinson seeking merchandise including products that will clean floors with the least amount of effort as well as the latest in farm equipment.

More importantly, what better place than the Kansas State Fair to check out age-old dining options. Perhaps one of the favorite offerings is the homemade chicken and noodle soup sold at South Hutchinson United Methodist Church's booth. Still, the

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most-talked-about edible at the fair is reputed to be the Pronto Pup.

Across the fairgrounds, Charlotte Summers and Joan Brown have done an outstanding job assembling items for display at the Lair White House to honor longtime vendors, including John Deere.

So, when Charlotte called to inquire if I might be willing to loan a family heirloom, a 1914 John Deere one-bottom plow, for the exhibit, it was worth the trouble in transporting



Courtesy photo

**A 102-year-old plow from the Shank farm will be on display at the Kansas State Fair.**

the implement to Hutchinson.

The old plow has a colorful history in itself. Purchased by my grandfather as a horse-drawn implement, it was later converted with a hitch to be pulled by a tractor.

When I was growing up on the farm in the 1950s, the old plow had long since been replaced by a larger version, but we continued to use it for planting potatoes. It is the only plow I have seen with a seat on the back and, when I was a kid, it was fun to sit atop the tiny implement while my dad pulled it with a tractor to dig a furrow for planting.

John Deere's slogan, "Nothing runs

like a Deere," applies to the plow, which works much the same as it did when new, but after 102 years it has earned a much-deserved retirement.

There is no short list of things to do at the state fair: Ron Diamond will hypnotize you in the Bretz & Young Injury Lawyers Arena, if you like. Or there are numerous options to purchase garages and other buildings, large and small.

Terry Stucky from Pretty Prairie brings an assortment of restored tractors to the fair, and if you are in the market for a zero-turn lawnmower, you should not be disappointed with the available options.

Several years ago, a group of state fair enthusiasts formed a foundation to raise funds for improvement projects on the fairgrounds. Their efforts led to the establishment of the Boots and Bling Auction, which is held annually on the eve of the fair's opening.

Restoration of the Capper House and construction of the Lair White House are two of the foundation's greatest achievements.

Most importantly, the Kansas State Fair is a fun time for chance meetings with old friends and an opportunity to make new ones. If your legs tire from walking, you have multiple opportunities to sit and enjoy a beverage at several venues on the fairgrounds.

Last year, I was invited to join the foundation board, a dedicated group that meets throughout the year to brainstorm ideas on how to make the Kansas State Fair the best it can possibly be for all fairgoers.

We've placed an order with Mother Nature for 10 days of uninterrupted good weather, similar to last year, and we hope our wish will be granted.

May your schedule permit you to take in the 2016 Kansas State Fair, and may you leave on a full stomach and memories to last until next year's fair. So, let the fair begin.

*Richard Shank is the external affairs representative for Hutchinson Regional Medical Center.*

## COLUMNIST

### How to talk to black people in eight easy lessons

Today's column is presented as a public service.

It is for serious politicians both Democratic and Republican – and also for Donald Trump. The urgent need for this service has been painfully obvious for many years, and never more so than today. So, let's get right to it. This is: How to Talk to Black People in Eight Easy Lessons.

1. Go where we are. You'd think that pretty obvious. Then you remember Trump purporting to speak to black people whilst addressing audiences whose aggregate melanin wouldn't fill a Dixie cup.

2. Don't act as if going where we are requires machetes and a supply line. "Some have said that I'm either brave or crazy to be here," Republican Sen. Rand Paul once told a black audience. He said this at Howard University, which is about 15 minutes from the White House. They have cell service there and everything.

3. Stop confusing the NAACP with the Nation of Islam.

Trump recently snubbed an invitation to address the civil rights group. Bob Dole once did, too, claiming they were trying to "set me up." Right. Because the NAACP has such a long history of incendiary rhetoric. As one of its founders, the great scholar W.E.B. DuBois, never really said, "I'm 'bout to bust a cap on these honkies if they don't give me my freedom."

**Leonard Pitts**

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4. Don't use Ebonics unless you are fluent.

I still have nightmares about Hillary Clinton crying out, "I don't feel no ways tired" in that black church in Selma. Stick to Ivorybonics. Most of us are bilingual.

5. Don't make a CP time joke unless you are a CP.

When candidate Obama sauntered onstage about 15 minutes after the start time of a black journalists' event and quipped, "I want to apologize for being a little bit late – but you guys keep on asking whether I'm black enough," it was cool and funny. When Bill de Blasio joked in a scripted exchange with Hillary Clinton about running on "CP Time" – "cautious politician time" – it was, well, not.

6. Don't make a slavery joke, period.

Joe Biden once warned a black audience that Republicans are "going to put y'all back in chains." Can you imagine him warning a Jewish crowd how the GOP is "going to put y'all back in the gas chambers"? Can you imagine how offensive that would be?

7. Don't talk to the black people in

your head.

This is what Trump was doing when he told black people they lived in the suburbs of hell and had nothing to lose by voting for him. He was speaking, not to black people, but to black people as he imagines them to be, based on lurid media imagery and zero actual experience. In this, he was much like Bill O'Reilly, who thinks blacks all have tattoos on their foreheads.

8. Know what you don't know.

"I'm here to learn," said Trump at a black church in Detroit a few days ago. It was a powerful expression of humility – or would have been, had it been said by someone who wasn't an OG of the birther movement, a serial re-tweeter of supremacist filth and the star of David Duke's bromantic fantasies. Still, he had the right idea. Politicians too often lecture us about without the faintest idea who we are. The truth is, How to Talk to Black People isn't all that difficult.

The candidate who wants African-American support should pretend black folks are experts on our own issues and experiences – because we are. He should learn those issues, tap that experience, formulate some thoughtful ideas in response. Then he should do what he would for anyone else:

Ask for our vote. Tell us what he'd do if he got it.

*Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald.*