

VE EDITOR

It's easier to fire bad teachers good

in the future.

I certainly doubt there is a pandemic of bad teachers making their way through the system, but certainly there are under-performing teachers out there, more than the handful of cases in recent years that have gone trial de novo.

This law makes sense and puts the process at the level of the private sector. Of course there are some hoops to jump through in the private sector, but it is certainly easier to oust an under-performing employee than the protection teachers received previously.

When it comes to the quality of education for our kids, it's important to have quality teachers on the front line. Teachers should be held in high regard and to high standards — and it's not just a taxpayer thing — it's the impact educators have on the lives of kids beyond their days as students.

I remember a number of teachers, in addition to my parents, who helped shape who I became. Teachers who impacted my life as far back as grade school, through middle and high school, and in college — every

step of the way.

That's why it is important to make sure our schools can provide quality educators, and thus, a quality education.

The new law should make that possible.

And, of course, for good teachers' sake, a pay raise wouldn't hurt either. If only there were a law for that.

What do you think? Talk about it on Facebook or comment on this article on our website.

And One More Thing...

Here's some school humor I ran across while traversing the World Wide Web:

I didn't do it

A girl came home from school and said to her mother, "Today in school I was punished for something that I didn't do."

The mother said, "That's terrible. I'm going to have a talk with your teacher about this... by the way, what was it that you didn't do?"

The girl replied, "My homework."

Clarifies priorities in budget for 2012

less than those of other agencies.

To help relieve pressure and increase efficiencies with taxpayer dollars, legislation has advanced this session to streamline and consolidate various services within certain state agencies.

For instance, combining and modernizing information technology among a variety of entities could improve productivity and generate tens of millions of dollars in savings. This money could then be redirected to core needs.

In addition, other practical options are being considered to ensure the state of Oklahoma lives within its means. Every proposal is being carefully scrutinized and properly vetted to ensure the best outcome for our

citizens.

As budget discussions ensue, bond financing is being considered to address critical transportation needs. This suggestion would likely yield a profitable return on an investment to repair, maintain and prevent further deterioration of roads and bridges.

However, other bond proposals for additional areas of government have been rejected because the extra debt would become a liability and outweigh any potential gains.

Even as work proceeds on these issues, Oklahoma's economic condition appears to be improving, giving greater hope for the future.

For more on this column, see our website, jenksjournal.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Alas, A Tree Tunnel No More

Progress. Moving forward. Growth. All important goals for our community. But with each come a variety of consequences. Some unintended.

One such consequence of growth in Jenks was our beloved "tree tunnel."

If you live in or come to town often you know it, or now, remember it. Just west of the intersection at Main and Elwood, right there at the hill then valley in the road created by the levee. Thick-trunked, towering elms and cottonwood trees bordered the road on both sides and reached out their limbs to each other to provide a living roof over the road.

I had driven this route as a teenager and an adult, but it wasn't until I had children that I realized the magic at work in this short stretch of Main Street. It was through a child's wonder-filled eyes that I first saw it for what it was.

Our twins were tiny, not even 2. We were driving through one day on the way to visit relatives. We went up the slight incline and then were on our way down into that tiny valley when they both screamed out "tree tunnel." They didn't have great control of their vocabulary yet and it sounded like "teetunno." My wife and 8-year old son all looked at each other and smiled. Then we all shouted together "Tree Tunnel."

It was the first of thousands of times we shouted those words as we passed under the canopy of green sheltering the road after we moved into a neighborhood just west of this magical spot. Our youngest daughter joined the "teetunno" chorus when she came along.

I knew it was coming. I learned last year that a four-lane bridge was to be built over Hager Creek. It is the first stage of widening Main Street from Highway 75 to Elm Street. Progress.

And last month the reality of progress hit hard when the twins, now teenagers, called me at work to give me the news — the tree tunnel was gone. They were both a little upset. Their younger sister even cried when she passed through on the school bus and saw only the stumps of the former magical trees. I have to admit, I choked up a little when I heard.

I could only shake my head when I drove home that evening. The tree tunnel was no more. I shook my head again and squinted the next morning driving back through heading east. Those familiar trees weren't there to provide their welcome shade. I realized what it was... A little piece of magic in the world had been lost. A special place that had captured my children's imagination and brought joy to our family was gone. I think maybe I miss those magical babies in the back seat just as much.

Progress in this instance brought with it a little too much reality — roads are built, nature is pushed out and children grow. Sometimes way too soon.

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