

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Sorry, but we aren't endorsing anybody

Tuesday's the day the voters get their chance to speak. We've listened to the candidates, read their statements and watched them sling mud and garbage back and forth on television advertising.

Now it is up to those going to the polls to determine who is telling the little white lie and who isn't, and mark their ballot accordingly.

The Colby Free Press isn't venturing into the gubernatorial endorsement game this election. It's not that we haven't got the guts needed, but rather there is equally as much reason not to endorse any single candidate as there is reason to endorse. It's what you would call a wash.

Mayor Bob Knight of Wichita — "do we really want a big city mayor running our state?" — is the suspicious tone in one television ad, and State Treasurer Tim Shallenburger — "part of the Capital gang who created this mess" (financial) — proclaims another. And then there's Dave Kerr, who, by the way, says in a television spot that he is going to look out for western Kansas. 'Bout time, we'd say.

Dan Bloom, the fourth candidate for the office of governor, pulled a surprise over the weekend when, during a televised forum, he withdrew from the contest. He is a former school superintendent. He said the numbers aren't in his favor and pointed to leadership qualities also recognizing facts of life — like getting out of something that isn't working.

Bloom threw his support behind Knight and in a race as tight as the gubernatorial thing is, his support might be enough to put Knight in the November election vs. Democrat Kathleen Sebelius.

Despite the commercial tone, Shallenburger, Knight or Kerr have the smarts to run the state. We may quarrel with performances of Kerr, as Senate President and Shallenburger, as a former member of the House and now state treasurer, but either will give it their best shot. And that "big city mayor?" A new face may change things.

Endorsements?

Sorry, not this time around. Maybe in the fall. — *Tom A. Dreiling, Publisher*

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U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715
State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web:http://www.idir.net/~jmorriso/
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Texans call it 'tax-free weekend'

DOWN Texas way, back-to-school shoppers got a break over the weekend. Clothes and other items needed to get kids set for another school term were purchased without sales tax added. They call it "tax-free weekend." As I read it, this is not a new program, but has been in effect for several years and saves Mom and Dad countless sums of money while they shop to get the kids ready for school. While Texans are enjoying this break, Kansans saw their sales tax go up on July 1, to help dig the state out of a financial hole that should never have been dug. I guess in Kansas we can call it "Tax More — Courtesy Irresponsible Pilots at the Controls."

BE sure to vote Tuesday!

WHAT is the story behind the Elizabeth Smart kidnapping? This seems to be another story that has dropped off the radar screens of the 24-hour cable news networks. They couldn't shove enough information into our ears at first, and now it's almost as though this tragedy never happened. Like JoBonet Ramsey.

Yes, we've had kidnappings since Elizabeth Smart's, but one would think they could at least give us an update, even if the update has nothing new to add. It's almost like "milk it for all it's worth, and when the milk's gone push the cow over."

THIS guy wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer. He liked fishing but never tried his hand at ice fishing. He had seen many books on the subject, and finally, after getting all the necessary tools together, he made for the nearest frozen lake. After positioning his footstool, he started to make a circular cut in the ice. Suddenly — from the sky — a voice boomed: "THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE!" Startled, he moved further down the ice, poured a thermos of cappuccino, and began to cut yet another hole. Again, from the heavens, the voice bellowed: "THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE!" He was now quite worried, so he moved way down



Tom Dreiling

● It's Monday!

to the opposite end of the ice, set up his stool, and tried again to cut a hole. The voice came once more, even louder:

"THERE ARE NO FISH UNDER THE ICE!" He stopped, looked skyward, and said, "Is that you, Lord?"

The voice replied: "NO, THIS IS THE MANAGER OF THE ICE SKATING RINK!"

BE sure to vote Tuesday!

HAPPY Birthday to...

Aug. 5 — Liz Shuman, Cayla Carter, Sara Juenemann, Mary Shackelton, Margery Kirk, Hope Schmid, George Collins

Aug. 6 — Arliss Phillips, Jodie Touslee, Jessica Krehbiel, Will Biggs, Tracy Rogers, Syd Keith, Wilma E. Voisin, Eileen Vette, Shawn Clark

HAPPY Anniversary to...

Aug. 6 — Craig & Katie Fulwider
Congratulations to all of you!

TEN more Commandments, as shared by a loyal Colby reader:

1. Thou shalt not worry, for worry is the most unproductive of all human activities.
2. Thou shalt not be fearful, for most of the things we fear never come to pass.
3. Thou shalt not cross bridges before you come to them, for no one yet has succeeded in accomplishing this.

Give credit, where credit is due

Everyone needs strokes — positive reinforcement — from time to time. Seems it's often easier to criticize someone rather than offer encouragement or a solution to a problem.

Whether raising a child or a crop of milo, the song remains the same — no matter how promptly we perform a task, or how well we meet the prescribed standards, we lose confidence if we are subjected to a constant barrage of negative comments.

With all of the concerns about food safety, pollution in our environment and concern about the cost of the farm bill, farmers have been taking their licks and hearing plenty about what they should and should not be doing. It seems you cannot pick up a paper, listen to or watch a television news program without hearing about consumers' concerns about farmers and the practice of farming.

Wouldn't it be refreshing to read a column that trumpeted the good deeds and accomplishments of the American farmer?

I believe it's about time for a positive update on agriculture. Here goes.

Farmers protect our environment. They have enrolled more than 30 million acres of their land in the conservation reserve program. Under this program farmers provide food and habitat for 75 percent of this nation's wildlife. Erosion rate by water on U.S. croplands has been reduced by 24 percent during the last 18 years.

Under a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative, farmers, ranchers and other landowners have pledged

John Schlageck

● Insight

to install 2 million miles of conservation buffers by the end of this year. Each year, hundreds of thousands of trees are seeded on farmland. The net loss of wetlands has decreased from a level of 27,000 acres lost each year (1982-92) to 24,000 acres each year (from '92-'97).

The money U.S. families spend for their food, at home and away from home, is approximately 11 percent of the average U.S. disposable family income.

That's down from about 14 percent in 1980 and 17.6 percent in 1960. If you pencil it out, the share of income spent for food is one-third less than it was 30 years ago.

Biotechnology offers benefits to consumers, farmers and the environment. Biotechnology provides consumers healthier foods with better quality that stays fresher longer, maintains a higher nutrient level and reduced levels of fat. Biotechnology also benefits the environment by producing crops that protect themselves against insects and disease, require less tillage, thus protecting precious topsoil and lessen the

frequency of chemical weed control.

Livestock producers are producing healthier animals. Beef products are nearly one-third leaner than a decade ago. Hog producers have cut the fat in their animals by nearly 50 percent.

Agriculture exports contribute to a strong U.S. economy. Approximately 17 percent of raw U.S. agricultural products are exported annually including 83 metric tons of cereal grains, 1.6 billion pounds of poultry and 1.4 million metric tons of fresh vegetables. Today, one-fourth of the world's beef and nearly one-fifth of the world's grain, milk and eggs are produced in the United States.

In Kansas alone, our farmers and rancher produced crops worth a total value of \$2,915,660,000 in 2,000. Livestock production accounted for another \$2,901,469,000.

Kansas farmers and ranchers lead the nation or rank in the top 10 in almost every grain and livestock category.

These are only a few of the accomplishments of the American farmer and rancher. The next time we talk about the people who supply our family table with a healthy, wholesome meal, let's give credit where credit is due.

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

Doonesbury

● Gary Trudeau

