

# Opinion



## Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

## School board member wrong

To The Free Press:

On Tuesday, Aug. 6, an article appeared in the Colby Free Press reporting on the last U.S.D. 315 board meeting. In that meeting a school board member indicated that Colby Community College would increase its mill levy by 4 mills. That is incorrect.

The college published its budget on Thursday, July 25, in the Colby Free Press. The budget, which the board approved on Monday, Aug. 5, stipulates an increase of 1.99 mills.

The Board of Trustees is always hesitant to act favorably upon an increase in the levy. However, the expected shortfall next year in state revenue has resulted in the college taking the following economic measures: (1) a \$5 hike in tuition rates (which is 2 1/2 times greater than any other increase in the recent past); (2) slashing the 2002-2003 budget in departmental expenditures by 10 percent; as well as (3) a 1.99 mill levy increase.

While the State Board of Regents has warned college officials to expect a 4-6 percent reduction in state credit hour aid funding next year, it is also significant to note that over the last two budget cycles the college incrementally reduced its mill levy by 3.05 mills. The governing board and the college community take their responsibilities to economize and to obtain the most efficient use of their resources very seriously.

**Mikel Ary**  
President  
(Letter #112)

### About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

### Addresses of elected officials:

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**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715

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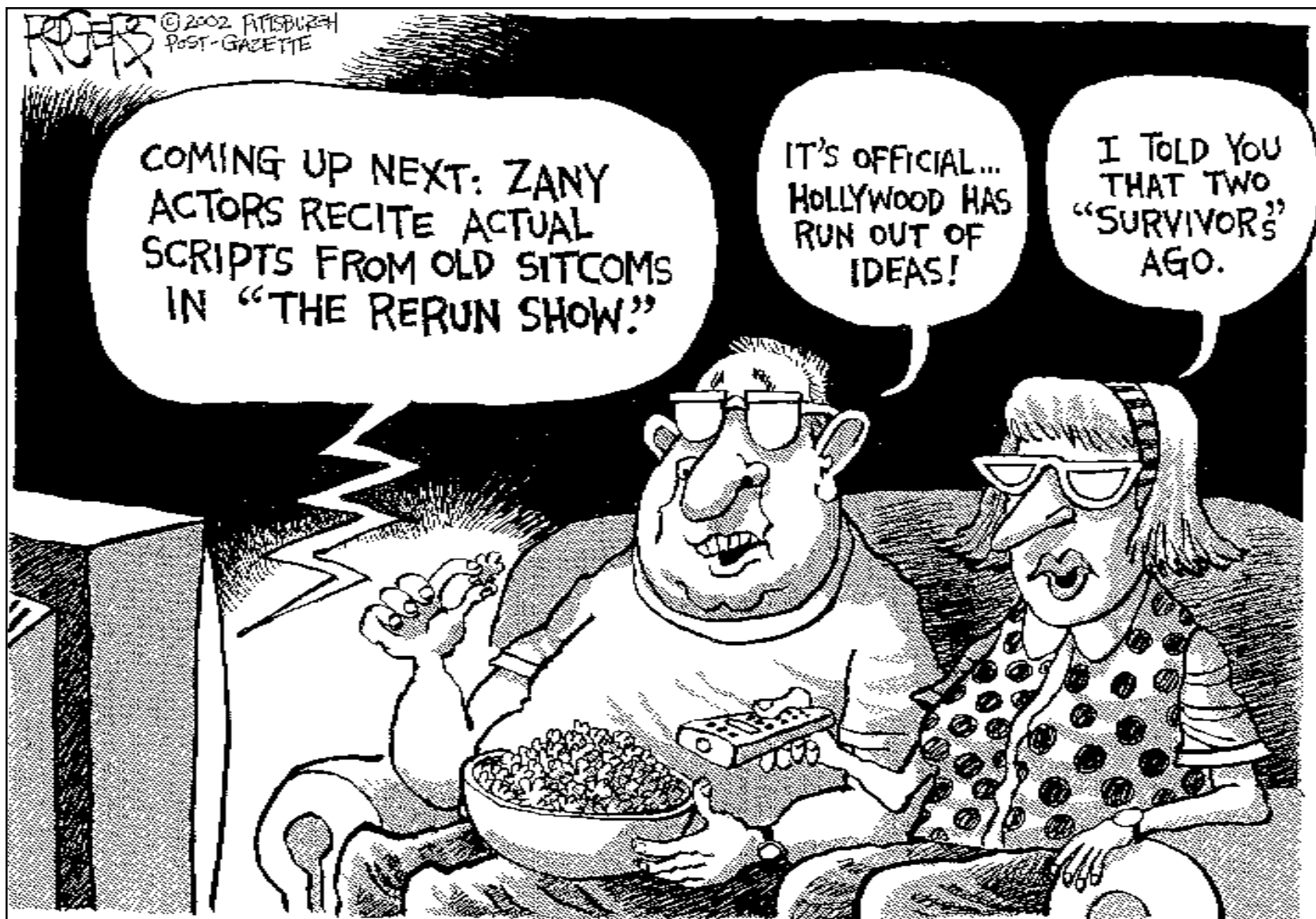
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## Looking back at the election

**TUESDAY'S** primary election had a couple of surprises, in my opinion. Tim Shallenburger's victory was not one of them. But Bob Knight's third-place finish was. I expected him to place second and Dave Kerr third. Kerr, you recall, came in second and Knight was third. Now, will the wounds heal enough for the Republicans to hang onto Cedar Crest when the final vote is counted on Nov. 5? When the fight is over and we see the losers embracing the winner, you have to feel for those who were fighting in the trenches. They are the ones who need to heal. Many times they don't.

When I was a youngster in my late 20s and 30s, and engaged in politics coming from pretty much a politically infected family — if infected is the word to use — I always felt badly when someone I was campaigning for didn't win. And no matter what I would not vote for the other candidate after the so-called post-election *headfest* was over. No one could convince me otherwise. I would only respond, 'bullroar' — *roar* being the polite form of what I really said. We will see in the fall how many Knight and Kerr trench fighters climb on Shallenburger's TopekaExpress. They may instead opt for the SebeliusStreamliner.

**OF COURSE** the big upset Tuesday was the victory posted by Connie Morris over State Board of Education chairman I.B. "Sonny" Rundell. Connie, of St. Francis and new to the political arena, embarked on a campaign that would have found the most physically fit huffing and puffing. She showed up everywhere. Incumbent Rundell, in his 14th year on the state board, apparently saw little need to put all of his energies into campaigning. After all 14 years is quite a credential, and I say that in all sincerity. Hard lesson learned — there is no easy opponent. Anybody, on any given election day, can come out the winner. Connie proved that.

**AND** for the pundits who are critical of Morris'



### Tom Dreiling

- My Turn

election — they don't like some of the things she stands for — ease off. If you look at the district you will see where she collected 60 percent of the vote. What some of the pundits are saying is that all of those people are wrong.

**KNIGHT** was sort of banking on a good showing in western Kansas. I still can't figure that out. Bob Knight, Wichita. Mayor of Wichita. Western Kansas. What am I missing?

**RON EVANS** is back in for another four years as District 1 County Commissioner. He had a pretty good challenger in Lonnie D. Wilson. Fifty-one votes out of 363 cast separated the two. Hats off to both the incumbent and the challenger. No Democrat filed, so unless a write-in effort develops, Evans will remain 'commish.'

**WHILE** shopping the other evening, I looked at a pack of cigarettes (I kicked the habit some 30 years ago), and read the warning label. It said, "Surgeon General's Warning: Quitting Smoking Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Health." Why don't they just come out and tell it like it is, "Surgeon General's Warning: These Things can Kill You."

### HAPPY Birthday to...

**Aug. 9** — Ashley Carswell, Betty Jean Wicke, Johnna Renner, Josh Lee, Kelli Thomas, Brenda Wilson, Jacob Hutfles

## Perfect pitch, right conditions

### John Hanna

- Kansas Politics

State Treasurer Tim Shallenburger doesn't hold a college degree, but few Kansans active in politics question his smarts, particularly during an election season.

He's now the conservative gubernatorial nominee of a Republican Party that moderates have maintained is more centrist than Shallenburger and his allies.

But Shallenburger won the three-way gubernatorial primary by pitching voters the right message under the right conditions. He remained confident of his strategy throughout, and the race ended up just about where he predicted it would.

He defeated Senate President Dave Kerr and Wichita Mayor Bob Knight in Tuesday's primary with a comfortable lead, 41 percent of the vote to Kerr's 30 percent and Knight's 26 percent.

Both Kerr and Knight said Shallenburger's message, particularly his promise not to increase taxes, attracted the support the state treasurer needed to win. "It resonated with the voters," Knight said.

Last year, as the race was in its formative months, moderates hoped for a one-on-one race between a candidate from their wing and Shallenburger, the conservatives' favorite.

That hope ended in January, when Knight entered the race against Shallenburger and Attorney General Carla Stovall. Stovall dropped out in April, and Kerr entered the race in late May.

With three candidates, Shallenburger didn't need a majority of the vote, only a plurality.

And he began with a well-organized conservative base, a network of abortion opponents, gun rights advocates, conservative Christians and right-of-center legislators loyal to him.

"What the Shallenburger campaign reminded us is that grass-roots politics still mattered," said Sen. Derek Schmidt, R-Independence, a moderate.

The final news media poll before the election showed the race a dead heat between Shallenburger and Knight, with Kerr a close third. Of the 455 respondents, 24.2 percent said they were likely to vote

for Shallenburger, 23.1 percent, for Knight; and 19.3 percent, for Kerr.

Another 31.4 percent were undecided. The poll was organized by the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas and had a margin of error of 4.7 percent.

Shallenburger's polling showed him about where the race finished.

His pollsters surveyed only Republicans who had voted in the last two primary elections, while the media poll surveyed registered voters likely to cast a ballot in the GOP primary, regardless of affiliation.

Committed conservative activists were more likely to go to the polls, helping Shallenburger. They also were the ones most likely to have voted in the preceding two primaries.

When he learned of the last media poll's figures, Shallenburger said the undecideds were not likely to vote and should be discounted. The results of Tuesday's primary suggest he was right.

But Shallenburger's message on budget and tax issues appealed to more than just his conservative base. A promise not to increase taxes helps candidates in Republican primaries. U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback ousted incumbent GOP Sen. Sheila Frahm with that message, and Gov. Bill Graves ran for re-election in 1998 as a champion tax cutter.

Kerr and Knight said they would protect education and social services. Kerr acknowledged that their message was more complicated and dependent upon voters considering the state's financial problems.

Shallenburger's pledge not to increase taxes proved

**Aug. 10** — Christopher Brown, Vicki Nickols, Jason Blackhart

**Aug. 11** — Connie Ritter, Julie Barnes  
Congratulations!

Please call us at 462-3963 or e-mail td@nwkansan.com to have your special day mentioned as our gift to you. And please, *please* keep us advised of any all changes. Thanks for your help.

**BLAME** it on Enron-era arithmetic. When looking for something to hang the corporate mess on, that would be it. The following came my way by a number of readers. I can't credit the originator — don't know who it is — but the point is well taken. Read on:

In traditional capitalism, you have two cows. You sell one and buy a bull. Your herd multiplies and the economy grows. You sell them and retire on your income.

In Enron capitalism, you have two cows. You sell three of them to your publicly listed company, using letters of credit opened by your brother-in-law at the bank, then execute a debt/equity swap so that you get all four cows back with a tax exemption for five cows.

The milk rights of the six cows are transferred via an intermediary to a Cayman Islands company secretly owned by the majority shareholder, who sells the rights to all seven cows back to your listed company. Its annual report says the company owns eight cows, with an option on one. You sell one cow to buy a new president of the United States, leaving you with nine cows. No balance sheet is required. The public buys your bull.

So, readers, that's how we come to find ourselves in the mess we are in today.

**HAVE** a good evening...and a good weekend!

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*Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His column appears Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. td@nwkansan.com*

more attractive, Kerr said.

"That's a very beguiling message that is hard for people to resist," Kerr said.

Pre-election polling suggested that Kansans prized other characteristics more highly in a potential governor than a candidate's willingness to cut spending, something Shallenburger's promise implies.

But the top three characteristics — ability to understand ordinary people's problems, willingness to tackle tough problems and working with members of both major parties — were universal desires, seen as very important by four-fifths of voters.

Nearly 48 percent of the 530 respondents said having a record of cutting spending was an important characteristic for a candidate. The figure for a willingness to find new revenue was about 37 percent; the margin of error was 4.3 percent.

In addition, another survey sponsored by the same media organizations showed respondents giving the Legislature Ds across the board for its session, including on how it handled budget issues. Lawmakers approved \$252 million in tax increases this year to shore up the budget.

Kerr was one of the architects of the tax package; Knight defended lawmakers' work, a natural stand for him to take because his running mate was House Speaker Kent Glasscock, of Manhattan.

Finally, Kerr and Knight always appeared likely to split the votes of Republicans who were willing to accept tax increases to support public schools and services for the elderly, disabled and poor.

Knight attempted to differentiate himself from Kerr by saying he wasn't part of a "capital gang." But Knight's argument was undercut by the presence of Glasscock on his ticket.

"In a statewide Republican primary, if you're the only guy saying you're not going to raise taxes, you have a good chance of winning," said state GOP Chairman Mark Parkinson.

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*Correspondent John Hanna has covered Kansas government and politics since 1987.*