

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

Where is their support now?

To The Free Press:

I want to point out that Mr. Clinton, Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.), Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and Joseph Biden (D-Del.) all supported taking out Saddam in 1998.

Mr. Clinton said, "Saddam poses a serious threat to the U.S.A. through his chemical, biological and possible nuclear weapons." So he fired off 79 cruise missiles at Iraq without a U.N. or Congressional Resolution. This happened a week after Monica come to pass!

What has changed since 1998? Well, Saddam has upgraded his weapons since the U.N. inspectors were kicked out. And, we have a Republican President. A recent national poll stated that 70 percent of us think the Democrats are playing politics.

The Democrats supported taking Saddam out in 1998, and now they don't.

**Galen Starkey
Brewster
(Letter #142)**

Keg Act's purpose is clear

To The Free Press:

The ultimate goal of the Beer and Cereal Malt Beverage Keg Registration Act recently signed into law by the State of Kansas, is to reduce access to large quantities of beer by minors. Effective July 1, 2002, the law discourages individuals from illegally providing kegs to underage individuals.

The new law requires all containers of four or more gallons of beer or cereal malt beverage to have affixed a state issued tag which corresponds to a Keg Registration Form listing the purchaser of the keg and his or her driver's license. If law enforcement officers find the keg at an underage drinking party, they will be able to trace it back to the purchaser. Since beer kegs are often a source of alcohol at these parties, the law holds purchasers accountable if the beer is accessible to minors. The purchaser could also be liable if a minor drinking alcohol at the keg party were involved in a car wreck resulting in injury or death.

Not only is it unlawful to possess an untagged keg or to remove or alter a tag, but also untagged kegs may be confiscated as contraband by law enforcement officials. The minimum fine for those offenses is \$200 and potential confinement of up to six months. In addition, a retailer who sells an untagged keg or fails to follow the registration procedure may be fined up to \$1,000 and lose his or her liquor license.

After the sale, retailers must retain the Keg Registration Form until the keg container is returned with the tag affixed. If the tag is no longer affixed or the container is not returned, the form must be retained for at least six months. These forms are to be made available to any law enforcement officer for the purpose of investigating violations or laws prohibiting furnishing to minors or possession or consumption of beer or cereal malt beverage by those under the age of 21.

For more information about the Keg Registration Law, call the Regional Prevention Center at (785) 462-8152.

**Janet Worthy
Community Prevention Consultant
Regional Prevention Center of
Northwest Kansas
Colby
(Letter #143)**

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. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published.

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Those confusing survey results

WE read all sorts of survey results for whatever the cause of the survey takers. One that crossed my desk this week deals with health care and prescription drugs, and takes a swipe at the AARP and a couple of U.S. Senators. I thought I'd pass it along, and, as always, you be the judge.

Here goes:

United Seniors Association today released the results of its "National Survey of Senior Voters," which clearly shows that older Americans' views on prescription drugs and Medicare are not what many in Congress and the media think.

"There is a mystifying lack of understanding about what Seniors really want in health care," said United Seniors Association Chairman and Chief Executive Charles W. Jarvis. "The USA *National Survey of Senior Voters* proves older voters detest mandatory and bureaucratic health care."

"Sadly, the AARP, Senators Tom Daschle, Ted Kennedy and Charles Schumer are projecting *their own* ideology on Senior voters," Jarvis said.

The September Survey of likely voters age 50+ completed by pollster John McLaughlin & Associates on behalf of United Seniors Association shows:

✓Of those on Medicare who have prescription drug coverage, an overwhelming majority (67 percent) would not give up their current coverage to go into a government-run plan.

✓Eighty-seven percent of Senior voters believe those on Medicare should have the same rights as



Tom Dreiling
• (Extra) My Turn

those not on Medicare to get the medication they need without government intervention

✓Almost all (90 percent) of Senior voters believe they should have the right to choose between different health care plans with different benefits.

"Most Seniors already have prescription drug coverage," Jarvis said. "The Gephardt-Daschle-Kennedy-AARP vision of the one-size-fits-all prescription drug program run by Washington, D.C. bureaucrats is completely counter to almost 7 out of 10 Senior voters."

"USA's latest National Survey of Senior Voters absolutely explodes several popular myths. Our Survey results are alarm bells for the Senate Leadership because they are clearly off track with the large majority of Seniors' views on prescription drugs," Jarvis said.

I have been a member of AARP since I was 10 years old (well, it seems that long), and I read closely their Bulletin (newspaper) and also their magazine, and pay

close attention to issues that are of direct concern to senior citizens. I don't always agree with the AARP's stands. And getting the above information from the United Seniors Association is clearly contrary to what we are being told by Washington and AARP.

I guess we all have our very own opinions on Medicare and prescription drugs and whatever your feeling is pretty much dictates what corner you are cheering for in this ongoing struggle.

ROBERT Bixenman was in this morning with a handful of junk mail. He wondered if I got this kind of stuff, too. I do. I usually toss it into the trash can at the post office without ever opening it. Someone suggested to me a few months back that I should just take the junk stuff up to the counter and tell 'em to send it back. Maybe if everyone did that the junk mailings would decrease. Who knows.

AND that so-called "No-Call List" doesn't mean that you won't get unwanted calls. There are exceptions, just be sure you understand that. There will be some of the old familiar voices on the other end. "No-Call" isn't quite what the name implies.

GOT to get today's newspaper to the press, so best end this babbling.

Dreiling is publisher of the Free Press. His email address is td@nwkans.com.

Climate change worsens asthma

Dr. Paul Epstein

- Another Viewpoint

It is hard to convince the Bush administration to do anything significant about climate change. It's having enough trouble trying to stabilize the stock market and prop up public confidence. But climate instability is becoming hazardous to our health, and bold responses to this global problem would also boost the economy.

While some of us lose sleep wondering when birds and bugs will spread diseases like West Nile fever to Alaska and Argentina, or whether diseases or drought-driven fires will consume forests first, a health problem close to us all is the epidemic of asthma. From the 1980s to the 1990s, asthma and asthma deaths doubled in the United States and elsewhere. Research has focused on indoor pollutants and genetic, emotional, and socioeconomic factors, including access to care. All are involved. But burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) is also related to asthma via several pathways.

First, a Lancet study recently revealed that ground-level ozone or smog causes as well as triggers asthma. Ozone, which burns lung sacs, is derived from automotive emissions — nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. Warming speeds up the reaction, thus more heat waves will mean more smog.

Second, ragweed grown in elevated carbon dioxide levels produces a lot of pollen. Global warming skeptics reassure us that more CO2 will green the planet by increasing photosynthesis. But opportunistic, weedy plants take advantage by allocating CO2 to reproduction — the male parts — whereby they spread and prosper. Pioneering trees that spread quickly — like maples, pines, birches, and poplars —

also appear to be boosting their seeds, cones, and pollen.

Warmer winters and earlier arriving springs that accompany climate change are also contributing — as seasonal pollen counts reach into the thousands per cubic meter. ("Severe" warnings are issued when pollen grain counts are in the 100s.)

The third contributor to breathing problems stems from diesel particles that block airways. Asthma rates are highest along inner-city truck and bus routes. Prolonged idling increases the exposure, and the EPA considers diesel particles probable carcinogens. Diesel also provides an excellent delivery system for pollen and molds, for they attach to the particles.

This distasteful image is yet another additive effect of the direct impacts of air pollution and the indirect consequences of fossil fuel combustion on climate and plants.

What is being done to address this global problem? A lot — on many levels.

The six New England governors and premiers of the seven eastern Canadian provinces have made strong commitments to cut emissions, and California

adopted legislation on July 22 to significantly limit automotive CO2 emissions. Massachusetts is finalizing its Climate Action Plan.

In July the attorneys general of 11 states urged the president to adopt strong regulations to reduce greenhouse gases. (Will lawsuits against major polluters follow?)

In Congress, Vermont Senator James Jeffords is forwarding a "four pollutant" will — to cap nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides, mercury, and CO2.

Internationally, most industrial nations have signed the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, and many U.S. businesses are voluntarily cutting emissions through efficiencies and investments in new technologies. A Clean Development Fund — akin to the Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and malaria — could jump-start an economic recovery and help stabilize the climate.

Missing in action, however, is the oil-industry dominated U.S. administration.

We underestimated the rate that the climate would change, the biological responses to that change, and the costs of increasingly extreme weather.

This administration does not yet grasp the magnitude of the problem. Big problems require bold solutions, and a significant investment in clean energy would be the best insurance policy against the growing risks of climate change to our health and safety.

Dr. Paul R. Epstein is associate director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School. Local feedback to td@nwkans.com.

Doonesbury

- Gary Trudeau

