

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

We need to keep Rundell

To the Free Press:

Please write in (X) Sonny Rundell's name on Nov. 5 to continue his position of 14 years on the State Board of Education. Sonny has been a rational conservative member of the Kansas State Board of Education.

Sonny's leadership has had a great deal to do with the fact that Kansas students rank in the top five on nationwide tests.

He best represents the educational values of western Kansas.

State Board of Education - (X) Sonny Rundell

**Kirk Nielsen
Colby
(Letter #156)**

Publisher is way off base

To the Free Press:

Your editorial in the Oct. 23 edition of the Colby Free Press *Viewpoint* column sort of left me amazed that you are actually the publisher of a newspaper. Do you actually read the news wires you receive each day? If you do, you should know that even though Tom Ridge has been appointed Director of Homeland Security, he is just basically a man with no authority, no meaningful office, no laws to back him.....he's just, well, Tom Ridge.

At this point in time Mr. Ridge and his "office" are basically useless in the east coast shootings investigation. Why? Because your liberal Democratic buddies in the Senate are sitting on the legislation that would legitimately create and fund this cabinet position. So I really don't understand how you can jump all over this man until he is in a position where he could actually have an impact.

Furthermore, how can you in good conscience jump on President Bush for the way the investigation is going concerning this madman's atrocities? Every law enforcement agency in (Washington) D.C., Virginia and Maryland are already on the case, including the Feds. Those are the same Federal agents by the way that would ultimately be under the "Homeland Security" umbrella. Personally, I would rather have the President's attention focused on threats posed by those with weapons delivery systems that can wipe out thousands of Americans at a time rather than a lone sick gunman.

All in all, I'm not sure if the Office of Homeland security is that great of an idea. My theory is less central government is better government, but I still won't sit by and let you bash this administration as if these shootings were their fault. My belief is that in the end, local law enforcement agencies will put an end to the terror on the east coast. While you, as is typical of most liberal journalists, will continue to believe that the federal government and only the federal government can be a solution to any problem in this nation.

So Tom, wanna put some money on who solves this one? You know where my money lays.

**Keith Reavis
Colby
(Letter #157)**

Addresses of elected officials:

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 302 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

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

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/

State Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: sclark@ink.org

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In two words: Thank you

Experience can be a good teacher. It's just that I wish sometimes I didn't have to experience something firsthand in order to appreciate "acts of kindness" from others. In this busy world, and while I have thought of myself as helpful and kind, through this recent "experience"

I have gained a much deeper insight that I will not soon forget. So the next time I know of something similar that might happen, heaven forbid, to a friend or even an acquaintance, I will probably do more than I might have prior to my own situation.

Let me explain. About five weeks ago, I had surgery on my neck. It was an ongoing problem and after all other possible remedies were exhausted, an operation was the only other solution. Not something I was overly excited about, but then anyone who has had surgery probably would agree it's no fun.

I also realize that while this operation was extensive, there are many other people who have gone through much worse.

In my particular situation, I was in Denver from a Monday until Friday of that same week and while hospitals are nice places to visit, being a patient is a whole different matter.

Along with everything else, I must confess that I am also a worrier. Consequently, my next concern was just making the trip home safely. After all, it's a long drive back from Denver and the last thing I needed was to be involved in a car accident while wearing a neck brace.

I tried not to think about that too much, but every now and then the "worry" crept into my mind. After all, I had a great surgeon, great nurses, aides, and physical and occupational therapists, along with many others at the hospital that got me past the first major hurdles. Now it was up to me to work on gaining strength and recovering.

Believe me, I have never doubted the power of prayer and I know it works because God was kind to



Patty Decker

- Deep Thoughts

my husband, Randy, and I as we arrived home safely that Friday evening. The next hurdle had been accomplished and I know there were many people who said they were praying for me before, during and after. That's why I believe prayer and faith in something greater than us does work.

Once home and settled in, I was greeted with many get-well cards just waiting. I read every one of them that same night and what a wonderful, indescribable feeling it was.

The following day, a dear friend called and said that beginning that day and for the entire week, plans were already arranged that my family and I would have a hot meal delivered nightly. In addition, to those meals and for a couple of weeks to follow, we still were getting deliveries from other friends.

As I wrote in many, many "thank you" notes, it is difficult to express in words the feelings I felt for all these people who cared so deeply and anyone who is disabled, whether for a long time or a short time really appreciates a meal. We sure did. It was just one less thing to deal with and made our lives a bit easier.

Along with the cards, flowers, food, telephone calls, and lots of visits from people in Colby, the entire Colby Free Press staff also treated me very kindly. There wasn't a day that went by that somebody didn't call or e-mail to ask me if I needed something, would like to go to lunch, or if they could help with some sort of an errand.

This is my first week back following surgery and prior to returning, I was talking with my boss, our publisher, Tom, and he suggested I take it a bit easy this week.

Of course, those who know me well, realize how much I try to take on more than I should. (I think that's part of my people-pleasing personality and my denial that I can leap off tall buildings in a single bound attitude.) It didn't happen immediately, though, and I was sure glad that my boss left the option open for me to ease back in.

It was just that I was so "sure" that if I just did my physical therapy exercises, got up and walked around now and then, and took it easy over the lunch hour, it would be a cinch.

Wrong.

Suffice to say, I am out of denial this week about the super-woman thing and even though I still want to push harder than I should, the folks in the office just aren't going to allow that.

I hope they know how much they are appreciated and also those who have called this week to say, "welcome back," or having to put up with some of the static as a result of a headset I am wearing in lieu of trying to type while using my neck and shoulder to hold the telephone. To everyone, thank you so much.

Many years ago, a good friend told me that love is the ability to give and receive. I have always been one of those folks that want to "give," and it's always been hard for me to "receive."

It cannot be true love, this friend of mine once told me, if it's a one-way street. We all need each other and there are times in everyone's life when they need help.

It's great to be back!

Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Thursdays.

New election law carries risks

Miles Rapoport

- Another Viewpoint

The passage of the "Help America Vote Act" is the product of long and hard work and difficult compromises by members of both the House and Senate, as well as the tireless efforts of election reform advocates around the country. The compromise bill takes historic steps forward, and regrettably, erects barriers at the same time.

Many of the bill's provisions are major steps forward in advancing election administration and in ensuring the accurate casting and counting of votes. The requirements that states adopt error-rate standards, allow voters to correct their ballots, and cast provisional ballots if not on the voter lists will all help voters be heard and counted as they wish. Funding for the states to replace antiquated machinery and the requirement that all states develop statewide computerized voter lists will significantly improve election administration. All these are major advances.

However, the new and overly restrictive voter identification provisions will cause substantial difficulty for large numbers of voters, and will undoubtedly mean that many eligible voters will be unable to vote. The issue of election fraud raised by proponents of the new provisions is certainly overstated and should not be used to unnecessarily restrict access and intimidate voters. In particular, requiring citizens to

show photo or other forms of identification and requiring states to check drivers' licenses and Social Security numbers and reject registrations that do not include them is a recipe for disaster. Congress should have the courage to reconsider these provisions in the future.

The focal point of debate will now shift largely to the states. People concerned with creating the most inclusive and vibrant democracy will need to do three things:

1. Fight to ensure that adequate funding is provided to carry out the administrative improvements by the states. The bill clearly does not guarantee funding for the future.

2. Monitor and challenge implementation of the identification provisions that discriminate against

poor voters, new citizens, or people of color. There are better ways to ensure the integrity of elections without impinging on access.

3. Seek to focus the state debate on the most fundamental issue: to guarantee the participation of all people in the electoral process. The bill requires states to develop plans for their election changes, with citizen input and public review processes. These plans must not be limited to simply replacing old machinery with new.

They should include measures that further encourage voting, such as Election Day Voter Registration and fairer policies for re-enfranchisement of people who have lost their voting rights.

It is essential that we continue America's historic march toward opening our electoral processes. Real progress will continue to be made by advocates and activists working for reforms that expand the process at every level and bring every member of society into the fullest possible participation.

The work does not end here; it is only beginning.

Miles S. Rapoport is president of Demos, a research advocacy organization, and former Secretary of State of Connecticut. For more information, visit: www.demos-usa.org/.

Doonesbury

- Gary Trudeau

