

# Opinion



## Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

## Tax reform?

To the Colby Free Press:

Where do you plan to spend all that money you are going to save with the generous income tax reductions we are getting? The Bahamas? A Mediterranean cruise? Maybe a tour of Paris? Or maybe you can step up from the used Ford Taurus you planned before vacation time to a nice new Lincoln Town Car.

I would venture to say, a very small percentage of the folks in northwest Kansas will have enough reduction in their income tax liabilities to any more than maybe spend an extra couple days on vacation and certainly very, very few will have substantial enough reductions to take the big trips. A few families may be able to look at a new Taurus instead of a used one but certainly won't be thinking about jumping to the big luxury auto. Those that do have that kind of reductions were already able to fund such trips and autos, when they wanted them, without the reductions.

How many of you receive a substantial amount of your income from stock dividends? Or, how many of you are affected by the estate taxes (death tax)? In fact, how many households in northwest Kansas even approach the top income tax brackets? And, how many taxpaying entities in northwest Kansas are in the top 3-5 percent income nationally? That top 3-5 percent group are going to rake in 60-70 percent or more of the savings. Of course that figure is debated hotly but we all know, if we know how to do math, that it is going to be very near those percentages and most likely will be a smaller percent of tax entities getting an even higher percentage of the savings. Think in terms of a \$3,000 divided among three 3 people (\$1,000 each) and \$1,500 divided among 100 people (\$15 each). \$1,000 for the top and \$15 for the middle class (who presently pay 60-70 percent of all taxes) doesn't quite seem equitable to me. I won't argue the exact percentages, but they are in the ballpark.

These tax reductions are going to: Turn the economy around? Provide investment opportunities? Create demands for food, manufactured merchandise, and create new jobs? Investment opportunities for who? It certainly won't be to those who need every dollar they can get their hands on to maintain their daily living?

The same holds true for food and shelter money. The ones who will benefit substantially from tax savings are already able to buy all the food they need and have adequate living quarters providing shelter from the elements.

Vacations? Again, those with substantial savings will spend their vacation money somewhere besides northwest Kansas. Don't look for any millionaires to be sending requests to the local Chamber of office for brochures describing all the exciting points of interest in northwest Kansas.

Now, maybe we need to consider just what all these tax reductions or reforms are going to cost northwest Kansas. Education funding (pre-school, elementary, secondary, and college)? Our Community College, one of the biggest employers in northwest Kansas, is taking a substantial hit. Elder care funding? Disabled assistance? Health care? Medical facilities? Natural resource protection? Weather and market related farm disasters? Future generations (deficit spending has to be repaid sometime)? What percentage of northwest Kansas families will be affected negatively by these costs?

Perhaps you need to think about some of these things before you shout, "Hallelujah and Praise God" for a legislature and administration (Republican or Democrat) that is pushing this kind of tax reform. Morality and ethics cover a lot more territory than patriotism, capital punishment, abortion, sexual orientation, and religious plaques.

Greed and economic power can certainly be a moral and ethical problem. The top 3 percent of our citizens (super wealthy) just might be abusing the middle 94 percent a whole lot more than the bottom 3 percent (totally dependent and non productive).

Ken Poland  
Gem  
(Letter #5)

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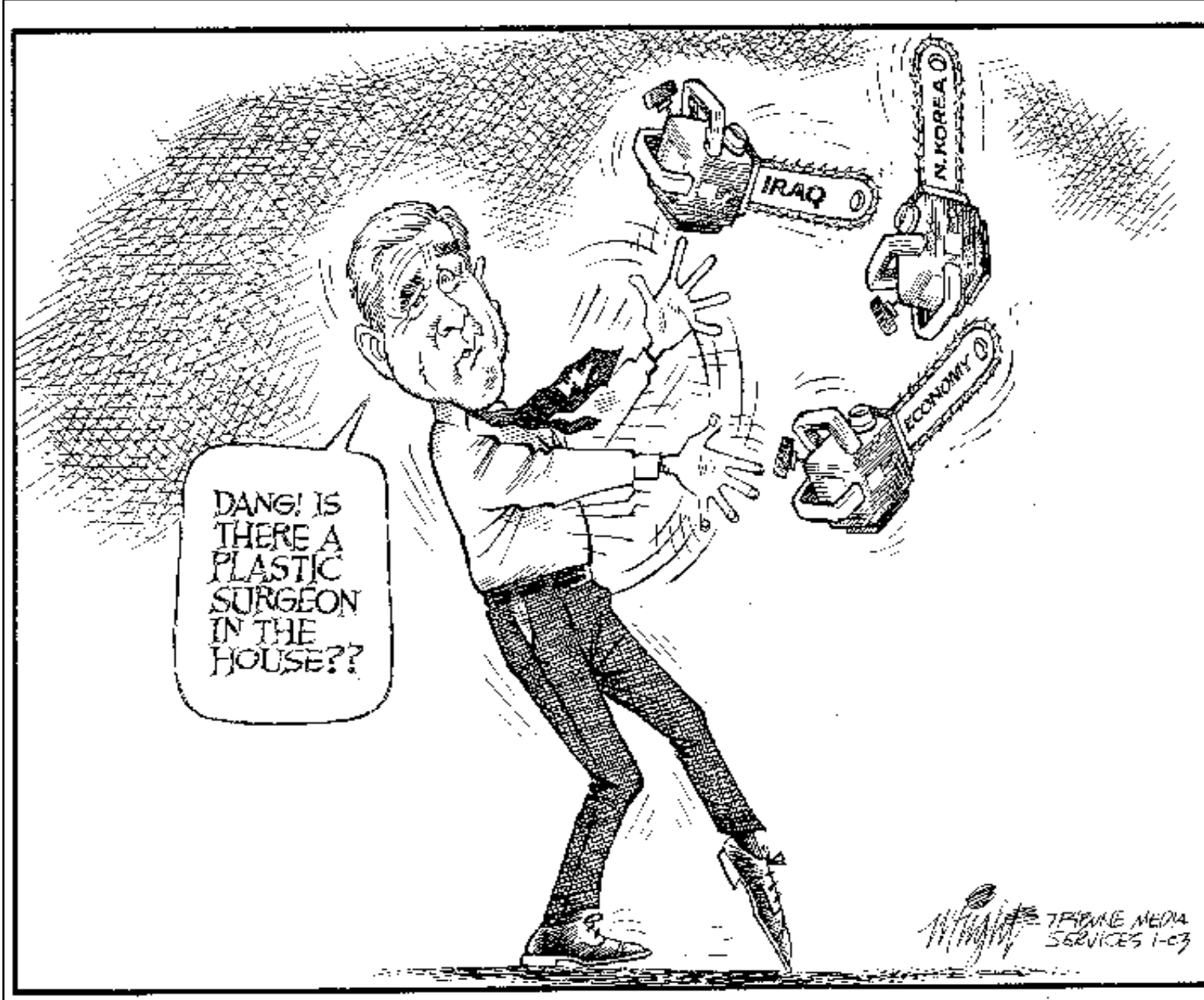
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## What kind of sign is that?

As long as I can remember, I have been making New Year's Resolutions, but for some reason I didn't even think about it this year. Maybe it's because I was too busy with other issues.

Anyway, I did start thinking about it recently and since it's already half way through January, I thought I might need a little help from other sources — so I asked around and did some research.

Not being much of a horoscope person, I decided to go ahead and check my Zodiac sign and, just as I suspected, it wasn't much help.

For **Sagittarians**, which is my sign, the New Year's resolution was simply this: "Think." What kind of a dumb resolution is that?

After checking on some of the other signs and the kind of resolutions that were suggested, it seemed only appropriate to list those as well. So here they are:

**Aries** are supposed to cut back to three double espressos a day.

Those under the **Taurus** sign need to take their mothers out for dinner at least once a month and bring two for one coupons.

**Gemini** people need to maintain a three-second vow of silence once a week.

**Cancer** folks should stick to a Spartan regimen of five meals a day.

**Leos** were told they need to avoid using the rear view mirror to check if their hair is okay while driving at speeds over 65 mph.

People under the **Virgo** sign need to stop copy-editing the grocery list.

**Libros** are told that for their New Year's resolution they need to find a new word for "cute."

**Scorpions** were reminded not to tell Aunt Cleo



Patty Decker

- Deep Thoughts

that she's gained 40 pounds every time they see her.

**Capricorns** need to put an end to all those annoying e-mails at work.

**Aquarians** need to ask if the fur coat is real before spray painting it; and finally **Pisces** need to try to remember that work starts at 9 in the morning.

As you can see, the above resolutions for particular Zodiac signs weren't much help. At least, I didn't think so.

Consequently, I took my own personal survey. It wasn't much better. Most people said the usual: World peace, exercise more, lose weight, save money, stop smoking, etc., etc.

Although there were others that had a slightly different twist to resolutions. I thought making more money wasn't a bad idea nor was being happy.

Seriously, though, I think it's a good idea to reflect on some of my shortcomings and try to make them better.

For example, spending more time with my family and friends this year. There are times when I tend to leave them out and make excuses that I have too much work or too many other

things on my mind.

Actually, one of the people I talked with said they needed to spend more time with their pets. I thought that sounded very sweet and got me to wondering if my cat thinks I spend enough time with him. Maybe this sounds crazy, but I just don't believe my cat would really care whether I spent more time with him or not. In fact, he might get so annoyed he would probably scratch me in my sleep for not having left him alone during the day.

With all the resolutions that are possible, I think I would still put health and happiness at the top of the list.

When we are healthy, it's easier to have all those other good things in life, which would probably take care of many of the not-so-good vices.

I believe that's probably the biggest reason why the annual Colby Wellness Fair takes place in mid-January.

After all, what better way to start a new year then to take charge of your health by learning more about whatever ails or whatever could be a problem in the future. The fair can help participants by discovering illnesses before serious problems develop. For example, participants can find out more about osteoporosis, diabetes, cancer, arthritis and much more.

Maybe that's the best way to start the new year.

The Wellness Fair begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 1 p.m., Saturday, in the student union at Colby Community College. Hope to see you there.

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

## War with Iraq will cost us more than blood

As the Bush Administration prepares for war in Iraq, the American people should demand a complete assessment of the costs of the war — which go beyond potential military and civilian casualties.

As President Dwight Eisenhower famously noted, the costs of militarism are not limited to the battlefield.

They include the budget sacrifices that must be made in order to support a war effort or military buildup.

In the case of the Iraq war, these costs will be substantial, most likely requiring our nation to forgo spending on domestic and international programs that are vital to our security.

Putting a price tag on human casualties is impossible. And even those costs that are quantifiable are hard to predict. Nonetheless, it would be irresponsible not to estimate — as well as we can — the costs of war before deciding to wage it.

Most likely, the Iraq war would last about three months as the United States moves from a lengthy air attack to a ground war in Iraq's major cities, followed by a lengthy occupation. Our nation would undoubtedly prevail in the end.

Assuming that the war would last three months and that America would have to occupy the country for one year, the Iraq war would cost \$90 billion, based on figures from the Congressional Budget Office.

Vice Admiral Jack Shanahan

- Another Take

That's a lot of money. It's more than the federal government spends on K-12 Education, the Environmental Protection Agency, housing assistance, and humanitarian foreign aid combined.

For \$90 billion, America could invest in programs that have a far better chance of enhancing our long-term national security needs than an ill-conceived war with Iraq. For \$90 billion per year, America could do everything on this list — and more:

✓For a decade, double current research funding for clean and renewable energy — to end our dependence on risky foreign oil. Cost: \$12 billion.

✓For five years, double the budget for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. This would lessen the threat of smallpox, anthrax, plague and more. Cost: \$20 billion.

✓For two years, double the humanitarian for-

eign aid budget. As President Bush has acknowledged, part of the war on terrorism involves fighting poverty, which breeds it. Cost: \$20 billion.

✓Double federal spending on K-12 education. A one-year influx of federal money would be a down payment on our nation's bill to renovate public schools. Cost: \$34 billion.

✓For two years, provide public financing of federal elections — as an experiment to see if we can make our democracy work. Cost: \$2 billion.

Clearly, \$90 billion is a lot of money, even for our rich nation.

The \$90 billion figure highlights how important it is for America to carefully consider the costs and benefits of waging war.

We need to strike a balance between relying on military action and using all the diplomatic and humanitarian tools that we have available to make the world more secure in the long term.

The federal budget is not limitless.

We should make sure our spending priorities are clear before the bombs start falling.

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## Doonesbury

- Gary Trudeau

