

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

He's right on target

To the Colby Free Press:
I agree with Conrad Reed's letter (Monday, July 26, *Free Press*).
Colby Public Schools have had high standards and a good reputation for excellence for many, many years.
Why would you lower the standards?
We even had high standards for the teachers' personal lives, which the privacy act will take care of now.
As he wrote, if you don't expect the child's best, you won't get their best.
School is education, not sports. It is a nice addition but don't let us forget reading, writing and arithmetic are the reasons for its being.
Watered down expectations and parents afraid of injuring the child's physic are a lot of what is wrong with our world today.
Let us raise our standards for everything and our world will be much better.

Moya Bieker
Colby
(Letter #60)

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.

Where to write

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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
State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web:http://www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorriso
State Sen. Ruth Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7399 e mail: rclark@ink.org

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Superintendent didn't tell whole story

To the Colby Free Press:
Disturbing circumstances and events during these past few weeks have compelled me to write this letter.
My Dad, Ralph Ostmeyer, is running on the Republican ticket for the 40th District Kansas Senate seat. He is a conservative and has served in public office most of his adult life. He spent 14 years on the Grinnell School Board, eight years as Gove County Commissioner and he just finished his second term as the representative for the 118th District of the Kansas House of Representatives.
He has also been an active member of the Kansas State High School Activities Association as a referee in both basketball and football for 33 years.
Unfortunately, many people in the Hoxie area have been misled about Ralph Ostmeyer. Please allow me to tell you about him.
My Dad is a farmer and most importantly a wonderful father. He raised seven children and gave each of us the opportunity to be educated beyond high school — 1 Master's degree, 4 Bachelor's degrees and 1 Vo-Tech diploma. I think it is important to note that three of his children are TEACHERS.
I would also like to point out that 10 of his 13 grandchildren are being raised in small rural

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school districts in northwest Kansas.
In the April 8, 2004 issue of the *Hoxie Sentinel*, Mr. Jim McDaniel, Hoxie School District superintendent, stated in his weekly newsletter that Rep. Ralph Ostmeyer thinks that teachers should take a cut in pay. I have visited with my Dad about this and I found that there is clearly more to the story than Mr. McDaniel reported. That comment was taken out of context during a meeting in Topeka with superintendents from this area. My Dad gave them the example of a school district in his representative district that, when faced with cuts, chose to work with the teachers as a group rather than eliminating positions and cutting programs. The situation my Dad was referring to, that consequently was taken out of context by Mr. McDaniel, resulted in that group of teachers willingly taking a small cut in pay so that none of them would lose their

jobs completely.
My Dad urged the superintendents in that meeting to make all necessary cuts in order to save programs. I believe Ralph Ostmeyer has done everything possible to insure that our schools are adequately funded EXCEPT raise taxes. My Dad voted against an increase in sales and income taxes to fund schools during this past session because he believes that in these economic times, we are taxed enough.
Ralph Ostmeyer was raised to work hard and taught to make do with what he had. He raised his children to work hard and live with their means, and he expects nothing less of the school districts and the state government, as well.
Ralph Ostmeyer is adamant that children deserve a good education. He knows that we are fortunate to have some of the best teachers in the world right here in northwest Kansas.
He supports education and he will do everything he can to make sure our schools are suitably funded.
Thank you for your time and consideration. I am very proud of my Dad.
Sincerely,
Chris Niblock
Hoxie
(Letter #61)

Elections, and corporate money

Any sign that corporate influence has been reduced in the first presidential election since the banning soft money went into effect looks dubious. Despite the Supreme Court ruling in support of the Campaign Reform Act, corporate money and the influence it buys is finding its way into the 2004 election. One only need look at sponsorship of the major political party conventions in Boston and New York.
Unfortunately, when the Federal Election Commission decided to allow convention "host committees" to raise and spend unlimited soft money from corporations to pay for the national party nominating conventions in 2004, it left a gaping hole in repairs to the democratic elections process. In the not-too-distant past, party conventions were largely funded by federal grants. Private sources are expected to give \$110 million for the 2004 conventions — about 13 times the amount of private contributions to the 1992 conventions, and donations to national party committees already exceed levels in 2000 in spite of the soft money ban.
The Republicans plan to raise \$64 million from private contributions for their convention, compared to the Democrat's \$39.5 million. A handful of corporations, including Coca-Cola, Altria Group (a.k.a. Philip Morris), and Pfizer, are attempting to hedge their bets by giving to both parties. Coca-Cola and Pfizer are Silver donors to the Boston Host Committee, giving between \$250,000 and \$500,000. Philip Morris/Altria is a Bronze donor, giving between \$100,000 and \$250,000. The Democratic host committee rejected tobacco money for its 2000

Patricia Lynn

- Guest Commentary

convention. These same corporations are listed as sponsors of the Republican Convention in New York City. We have become far too apathetic in the face of these numbers and the presence of corporations in politics — unless we follow the money — to understand how it affects us directly.
Corporations obviously stand to gain by donating to political parties and conventions. Why else would they do it? According to a Supreme Court ruling, soft money donations from corporations directly to both national parties led to "no other conclusion but that these donors were seeking influence, or avoiding retaliation." President George W. Bush is the top recipient of tobacco money in the current election cycle, but Philip Morris/Altria isn't taking any chances given that the US signed the Convention on Tobacco Control in 2003, and must decide whether to ratify the treaty. The tobacco giant is splitting its donations more evenly than in 2000 when it overwhelmingly supported Republicans — 60 percent to Republicans and 40 percent to Democrats so far in the 2004 elections. Call it an insurance policy. Tobacco-re-

lated illnesses kill nearly five million people around the world every year.
Pfizer also has a great deal at stake in this year's elections as the importation of prescription drugs is debated in Congress. The corporation has donated over half a million dollars so far in this election cycle, 65 percent to Republicans. The cost of drugs is an issue that affects nearly everyone, in particular the more than 40 million uninsured.
Corporate scandals of the past several years like Enron also do not appear to have curbed willingness of political candidates or parties to accept these contributions. Each party points at the other while continuing to permit undue corporate access and influence at the expense of public trust. There is a "silver lining" in that tobacco industry and pharmaceutical industry donations are down from 2000, indicating the ban on soft money may have had some impact. The key is to continue to close loopholes and expose the quid pro quo between corporations and their political donations — whether it is access to political leaders or changes to legislation that affects them.

Patricia Lynn is Campaign Director for Infact, a nonpartisan membership organization that protects people by waging and winning campaigns challenging irresponsible and dangerous corporate actions around the world — www.infact.org. Infact does not endorse, support, oppose, or otherwise advocate the election or defeat of any political candidate or party. "Distributed by MinutemanMedia.org."

Doonesbury

- Gary Trudeau

