

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Does Patriot Act invade our privacy?

Most Americans say they support the so-called Patriot Act, but the truth is, most people don't have a clue what the act involves. The name sounds nice, and that's good enough for 64 percent of us, a University of Connecticut poll shows.

Of course, only 42 percent could identify the main purpose of the law as enhancing surveillance powers for federal law enforcement agencies.

The poll also shows that, the more people understand this law, the less they like it.

Most of us, 81 percent, are OK with the provision that allows federal agencies to use information gathered from foreign intelligence activities in domestic criminal investigations. To most people, that only makes sense, though it's long been illegal.

It means, if the CIA overhears terrorists plotting a bombing in the U.S., the FBI can move in and use the information to make a case against the bombers.

A two-thirds majority agrees with a provision allowing the government to collect names and addresses from Internet communications in criminal investigations.

A section which allows federal agents to tap any phone a subject uses, rather than having to name each number in a court order, also draws wide support, 62 percent. It just makes sense to get one warrant for one bad guy.

When it comes to allowing agents to get people's library records without telling them, though, only 53 percent say it's OK.

We suppose there is some legitimate reason to check out the "Radical's Guide to Bomb Making," but we can't say right now what it is.

Still, will we get on an FBI watch list if we read the Koran? Just 43 percent support requiring banks to turn over records without a court order.

Why not get a court order? It's not that hard.

Searching American homes without telling the occupants doesn't draw much support, just 23 percent. Common sense has not left the American people.

Still, there is some scary stuff here.

A vast majority of Americans say they support this law with the patriotic name, though few of us know what it really means.

Few understand that it means your librarian or banker may be spying on you, turning your information over to some federal agency.

When people know about this law, though, many parts don't sound so nice.

The Patriot Act — high sounding, but not so high in purpose. Many provisions have to be reauthorized by Congress, and some of them ought not to be.

When the law was passed, the Sept. 11 attacks were fresh in everyone's minds. Few asked questions.

Now, though, people have a better grip on the law, and many Americans know which parts ought to be scrapped. Congress needs to listen to them. — *Steve Haynes*

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail pjschief@nwkans.com or pdecker@nwkans.com.

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COLBY FREE PRESS
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Colby, Kan. 67701
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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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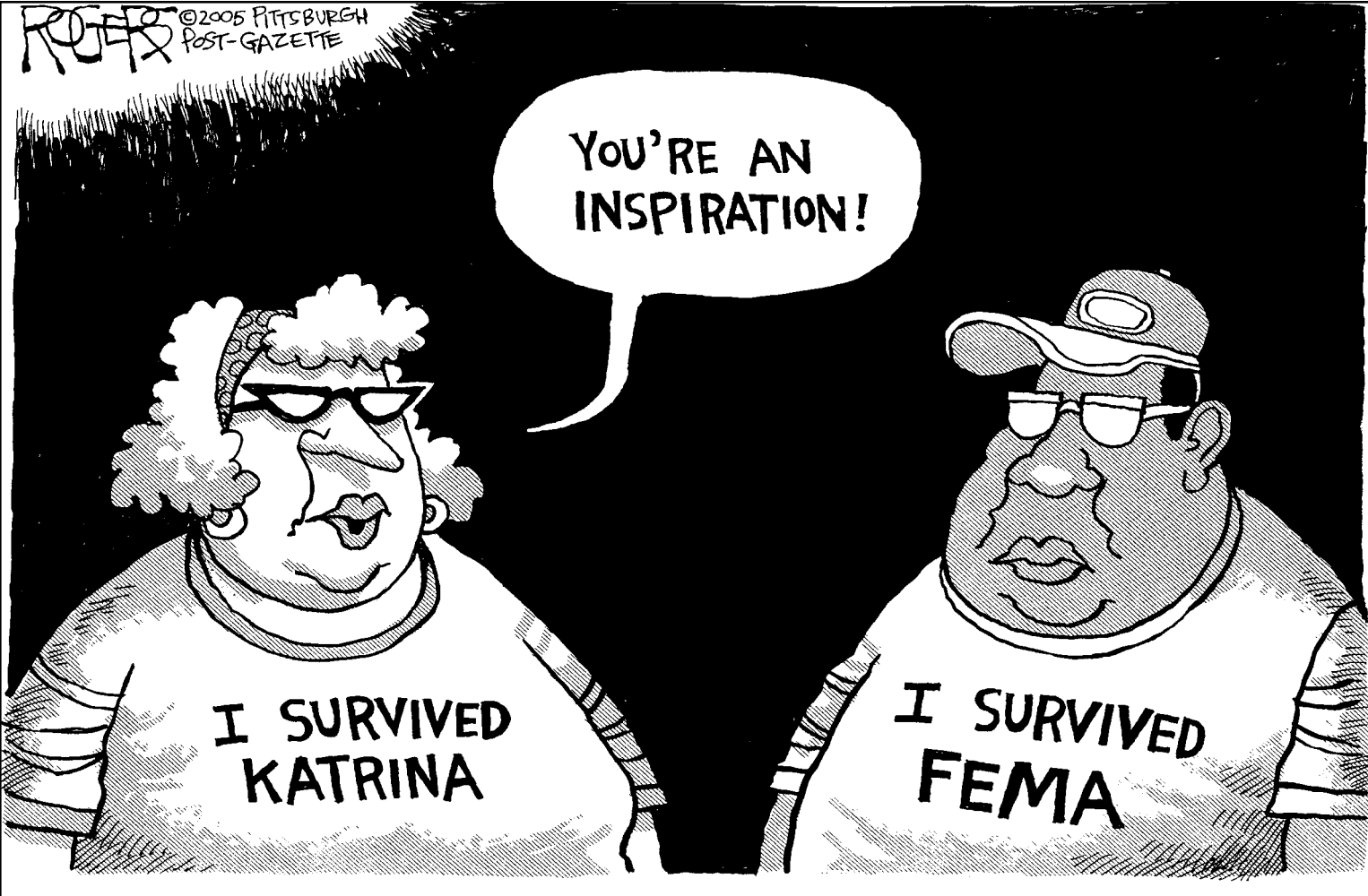
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

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Haynes Publishing Company



Major networks scrambling for hits

Three years have passed since the last best scary show on regular television quit production. Now, suddenly, all the major networks are scurrying to get what they hope will be hits onto the fall schedule.

I was a devout fan of "The X-Files."

I hear thanks to "Lost" last season, there are now several new shows this fall that are dedicated to scifi or suspense.

One is "Night Stalker," an update of the old 1970s show "Kolchak the Nightstalker" with Darrin McGavin as a reporter who had a penchant for stumbling onto stories paranormal in nature.

Though short-lived, it was the inspiration for Chris Carter's X-files.

Stuart Townsend plays Kolchak now. I hope he can pull it off. I've caught re-runs of that show and hope the remake lives up to the spirit of the original. (Pardon the pun.)

Most have to do with alien invasion, the supernatural or suspense. Let's just say I'm not holding my breath.

Shows like this seem to come and go in cycles. I guess they fill a deep-seeded need for people to be frightened.

No matter how technologically advanced we become, people still need to be frightened once in a while.

Scary is good. Gore is not. Something does not have to be realistically violent to be frightening. In that case, I think whoever thinks that is scary is just stupid.

Such thinking causes people to get desensitized to violence, or end up in therapy.

Vicarious fright seems to be the way people prefer their scares these days, safely tucked away



Tisha Cox • Off The Beaten Path

at home with the door locked and the lights off, secure in the knowledge that within an hour, things will be back to normal and their world left right side up.

Nothing is wrong with that.

I know fear is a powerful motivator. People are naturally afraid of many things, both real and imagined.

I've even heard it said you should do something each day that scares you.

Fear and risk are intertwined, I think. Fear keeps people, including me, from taking risks.

Not that I want to take a big risk, like climbing Mount Everest.

But every now and then, I do enjoy the adrenaline rush from a good old fashioned scare.

I haven't seen anything recently that would constitute a "real" scare. Sure, there are all kinds of scary things in the world but living in constant fear would be paralyzing.

However, with the entertainment definition of a scare, it's all retreads. How many times can they recycle the same gimmick?

The unseen and unknown used to be frightening. Now, it's the never-ending body count in pop entertainment that seems to be more appall-

ing than anything else.

Fear of the unknown used to be a motivation to people to push the envelope and see what was over the next horizon or outside the light of the campfire ring.

In some cases, my own curiosity has been stronger than my fear. It hasn't happened too many times but there have been times I've overcome my fear to take a look around instead of turning tail and running the other way.

Looking back at some of those times, I don't know if it took courage or stupidity but it was well worth the risk.

Some haven't been to outrageous — going out of state for college and sticking it out, choosing my career field.

That in itself was one of the biggest risks I have ever taken. My internship in 1997 was a baptism by fire that showed me I had what it took to be a journalist. I had to get over being shy and soft-spoken and was pretty much thrown in head first when it came to interviewing people.

I was told there really was no way to learn how to interview someone than by writing down questions, asking them and going from there. Well, that was true.

I know everyone has their own tales of overcoming fear, taking a risk or not taking one.

But I like to remember this one thing: Without risk, there is no reward.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcx@nwkans.com.

Will my choices make a difference?

Do conscious choices really affect how we turn out in the twilight years? Wouldn't I rather turn into aged wine rather than vinegar? The best would be not to age at all. Fat chance of that happening.

There is no doubt that exercising, eating right and staying mentally active make a big difference. Research and case study bear that out. But when going home after a tiring day it's really hard not to grab the fastest, easiest thing to eat. I even tell myself as I am eating that it's not good for me. The easiest one of the three for me is staying mentally active. I like the challenge of learning new things. I have to work the hardest at exercising. Each day at my lunch hour I'm trying to go do some walking. So far so good.

I like to cook but it takes on some strategy when you know you need to eat low fat, no salt with keeping the calories down but without the taste of cardboard.

I do think potatoes have been slandered. I had a cousin suffer head injuries in a hit and run and the hospital fed her potatoes of one form or another for three meals a day. They said that pota-



Pat Schiefen • Interim Publisher

atoes were brain food and it worked for her. She ended up with no mental or physical problems. I think the problems with potatoes are what we cook with them or put on them. If your mind feels a little sluggish maybe a potato would help.

Cutting back on the salt has been the easiest for me. Mother always had blood pressure problems so she cooked with very little salt. Also if a recipe calls for celery salt use ground celery seed and the same with garlic salt, onion salt and so on. Reading the labels on cans or boxes of things I buy has become habit. It will tell you the daily percentage of salt but also look at the ingredients list. It is the sodium in the salt that is

not good so watch for chemicals with sodium in the name.

Fats have been the hardest for me to figure out. I have read that cottonseed, palm and coconut oils are the worst for you. Again check the ingredients list. I like soybean, canola or sunflower oils. Canola doesn't seem to keep well for a long time.

If you have a family history of food allergies, that must be taken into consideration. If anything you eat goes through your digestive system without being broken down chances are that you have problems digesting it for example corn or sesame seeds.

As a child if you were lactose intolerant you may have problems with milk products as you age. Cheese, cottage cheese and yogurt have smaller amounts of lactose because the lactose is used by the bacteria that help make those products.

All of this said will I make it past McDonalds on my way home?

Pat Schiefen is the interim publisher and may be reached via email: pjschief@nwkans.com.

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