

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Staying at home a welcome relief

If I stayed at home, I'd want to travel. Since I'm on the road all the time, I'd like to stay home.

Steve and I figured that we were going to be in five beds in six days.

Last Wednesday, we headed for Concordia to see my mother and go to a funeral, then on to Lawrence to see our son.

We spent the night at the Springhill Suites in Lawrence and took our daily walk along the levy of the Kansas River. The levy in Lawrence looks good and the river runs placidly until it hits a dam right above our hotel. The spill over the dam is quite a show.

On Thursday, we headed toward Kansas City to get some barbecue for lunch. Ribs and barbecue beef are some of the things we miss from our former lives as city dwellers on the Kansas-Missouri line.

From Kansas City, we headed west and south to the Lake of the Ozarks, our final destination. We were there to represent the National Newspaper Association at the annual Missouri Press Association meeting.

We spent the next three days and two nights at the Four Seasons Resort on the lake. I'm not complaining, mind you, but the Lake of the Ozarks is a much cooler place for a convention than the Holiday Inn in Topeka or Manhattan, which is where the Kansas Press holds its conventions.

On Saturday, we said good-bye to our friends in Missouri and headed back towards Kansas City for another round of barbecue.

After a late lunch, we made the run across Kansas. We finally got home about 10:30 Saturday night and it was good to sleep in our own bed after three days of travel.

Sunday morning after church, we made lunch, but when we started to clean up, the garbage disposal choked and started spitting stuff back into the sink. Steve accused me of putting too much vegetable matter down the drain, and since that was true, I told him it was his fault.

However, when I went downstairs to run a load of clothes, I found that the sewer was backing up. We didn't have a big problem, yet, just a pool of dirty water around the drain. However, it wasn't going down, and any additional water down any pipe in the house would cause the water around the floor to rise.

We figured we couldn't do any more dishes or clothes, flush the toilet or take a shower. Since it was Sunday and we couldn't find a plumber who would answer his phone, we decided to spend the night at the LandMark Inn. We needed showers after working around the house all Sunday afternoon.

Monday, the plumber came and we were back into our home and bed, if only for a night.

Tuesday we were slated to leave for Milwaukee for the annual National Newspaper Association convention.

That's one night in Lawrence, two at the Lake of the Ozarks, two non-consecutive nights at home, one at the LandMark and several in Milwaukee.

I love to travel and I really enjoy going places and meeting people, but I'm going to be ready to be home for awhile, let me tell you.

With running water, of course.

Cynthia Haynes



### Are prices inflated on text books?

Jim Hightower

#### Other view points

In recent weeks, on campuses all across America, another wave of bright-eyed and bushy-tailed students have been enrolling in university. Ah, what an experience - the camaraderie of college spirit, the titillating possibilities of higher learning! Then these eager innocents go to buy their textbooks, and - wham - the dispiriting reality of corporate greed whacks them upside the head.

Students, already beleaguered by skyrocketing tuition and fees, now face sticker shock when purchasing required texts. A congressional study finds that students today are averaging \$900 per semester for books. A watchdog group called CALPIRG has issued a report called "Ripoff 101," documenting that the giant publishers are raising prices of college texts at a rate three times higher than the prices of general books.

CALPIRG finds three main reasons for the

inflated costs. First, the publishers issue new, higher-priced editions every three years or so, even though there's little substantive change in the material. Second, at least half of the books are now sold "bundled" with unnecessary CD-ROMs and flashy workbooks that drastically bloat the price - even though two-thirds of college faculty say they "rarely" or "never" use these add-ons.

Third, publishers jack up the price simply be-

cause they can. Students are a captive market. Professors say, "Buy this book," and there's little choice but to pay the ripoff price. Also, like drug companies, publishers have been charging Americans more than they charge consumers overseas. On average, the same books cost 20 percent more here than in England, for example. In many cases, the overcharge is much greater - a calculus textbook, for example, sells for \$132 here, but only \$62 in Britain.

The good news is that students, some faculty, and a few lawmakers are fighting the gouging. To learn what steps you can take, go to this web site: [www.maketextbooksaffordable.com](http://www.maketextbooksaffordable.com).

Jim Hightower is the best-selling author of "Thieves In High Places: They've Stolen Our Country And It's Time To Take It Back," on sale now from Viking Press. Distributed by MinutemanMedia.org.

### Nation at crossroads after hurricane

Our nation finds itself at a crossroads following the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Thousands of lives have been affected, and thousands more have sacrificed and opened their hearts to relieve the suffering of victims.

While Americans have given much, Congress has been slow to learn that being good stewards of the taxpayer dollar also requires a little sacrifice. Congress has provided a much needed \$65 billion in disaster relief - a record level in our nation's history - but has yet to tighten its belt to reduce spending in non-critical areas in order to pay for this aid.

Instead, Congress appears poised to pass on the burden of record deficits to future generations. As more aid is needed in the coming weeks and months, we must ensure this natural disaster does not become a financial disaster for our country.

The magnitude of rebuilding the Gulf Coast region requires Congress to make sacrifices, even if they fall close to home.

I am calling on my colleagues to adopt a one-year moratorium on all 2006 legislative earmarks. Last year, members secured nearly 14,000 special projects, totaling \$27 billion.



Jim Morrison

#### Capitol Review

Delaying these projects for a year is a reasonable sacrifice members of Congress can make. I also have sponsored legislation to postpone for two years the Medicare prescription drug benefit, except for seniors with the highest financial need.

This delay of full implementation will save taxpayers billions of dollars. In this time of over-stretched budgets, our country cannot afford this expensive program.

Now more than ever, it is time for Congress to get serious about exercising fiscal responsibility. As critical resources are provided for recovering and rebuilding the Gulf Coast communities, it is important proper controls are put in place to ensure taxpayer money is spent wisely

and reaches those who need it.

There is also much room to reform the federal budget process in ways that eliminate wasteful, unnecessary and inappropriate spending. I am pleased to support legislation led by Kansas delegation members Sen. Sam Brownback and Rep. Todd Tiahrt that establishes a commission to independently review federal programs in order to eliminate those which are outdated, irrelevant or inefficient.

I am also supporting a Constitutional amendment to require the federal government to balance its budget. Almost every state, including Kansas, is required to balance its books by year's end, just as you and I do with our budgets at home.

The time for fiscal discipline and accountability is long overdue in our nation's capital. As we reach this crossroads, the decisions of Congress will affect generations to come. I have no doubt that Americans will come together and recover from the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina.

Members of Congress must now step up and work together to ensure the financial future of America does not become another victim of this disaster.

#### About those letters . . .

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State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

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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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