

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Kansas shouldn't pay the price

A policy aimed at easing the plight of motorists stranded in Colorado storms is causing problems for people who live in — and need to get to — places in western Kansas.

When roads are closed in Colorado, officials there ask Kansas authorities to block traffic where there are hotel rooms to handle them. That makes sense, properly applied.

When they close the roads, though, they close them. And that means that wherever there are motel rooms left, that's as far west as you can go.

I-70 has been closed as far east as Hays or Colby when there were no road problems in Kansas. Mail, newspaper deliveries for those of us farther west were stopped along with through traffic.

People who live in far western towns couldn't go home. People with business out here couldn't get through.

Not because of the weather. Not because of the danger. But because the guys manning the barricades, state troopers and state highway workers, didn't want to separate the local traffic from the Denver bound.

This is too high a price to pay for solving Colorado's problem. It's good that Kansas can cooperate. No one wants to see hundreds of people stranded in Burlington or Limon or some other places where there are no beds or shelter.

But Kansas towns and Kansas people shouldn't have to pay the price.

State highway officials say it isn't supposed to work this way. Local traffic is supposed to go through. In practice, though, troopers and highway crewmen manning barricades in Colby and Goodland just block the road. They don't ask where people are going.

On lesser routes, they just put a sign up and go home. Gates are locked at some entrances to the freeway. And a locked gate won't allow anyone on, local traffic or no.

Now some county commissioners are questioning this policy. They wonder why they are helping to keep people off their roads when it's safe and reasonable to travel west in this state. They don't close county roads when it snows here, so why block them when it snows in Colorado?

It's about time somebody spoke up against this poorly implemented policy.

If we can't separate local traffic from through traffic, and allow people with business in Kansas through, then Kansas roads ought to stay open.

It'd be better to let the through traffic pile up in Colorado than to stall commerce on this side of the border when it's not necessary.

We'd hope for a sensible compromise, allowing local traffic to move where it needs to move, but if that can't happen, then let's keep our roads open.

If the weather here gets bad enough, we can close the roads. But when the problem is in Colorado, then why keep Kansans behind the barricades?

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 email jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

freepress@nwkansan.com

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.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher

jvannostrand@nwkansan.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

pdecker@nwkansan.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

tc Cox@nwkansan.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter

ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

crystalr@nwkansan.com

Jasmine Crottinger - Advertising Sales

jasminec@nwkansan.com

Cindy Davis - Advertising Sales

c.davis@nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager

lea@nwkansan.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building

japplegate@nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkansan.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

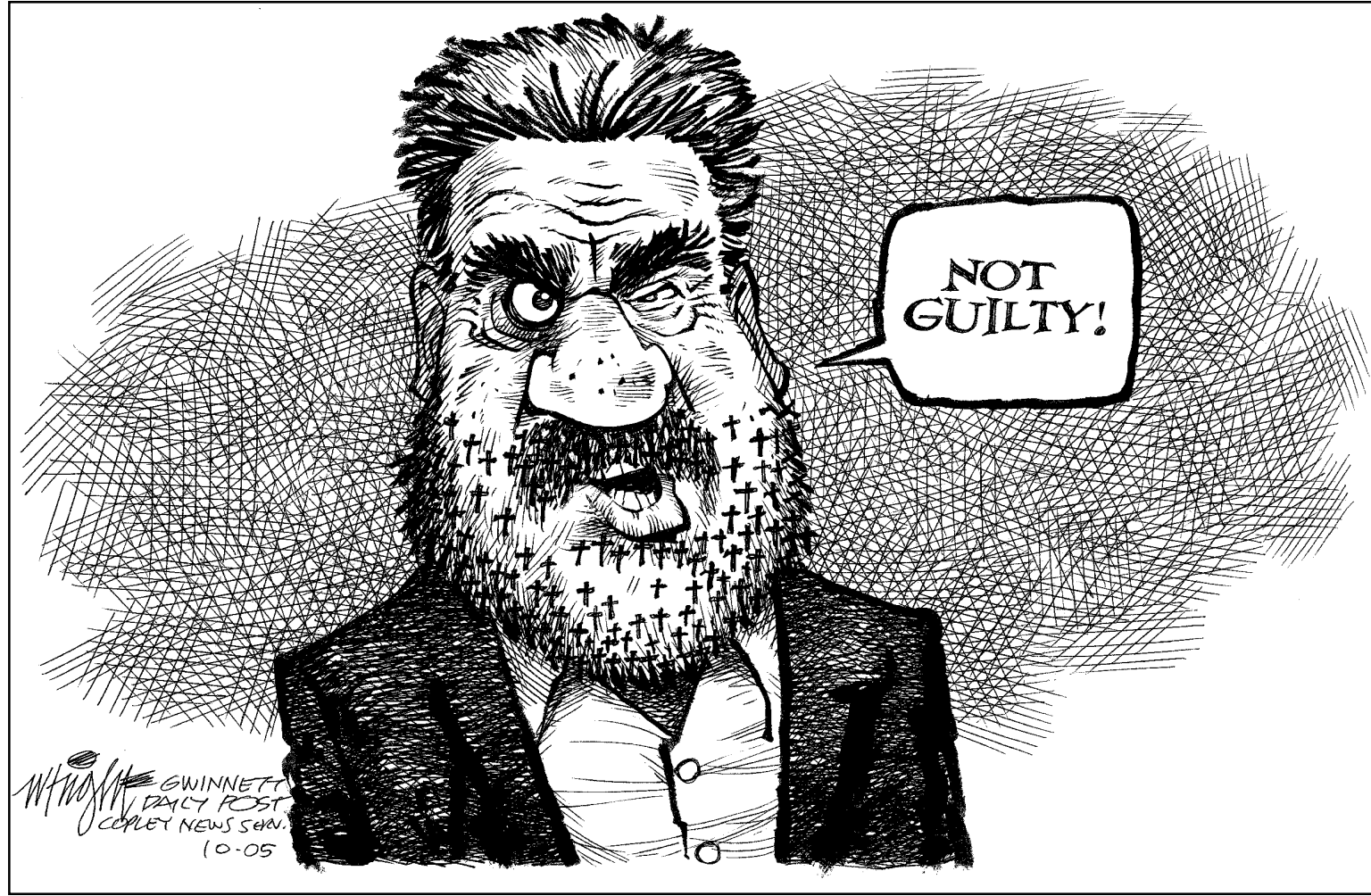
Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

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: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



Making an acquaintance a good friend

Having publisher in front of my name is new to me. Colby, Kan., is not.

I can relate to Colby from my wedding day to one of my pieces of luggage.

After growing up and graduating from high school and college in Sterling, Colo., my first newspaper job was at the Flagler (Colo.) News. It is a small, weekly paper about 110 miles west of Colby on Interstate 70.

Just a little after a month into that job, I met a girl, named Jennifer, from Seibert, Colo., who would eventually become my wife. Early in our relationship we had occasional daytrips to Denver or Colorado Springs. But one day we got tired of going west and headed east — to Colby.

We spent the Fourth of July 1995 in Colby. We walked through the museum, ate at A&W and went shopping. Not having a good overnight bag for when I visit my parents on weekends, I purchased a snazzy duffel bag in Colby. Don't ask me where, I can't remember. I think it was in one of the outlet shops. The bag quickly got nicknamed the "Colby bag." To this day, if Jennifer or I are ever gone for a night or two, we always say we will take the "Colby bag."

We came back later to watch a Chris LeDoux concert at the Thomas County Fair. Jennifer was a country music fan during those days. Jennifer's tastes have changed but I can still listen to some country.

A year later, Jennifer and I went through Colby on our honeymoon to the Bridges of Madison County in Iowa. We were so caught up with friends and family in Seibert that day we really didn't eat until after we left late that afternoon. We stopped at McDonald's in Colby.

Jennifer then dozed off and I remember driving and watching a lightning storm while driving north on U.S. Highway 83 I will never for-



John Van Nostrand

• A line in the dust

get. In a 360-degree view, the lightning strikes were far enough not to feel threatened, but close enough to be hypnotized by the continual bright lights from ground to sky.

After we moved to Greenfield, Iowa, in 1998, Colby still was not out of our life. During occasional trips back to Colorado to see friends and family, we would drive through Colby. Sometimes we stopped for gas or to get a drink for the kids.

Colby even crossed my path while in Iowa. A friend and I attended an economic development dinner and meeting in February at Lake Panorama, an affluent lake resort northwest of Des Moines. We sat down at a table and I was seated next to a woman and the small talk started. I asked where she was from and she said Colby, Kan., — with the tone that I would not know where that was.

I surprised her by saying, "Yeah, I've been there. I love the museum with the big white barn."

She said she worked at the museum during high school. Unfortunately, I can't remember the woman's name.

It wouldn't be for another four months until I would hear about Colby. Earlier this year I wanted to take another step in my career and researched how to purchase a newspaper. Dur-

ing an Internet search of finding such a place, I came across Colby and the publisher position.

I sent *Free Press* owner Steve Haynes my résumé and clips before the Fourth of July and we eventually scheduled an interview for mid-August.

At first, I had concerns about the anguish of actually moving. But the more Steve and I talked and the more I realized God was providing for my family, I was convinced Colby was the place to go. We sold our house in Greenfield in just 12 days, which is rare by Greenfield standards, and yet another sign that we are supposed to do this.

I admit, it was a hard decision to leave Iowa. Jennifer and I left Colorado with the intention of raising a family in Iowa because we heard Iowa is a good place to do so. That was true for us. We had a wonderful church family and an excellent lineup of teenage girl baby sitters. But that is not to say we can't continue to have all of that in Colby.

Jennifer and I decided we didn't want our next step to be to a big city, something like 50,000 residents or more. We also did not want to go any smaller than Greenfield, a county-seat town of 2,000 people with all the essentials. Colby easily fits in there.

I need to learn more about the *Free Press* and Colby before I can put my publisher title in gear. But I am ready to make Colby more than just conversation over dinner or a place to fill up the gas tank and stomach. I want to make Colby a good friend.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press. He can be reached at jvannostrand@nwkansan.com

Your turn

Ignorant of the facts

Ken Poland must be ignorant of the facts. We have foiled at least 10 planned terrorist attacks, contradicting your statement. The Iraqi people have had two elections in spite of the terrorists. We have the fastest growing economy in years, another fact. We have the lowest unemployment rate in years, or were you aware of that? 60 million people are free to determine their own future.

Their women and children are free to go to school, get treatment in hospitals, in spite of the terrorists. Our troops and President Bush according to our leftist press had nothing to do with it. The tax cuts now leave millions to the tax payers rather than more bungling by our bureaucrats. Your right to speak is protected by our Constitution and is not in step with most Americans.

I for one am free daily to achieve positive pro-American things, rather than pointing fingers and blather anti-American untruths. No America isn't perfect, nor is our system or President Bush, but I'll take it and form my own opinions.

*Bob Schmidt
Hays*

Coach asks for help with Cats for Cans

Wildcat Fans,

I would like to ask all Wildcat fans to help make sure that no one in our community will go hungry this holiday season. The K-State vs. Colorado game on October 29th has been designated for the Cats for Cans food drive.

Please bring a donation of canned food to the game. Cash contributions are also welcome which will be matched by a local foundation. Checks can be made payable to The Mayor's Holiday Food and Fund Drive. Wildcat student-

athletes and alumni will be located in the parking lots seeking donations prior to game time. Cats for Cans has been a university sponsored food and fund drive for the past nine years.

These donations will go to the Flint Hills Breadbasket in Manhattan. The Breadbasket serves Northeast Kansas nonprofit agencies that help feed the hungry. The foods and funds collected will help provide holiday meals for financially challenged families. Last year the Flint Hills Breadbasket served over 2,000 families with

holiday food baskets. Please help me and the Wildcat teams create another holiday season where no one will go hungry.

Thank you for your gracious help with this drive. May the Lord bless and be will you and yours.

Go Cats!

*Bill Snyder
Head Football Coach,
Kansas State University*

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

