

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Let the schools make the choice

It's no surprise many Kansas students are discussing intelligent design.

Young, curious minds are interested, as they should be, in issues of the day. That includes debate over an effort by Kansas State Board of Education members to add intelligent design to science teachings.

Intelligent design, based on the belief that life is too complex to have been created solely by natural processes and without divine intelligence, is an idea worthy of wonder and discussion — especially at church and home.

Debate in Kansas, however, centers on whether intelligent design belongs in the public school science curriculum alongside the theory of evolution, the cornerstone of modern biology.

In public schools, discussions of intelligent design and other religious beliefs may have a place in history, philosophy, comparative religion or even political science classes.

But conservative BOE members are determined to interject intelligent design into the science curriculum, even though it's not science. ...

The new standards would go into effect in the 2007 school year. That could make conservatives' effort moot, as in 1999—2000, when BOE conservatives struck references to evolution and a new board seated the following year rightly reversed that move.

Four of the six current conservative board members ... are up for re-election in November 2006.

Meanwhile, local school boards would be left to address whether to teach the new standards, should this week's vote go as expected.

Even though standards are the basis for state assessment tests, local districts should separate themselves from the politics of BOE right-wingers intent on including religion in the science curriculum.

Districts have a responsibility to do what's best for their students, including those who want careers in health and other fields that draw on the biological sciences.

That is why districts should support the current science curriculum that gives students the background they need to succeed in college and the work force.

The Garden City Telegram

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 jvannostrand@nwkanssas.com or pdecker@nwkanssas.com.

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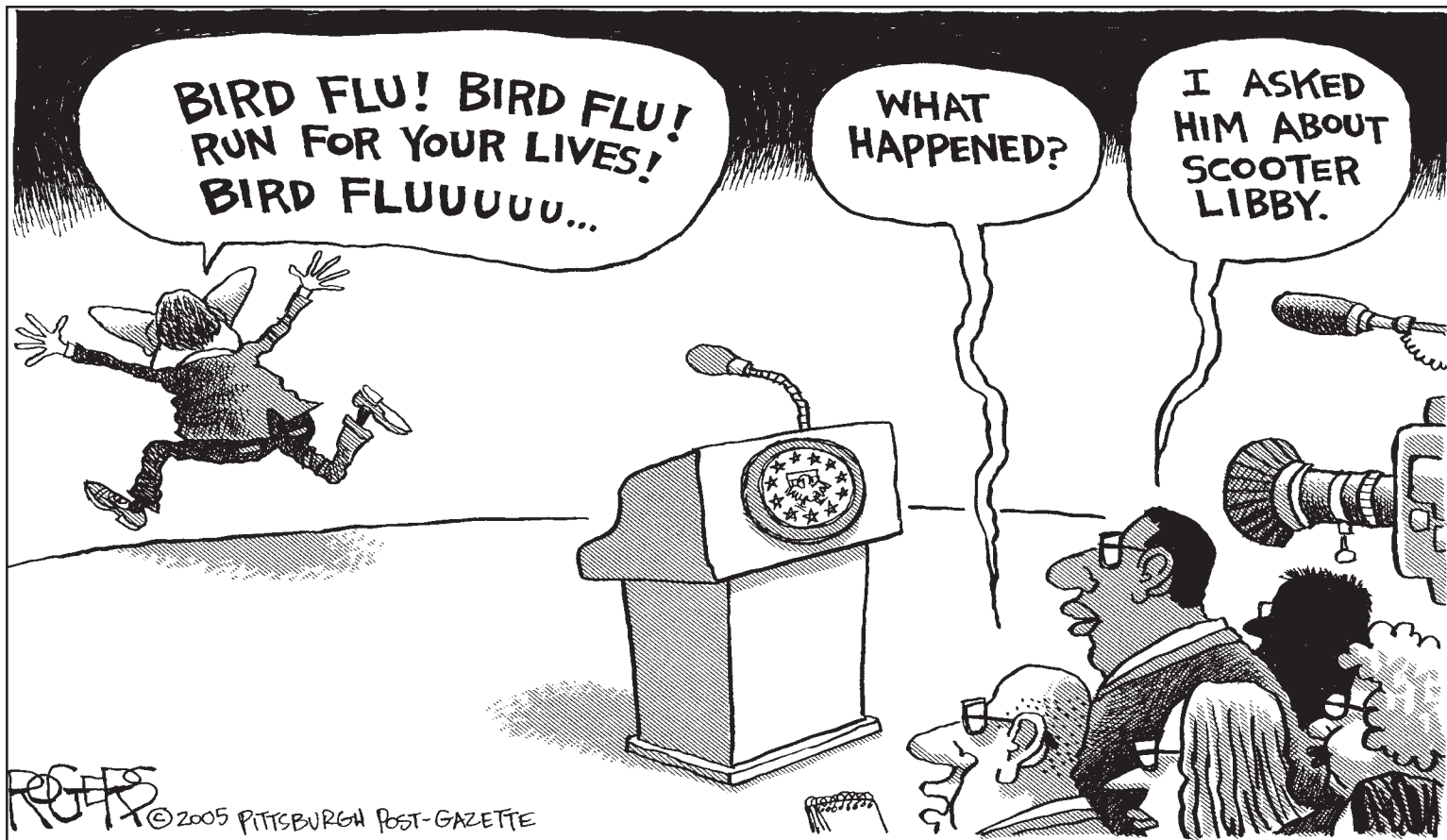
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Page after page of perfection

If it is not on every coffee table in Colby, along with a *Free Press*, it should be.

A few years ago, my uncle suggested I read "Great Plains" by Ian Frazier. Frazier, from the East Coast, was so fascinated by the Great Plains portion of America, he just got in his car and drove out, toured the area and wrote about almost everything he saw and experienced.

I received "Great Plains" as a Christmas gift in 2002 and I had it finished by the following February, which is fast for my reading habits. Frazier brilliantly combined history, legend and culture of the area and topped it off with occasional humor. That is why I couldn't put it down.

Frazier defined the Great Plains as the area from the Rocky Mountains stretching east to the 100th meridian of longitude. On a map of the United States draw a straight line, north and south, at Norton. What you see between the mountains and that line is the Great Plains.

According to Frazier's historical research, banks were cautious of lending money to homesteaders in the Great Plains because of the high risk for a lack of moisture, which means farmers may not have enough of a crop to pay back the loan. The climate does have its advantage, however tenuous. The federal government chose to build nuclear missile silos in the Great Plains because the low humidity won't damage the electrical components in the bombs.

Frazier also tries to right the wrongs in the



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

Great Plains.

The phrase "get the heck out of Dodge" relates to Dodge City's history of shoot-outs and murder. Frazier said the town doesn't deserve the reputation. During Dodge' heydays in the late 1800s, there were more murders in New York City than Dodge City, but Dodge City's crimes were more dramatized. Frazier makes several other references to Kansas, including Oberlin.

When, or if, you read "Great Plains," you may come across a reference to where you have actually been.

He mentioned Last Chance, Colo., a tiny spot rightfully named. Wife Jennifer and I had our engagement picture taken near Last Chance. With permission from the property owner, we used an abandoned, wore out farm house as background. It was a nice touch. We could hear nearby cattle bellowing as the photographer was posing us.

Maybe because I grew up in the Great Plains

Who's to blame?

Leaders of the Democratic Party in both houses of Congress are understandably upset at the nomination of Samuel J. Alito, Jr. to fill the Supreme Court seat being vacated by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

Alito is, after all, the anathema of all that the modern liberal embraces. He is conservative, intelligent and possessed of a trait becoming more uncommon every day common sense.

Of course, he will be vilified for some of his rulings, not because they are wrong constitutionally, or even morally when one looks at the entire case, but because they are not politically in line with the "mainstream" which presumably includes the A-list celebrities at a Kennedy compound cocktail party.

Less understandably, however, is the dismay expressed by liberal Democrats, including Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, at the nomination. They feign confusion about the withdrawal of Harriet Miers and wring their proverbial hands over the sudden Jekyll and Hyde transformation by the White House.

Folks, someone who was really that naïve couldn't get elected as dogcatcher in Mayberry.

Comparisons have been made to the conservative reaction to Miers and the liberal pattern of stonewalling judges, but the complaint doesn't hold water.

The reality is those conservatives who opposed Miers did so based on her experience and qualifications, not her ideology.

By the way, this religious conservative disagrees with that assessment. I think her lack of



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

judicial experience and the consequential good-old-boy attitude might have been refreshing and made for some better decisions.

In fact, there was a substantial minority of even the religious right who accepted her. Even the most liberal press reported it, yet in the wake of Miers, withdrawal both politicians and pundits on the left seem to have developed selective amnesia.

The reality is President George W. Bush went out on a limb to give the Senate Democrats the most palatable candidate he could and still maintain his own principles and they snubbed him.

The president spent a great deal of political capital and alienated a number of his supporters by putting Miers up instead of someone like Alito in the first place and the disarray of the usually solid conservative block gave the Democrats the best chance they will get until at least 2009.

Yet, they squandered it. They sat on their hands and ignored the best choice they were going to get from this conservative president. Of course, now that she is gone, some have jumped on the qualifications bandwagon, but a Johnny-

come-lately horn always rings hollow. because Frazier treated the area and the people in his book direct and with respect that I connected with him. He would go to town celebrations and meet the people. It's too bad, so many factions in today's mainstream media are usually the punch line of jokes and insults.

A sports editor I worked with in Iowa was from Overland Park. When I told him about my new job in Colby, he joked, "John, I'm from metro Kansas City. I'm not supposed to know anything about western Kansas."

He was only kidding, but hinted that western Kansas is forgotten by people in other parts of the state.

That comment reminded me of a church-youth meeting Jennifer had in her hometown of Seibert when she was in high school. Some of those kids were from Boulder, that hip college city north of Denver. Jennifer said one peer was surprised there were compact discs in Seibert since it was so far away from anything. So naive.

Frazier's book will hopefully help the rest of the nation better understand our environment and personality.

"Great Plains" is available at Pioneer Memorial Library.

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come-lately horn always rings hollow.

To cap it off, Democratic leaders have the audacity to wonder why the president has all but ignored them in nominating a man who is both extremely qualified and ideologically conservative.

Make no mistake; Alito's competence is at least as big a sticking point as his beliefs. It will be very hard to break the "gang of 14" in the Senate who stopped the previous filibuster/ nuclear option nonsense unless something in Alito's record indicates more than simply a conservative bent.

My comments on Miers notwithstanding, I'm enjoying the Alito nomination. His philosophy is much more conservative, like my own, and I think he will make a fine addition to Justices Scalia and Thomas as well as Chief Justice Roberts.

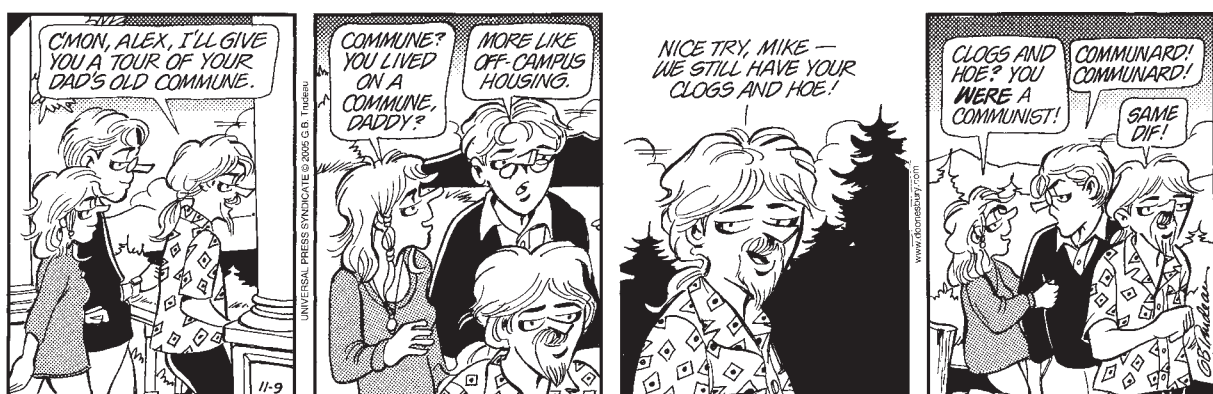
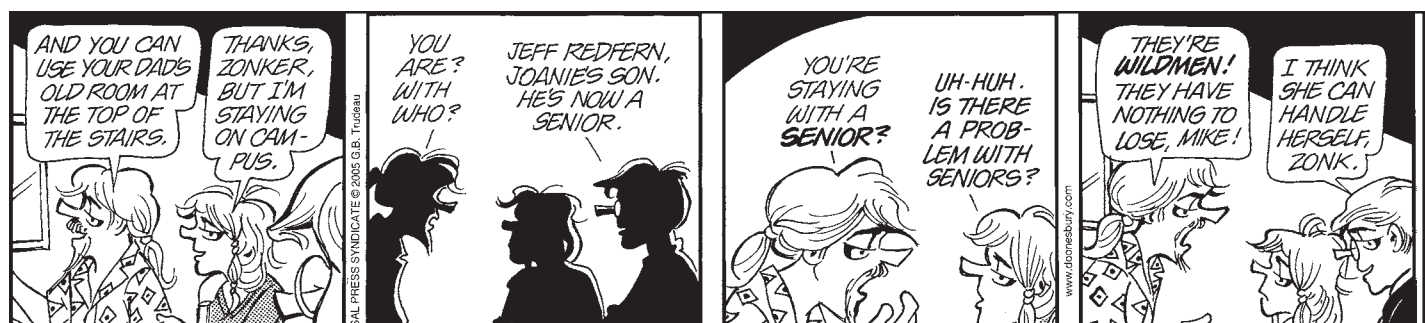
Liberals, however, are probably not enjoying his nomination as much. They need to remember, however, their own role in all this.

If their worst fears come true and Alito casts the deciding vote overturning Roe v. Wade (which will not stop abortion in America, in spite of all the rhetoric from both sides) they need to remember they could have stopped it.

All they had to do was build a consensus but, like children who want or nothing, they chose to do nothing.

Now they are throwing a tantrum.

Jay Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is: jkelly@st-tel.net.



Doonesbury

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