

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

A tough call to make

The Hays Daily News
We are heartened by the opinion of some Kansas lawmakers that any bans on cell-phone use while driving will not take place this year. Not that we disagree that certain drivers most certainly are distracted by these communication devices. Enough in some cases to even be a direct or at least contributing cause to accidents on the road. National research is bearing this out throughout the nation. ... Nor do we agree with the assessment offered by Senate Transportation Committee chairman Les Donovan, R-Wichita: “When we can’t get the votes for seat belts, I would say to try to get something done on cell phones would be extremely difficult. It has to do with freedom. ... They just don’t want the government telling them what to do.” No, we believe the Legislature is correct in not targeting cell-phone use in automobiles because the focus is too narrow. In fact, it is the wrong issue. What lawmakers need to consider is making it mandatory for new drivers to attend an approved driver’s education course before they could obtain a license. There are numerous other issues besides responsible use of cell phones by drivers that should be learned. Knowing and understanding traffic laws, for instance. The ability to recognize traffic signs by their shape, color and symbol. ... It’s a matter of priorities. If the state government is serious about any attempt to improve the safety on our streets and highways, it should focus on the bigger picture. Young adults need to learn how to drive before we start limiting what they can or cannot do while they drive.

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Hockey in Kansas? ... Sure



Tisha Cox
● Off The Beaten Path

I didn’t watch the NHL All-Star game last week. It was Wednesday night. I should probably feel guilty, being the die-hard hockey fan that I am, but surprisingly, I feel no guilt over the admission. Maybe it has something to do with the fact it was the first all-star event the league has held since 2004. There wasn’t a game in 2005 because of the lockout, and none in 2006 because the league’s players were allowed to play in the Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. Or maybe it had everything to do with being in the middle of the week, when there are other things to do. For as long as I’ve been watching hockey, the game has been on a Sunday night, capping off a weekend of activities built around the sport, starting on a Friday night with fan events that run the entire celebration. Saturday is filled with an old-timers game, and skills competition. This year, the skills competition was mediocre and I never saw an old-timers game. Instead, they played up the new stars game, allegedly to showcase the up and coming talent. But if I’m shelling out the bucks for an all-star event, you can bet I’m not there to see players that might not even be in the league in five years. To top it all off, it was buried on a cable channel instead of one of the big four networks. The past few years, it’s been on ABC or Fox, but since the lockout, no one really cares about the game. I thought that was just all a bad idea. The lockout was bad for the sport, even worse for its fans. The all-star game is to showcase the best and brightest the sport has to offer, but how can anybody see them when it wasn’t even on where more people could see it?

Hype for hockey over the past year and a half has been geared toward exposing more people to the sport, and building the fan base. Antics like that won’t help. The game was on Versus, formerly OLN, and hockey frequently gets pushed aside for professional bull riding. I know I wasn’t the only one who was less than happy about the game. One Canadian columnist, Bruce Garrioch, who is a well-known hockey writer, was calling for NHL commissioner Gary Bettman to step down. And I bet some people are wondering why we should care in Kansas? Well, Oklahoma City was one of the cities that put in a bid for an expansion team in 1996. Denver has a two-time championship hockey team. Kansas City has a nice new shiny arena — the Sprint Center — just waiting for a professional team of some kind, be it NHL or NBA. One possibility discussed of late is the Pittsburgh Penguins of the NHL. Owner Mario Lemieux, who captained that team to two Stanley Cup championships as a player in the 90s, is trying to find a way to keep the team in Pennsylvania, but he’s also talked with officials in Kansas City. The team could

move there and be playing in the fall. That team has two of the hottest properties in hockey right now. People might have heard of one. His name is Sidney Crosby, touted as the “Next One.” As in the next Wayne Gretzky. And almost everyone has heard of Wayne Gretzky the “Great One.” The team also has Evgeni Malkin, a rookie player who, in tandem with Crosby, are ripping up the league. Imagine having that to go see. As of today, there is a deal on the table from Kansas City. It will be interesting to see how it all plays out. I love hockey. It is a great sport, and I enjoy sharing my enthusiasm about the game, and it isn’t all about fighting and goonism. The sport has a history in the Midwest, with small minor league teams in many cities. Wichita, Topeka and Oklahoma City have Central Hockey League teams. Denver and Colorado Springs have college teams, the Pioneers and Tigers. The DU Pioneers won NCAA championships in 2004 and 2005. When was the last time KU or KSU basketball or football pulled off a feat like that? My point is the game isn’t just a northern sport, or a game played on the east or west coasts. It is a game that has expanded into the south, and is growing faster there than NASCAR. The sport has an amazing history, and not all of it is just the games. The people and stories have made it great. I wish a few more people could discover that.

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

Your turn

Voters need to see the benefits

Sacha Sanguinetti
Great Bend
As a former student of Colby Community College, and a former resident of Thomas County, I am excited to hear that plans for such a facility are moving forward. I now work with Eagle Radio in Great Bend and have a close association with Barton County Community College. The proposed wellness center in Colby would not only serve as a benefit to Colby and north-west Kansas, but to the entire state. The athletic facilities that community colleges in Kansas (especially western Kansas) boast are

exceptional...and as a whole far superior than what you will find elsewhere. This complex will only serve to enhance that. The Community Building is a nice venue with a lot of “charm”, but certainly outdated. Having a facility located adjacent to the college campus will also be beneficial. The small town of Hoisington (here in Barton County) just built a brand new activities/wellness center. Many of the benefits that you have highlighted in your plans have already occurred in Hoisington. There was a lot of opposition when this facility was sent to the voters (there always

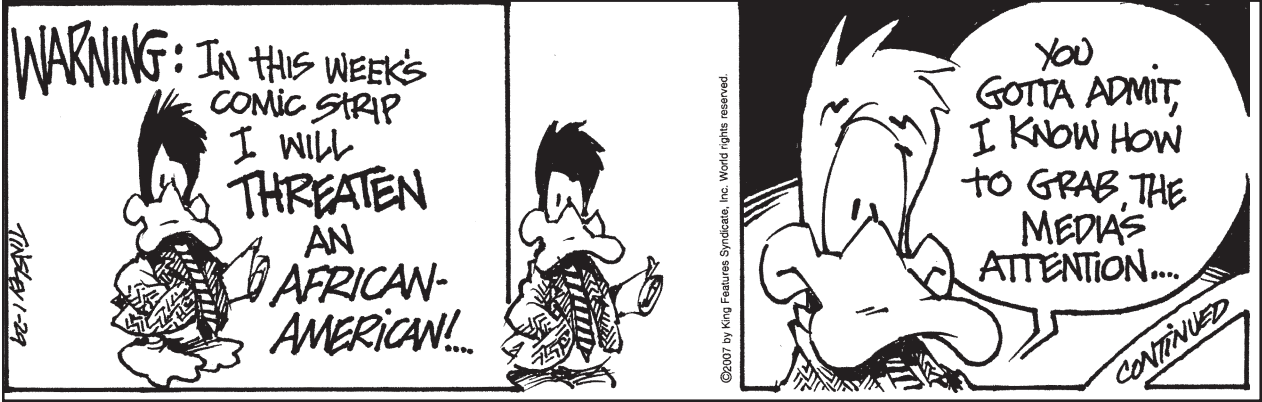
will be when you are entertaining the idea of a tax increase, especially in the wake of an F-5 tornado that devastated the town). Many of those who opposed the idea have now realized the rewards that Hoisington is reaping because of their building. I believe the town has recovered at a faster pace than previously thought because of the activities center. Northwest Kansas and the great people there treated me well. I still have many friends in the area and I am pleased to see that plans are in place for such a project. I hope the voters of Thomas County will be able to see benefits that this facility will bring for many years to come.

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Mallard Fillmore

● Bruce Tinsley



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

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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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 \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company