

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Who should pay the bill?

**The Junction City Daily Union**  
It's easy for Kansas lawmakers to deflect its responsibilities for the repair and maintenance of buildings in the state university system by blasting the messenger — the Kansas Board of Regents and university presidents.

The state of Kansas and its citizens are responsible for funding the massive upkeep of buildings on the campuses and the Legislature has failed us in maintaining that responsibility.

We would venture that state universities are unique in their repair and maintenance needs just by the sheer number of buildings on the seven regent campuses.

The numbers are certainly bigger than the state office complex surrounding the capital. Lawmakers and then-Gov. Bill Graves weathered storms of protest several years ago when it spent tens of millions of dollars restoring the statehouse, building a parking garage and updating other buildings in its complex.

Why is there reluctance to adequately fund university buildings? The board of regents predicts that by 2010, if the current level of funding is maintained by the state, tuition payments will far outstrip state funding. In addition, faculty salaries in our state institutions still fall below those of peer institutions. ...

Legislative leaders, jokingly or not, have suggested paying for the repairs by raising the property taxes in the cities where the schools are located. We think the regents' figures are closer to reality.

Lawmakers should come to grips with this reality and find a way to fund the repairs and maintenance not only for the present, but in the future as well.

We believe that our institutions of higher learning belong to all the people of the state and the repair and maintenance of those facilities should be shared by all.

It's time to step to the plate and bring our institutions up to the standards to which we can all be proud.

#### Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774  
**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521  
**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124  
**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com  
**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.



### Watch your language



**Tisha Cox**

● Off The Beaten Path

Anybody who spends any time on the Internet, or who has a cell phone, has probably noticed how language and its usage has well, evolved.

As a reporter, I'm intimately familiar with the English language as well as the other two I've learned.

The Internet, e-mail and instant messaging, as well as text messaging by cell phone have all caused abbreviated use of the language and a general ignorance of proper grammar and punctuation.

I'm just as guilty as anyone when it comes to texting or IM, but at least I try to use complete sentences.

From blogs (Web logs) to Web sites, I've seen people use lower case letters and all caps, to using the word "your" when it should be the contracted "you're."

And honestly, it drives me nuts. How we communicate, from talking to writing, from the words we use to how we say things says a lot about a person.

People use acronyms to say things instead of typing them when communicating over instant message or e-mail, like "np — no problem."

I had grammar, spelling, reading comprehension and vocabulary drilled into my head in school. I paid attention because I wanted to, and because I eventually realized the importance of it all.

Language is the foundation for all else — one

can't communicate ideas about anything else without it, including science and math.

I can admit I'm not perfect. Sometimes I put a comma in the wrong place, or misspell words. Besides corrupting the language, technology has helped eliminate, in some cases, written communication.

Writing with pen and paper may someday be a thing of the past thanks to instant communication. I doubt it's likely in the immediate future, but one never knows.

Besides its affect on language, the Internet has given birth to a trouble of another kind.

The free exchange of ideas is a good thing, but I balk when it comes to how information is sometimes passed around. Everyone knows how rumor spreads by word of mouth. Information gets passed over the Internet in a similar fashion, and sometimes it is questionable at best.

Or people pass along something they read,

and don't attribute a source.

Such behavior has resulted in a couple of Internet lawsuits, and mainly involve pictures. Some people have been using copyrighted pictures belonging to others on their personal Web sites or blogs, and say they have the right to.

None of this will be resolved quickly, but it is just one more step in the evolution of communication.

**Wonders never cease. . .**

Sunday afternoon, I was half-way ignoring the Daytona 500 NASCAR race while reading the news on one of my favorite Web sites. I was reading with disbelief, which carried over into looking at a picture.

Until today, I didn't know there was such a thing as a white moose.

I backtracked on the story, and I guess there is a century-old legend about a large white moose in Maine, but in Idaho and parts of Canada there are white moose.

The animals aren't albino, but have white fur. It is unusual, but not completely rare.

It just goes to show that sometimes there can be new, even useful information out there on the Web.

\*\*\*\*\*

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

### Common sense tax relief

**By John Schlageck**  
**Kansas Farm Bureau**

Production agriculture remains one of the most capital-intensive industries in this country. Hours of operation are long, intense and the window of opportunity is often short and fleeting.

Profit margins are razor thin. Producers continually monitor the markets, look to forward contract their commodities and seek to find an edge that will keep them productive and profitable.

One such measure that has the potential to help some farmers is the repeal of the Kansas franchise tax. This is a .125 percent tax on net worth above \$100,000 that goes through farms and other small businesses such as limited liability corporations and limited partnerships. Net worth less than this amount is exempt from the tax.

With many farms and ranches operating on narrow margins when compared to investment, absorbing this franchise tax can often be a real burden to the bottom line of these family businesses — much more so than to large publicly-traded companies.

In agriculture today, the rule rather than the exception remains increased production. With increased production come increased operating costs including fuel, fertilizer, seed, herbicides, insecticides, etc. Increased production also

means additional machinery and land.

The Kansas franchise tax is essentially another form of property tax on Kansas landowners, farmers and ranchers. In order to be in the business of farming, there must be land. This land contributes to net worth and as a result another tax is levied on that property needed for making food, fuel and fiber.

For business purposes, many agricultural operations are organized under this structure of limited liability and limited partnerships. They have to be to grow and prosper. Many Kansas farming operations have multiple crops, sometimes several farms and often support two or even three generations of a family. Each is subject to this franchise tax — each subject to this additional tax burden — each tax is unfair to capital-intensive businesses.

No one would argue that it's in our state's best interest to have a healthy, vibrant economy — one that encourages creation of jobs, income and wealth. It is counterproductive to impose a tax that discourages growth and penalizes accumulation of assets.

This franchise tax appears to be nothing more than an annual bill for the privilege of doing business in Kansas, unrelated to realized income, profitability or productivity.

The Kansas franchise tax is an economic dis-

incentive for businesses who may be contemplating expansion or locating in this state. Many other states do not have such a tax. Simply put, it's a bad tax for small business, farming, landowners and Kansas.

As our Kansas legislature wrestles with the budgetary challenges, it is fair to ask how the state can withstand lost revenues by repeal of this franchise tax. Farmers, ranchers and landowners believe elimination of this tax will have a beneficial fiscal impact. With a more favorable tax policy, Kansas has the potential to attract new businesses. Elimination of this deterrent to growing assets can stimulate new economic growth and increased opportunities in a state desperately needing them.

Last week the Kansas House of Representatives passed (91-28) HB 2031, a measure that repeals the Kansas franchise tax which calls for a phase out of the tax during a three-year period. It's now in the Senate. Contact your Senator and ask him/her to repeal the franchise tax.

\*\*\*\*\*

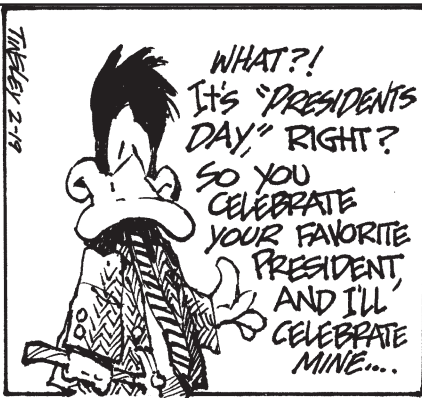
*John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.*

#### About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

### Mallard Fillmore

● Bruce Tinsley



©2007 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved.

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.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher

jvannostrand@nwkansan.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

pdecker@nwkansan.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

tcox@nwkansan.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter

ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

crystalr@nwkansan.com

Kristi Powell - Advertising Sales

kpowell@nwkansan.com

Emily Wederski - Advertising Sales

ewederski@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, Jim Jackson, Delisa Allen, David Erickson, Betty Morris and Dana Huthansel

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