pinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Propose something Gov. Sebelius

From The Wichita Eagle

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is in remarkably good standing with Kansans, averaging a 67 percent approval rate last year in the monthly

In year-end interviews, she set an optimistic and forward-looking tone that state lawmakers would be wise to emulate when the 2008 legislative session begins Jan. 14.

She's been talking up the ideas that economic growth and environmentalism are compatible, and that "green jobs" related to renewable energy could fuel the state's economy.

She wants to engage the Legislature in a "comprehensive conversation about climate change strategies."

And "there's a new discussion about nuclear power going forward, and certainly there's capacity for wind" power, she said. ...

She recognizes the budgetary pressure of multiyear commitments to K-12 schools, the transportation plan, state retirees and more, but also sees Kansas being spared the economic bite other states are feeling related to the housing market, thanks in part to the booms in aircraft manufacturing and ethanol. ...

Some GOP leaders of the Legislature, not among the Democratic governor's fans generally, may receive her 2008 State of the State speech on Jan. 14 more coolly than usual given her administration's recent denial of a proposed coal plant expansion in western Kansas.

They have been vocal in their desires to undo that regulatory decision and to consider the Health Policy Authority reforms in pieces rather than as a package. They don't see eye-to-eye with Sebelius on rural redevelopment.

And as usual for an election year, partisanship and payback will have allure, especially on red-hot campaign issues such as illegal immigration and abortion.

But, mindful of how much there is to do in only 90 days of the legislative session and how much public support Sebelius enjoys, lawmakers should refrain from petty fights over the past and join the governor in focusing on the future.

She can help by offering and promoting her own specific proposals, something she's done too rarely in her first five years in office.

About those letters . . .

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Gambling on gambling

Gambling is the reason why Las Vegas and Atlantic City exist.

Gambling has been romanticized in the movies and now even competitive poker playing is

on television. But will gambling save Dodge City and what will its impact on western Kansas be?

Thanks to voter approval, a developer is hoping to build a casino in Dodge City. For starters, those in favor of the casino say it will revitalize the Queen of the Plains and add more to the western flavor the town has.

The more casinos in Kansas issue is still under litigation. I don't see the court system turning this item down.

If and when the casino is built, I expect the casino to have a strong western motif. The little office where the cash and poker chips are kept will look like a Conestoga wagon. The roulette wheel will probably look like a wagon wheel. Bar maids will wear fancy jeans, boots and a snazzy cowboy hat. The restaurant will have something to the effect of chuckwagon in its name.

Will people proverbially eat up a casino in Dodge? Will people jump on this bandwagon? I have a hard time seeing that happen.

as the number of visitors continually declined. Boot Hill is a replica and re-enactment of what Dodge City looked like in its heyday years after the Civil War, when the cattle industry started. That seems to be the last time someone wanted to visit Dodge City. (A few longtime Dodge City visitors I've talked to said Boot Hill really never matched its potential). But Dodge City officials found enough money to keep Boot Hill afloat.

Dodge City is in a unique location, geographi-



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

cally. Although Dodge City, Garden City and Liberal, are the population centers of southwest Kansas, it won't take long for those approximately 75,000 people to get their fill. Is that even enough of a population base? Unfortunately, the casino will get too much out of some of those people and a gamblers anonymous chapter will be created. Some families will be hurt in one

Marketing will be key for the casino in Dodge. Expect the casino owners to go farther and further to attract customers. Wichita, only 150 miles from Dodge City, could help, but there is talk to build casinos closer to Wichita. Dodge City will compete for the people in and near Pratt and Great Bend.

Las Vegas' popularity is partly because of the A couple of years ago, Boot Hill, the town's easy drive for the millions of Southern Califormain tourist attraction was on the verge of closing nians to go there for a weekend. Dodge City does not have that kind of customer base

People along the Front Range of Colorado, and even eastern Colorado, to an extent, will continue to go to the mountain gambling towns. Those gamblers will be more enticed by what metro-Denver offers to complement the gambling trip. For example, it's a 187-mile trip from Kit Carson. Colo., to the casinos in Black Hawk, Colo. — and tough to avoid Denver.

What is enticing during the 210-mile trip from Kit Carson to Dodge City? The only distraction will be the people counting the money they lost on the way home. Stopping for gas and a cup of coffee in Tribune won't cut it.

Sure, Dodge City casino will have plenty of jobs, another so-called benefit of the casino. But refilling buffet bars and pushing vacuums won't be any different than the same jobs at the restaurant or hotel on the other side of town. It will be more service, paid-at-least-minimumwage jobs and a select few "career-like" jobs. Twentysomethings and second-income parents will apply. (A casino that opened in Iowa years ago fired dozens of its first employees the week it opened after catching employees with their hands in the piggy bank.)

I wouldn't be surprised if the Dodge City casino owners made a big push along western Kansas. We will be exposed to the casino in Dodge in and around Colby. There already is a billboard near Oakley for the casino near Lawrence. Ads will pop up on the radio, television and be seen in newspapers.

The casino in Dodge City will be like most everything else when a town gets something new. People will talk. People will go see what its like. But the new will eventually wear off and, like Boot Hill, administration will wonder where the people went.

Hannah Pyle is our new advertisement sales representative. She has been with the Free Press since September. She started out helping us with our family page and occasional pictures.

- John Van Nostrand is the publisher of the Colby Free Press.

A populist revolution

By Jay Kelley

The emergence of Barak Obama and Mike Huckabee as victors in the Iowa caucuses showed a much stronger populist sentiment among the people than most observers were prepared to

It was refreshing to see Hillary Clinton in third place, though. It seems the idea that witnessing great events was equivalent to guiding them was not as easy to sell as she thought, even with her husband – who is an undeniably popular and persuasive man – promoting it.

She will be in trouble if she doesn't win New Hampshire. I don't think she can win the more conservative and populist South Carolina and losses in the big three will hurt her campaign seriously.

That is not say she is finished, however. This is still Hillary Rodham Clinton and, regardless of what anyone thinks of her, she knows how to win. Look for the campaign to turn ugly if she loses the big three.

I was particularly surprised to see the turnout among the Iowa Democrats. According to CNN, about 227,000 came out to vote – exceeding the old record of 125,000 set in 2004. About half as many Republicans turned out and both groups were characterized by a strong populist sentiment, which explains wins by Huckabee and Obama.

with the common man. Huckabee, a former Baptist minister, has an understandably more evangelical message, while Obama's is more social in scope, dealing with our responsibility

Both messages have some good thoughts, but are way too insular for the times. America is again seeking to turn inward and ignore the problems of the world just as we did 30 years ago when we elected Jimmy Carter – perhaps our worst president and the reason the Nobel Peace Prize is now a joke.

We have tasted the fruit of world leadership and, whether we like or not, we must remain a world power if we are to maintain our lifestyle. It is not about bullying other countries, nor is it particularly immoral to direct world affairs for our benefit. Yes, Iraq is about oil, but it is not simply for us – the entire world depends on oil for now.

It is a choice. If we choose to turn inward, concentrate on creating a socialist government and ignore the problems of the world, we will be forced to learn to accept high taxes, stifled growth and subservience to the dictates of the great world powers - China and perhaps Russia again.

No, it won't be the Arabs who rule. They don't have the unity or education, and they'll eventually do something to China and that retaliation

Both men have a moral message that resounds will make the Little Bighorn look like a high school football game.

> If we step up, do what it takes show the Arab world we mean business including showing them how to build a republic, invest our economic power in returning American production and wean ourselves off oil we can again gain the respect of the world.

> We haven't lost respect because we invaded Iraq. We haven't even lost respect because we didn't listen to the naysayers. We have lost respect because we have lost direction. We can no longer be counted on to do the right thing regardless of what everyone else thinks – and then find a way to win anyway.

We are more concerned about losing our benefits and our security than losing our self-respect. The world thinks America prizes peace and safety above liberty and integrity and doesn't realize you can't have the former without the latter and you must have leadership to have any of it.

The president of America must be able to lead his or her people as they lead the world.

Huckabee and Obama are followers of popular sentiment, not leaders.

Jay Kelley is a former Colby resident who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is jaykelley5@yahoo.com.

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Bruce

Tinsley

