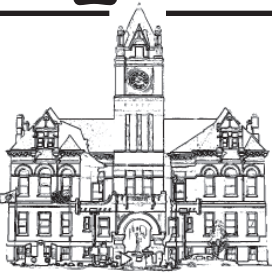


Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Lead by example

By John Van Nostrand, publisher Colby Free Press

It's honorable for America to want other countries to be a Democracy. We've proudly been that way for more than 220 years.

But it's not honorable for what we do within our Democracy while still having the hopes other countries will follow suit.

Just take this presidential election for example. Friday, Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean warned his fellow Democrats, including White House front runners Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, about the ills of turning against each other. He said the complaints and criticism may influence voters to go for Republican nominee John McCain.

Where to begin.

First of all, Dean should be the last person to offer such advice. His entire presidential campaign in 2004 was based on tearing apart everything he could find about the Bush administration. Dean's campaign took a serious nose dive early in the primary season that year. He really never promoted himself. He never won a state. You got to wonder why.

There shouldn't be a difference between being critical of another candidate in your own party compared to being critical of the opposition. Negative-based politics is just part of what has turned off voters over the years. Sure, they expect to hear some of the bad stuff, but voters need to know why they should vote for a certain candidate, not why they should not vote for another. This year is no different as candidates in both parties continually took jabs at each other.

What the candidates do is just one aspect of how we need an honest, reputable, influential Democracy other countries want to have.

After Michigan held its primary a few weeks ago, some people wanted to do it again because they didn't like how the delegates were distributed. That was a scary reminder of the voting disaster in Florida in 2000. Since then we've had vans intended to carpool voters to polling places vandalized on election day, malfunctioning voting equipment down to the local level. Maybe a lot to ask for, but voting must be done right the first time.

Of all the things in this country that needs to set an example to the rest of the world, it should be our Democracy.

That will only happen when people involved will leave their egos and fears at home, and only bring forth their best.

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, 2202 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: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

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

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 within 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.



Bill of Rights



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

One of my favorite syndicated columnists, John Rosemond, a child psychologist, has come up with his own "Bill of Rights," and they are worth repeating.

Rosemond said he wrote this special set of rights in memory of civilized behavior and with the hope it can be salvaged from the slag-heap of "self-esteem." With that, here is a child's real and only rights, according to Rosemond, but I agree.

— Article One: Because it is the most character-building word in the English language, children have the right to hear their parents say, "No" at least three times a day, every day.

— Article Two: Children have the right to find out early in their lives their parents don't exist to make them happy, but to offer them the opportunity to learn the skills they — the children — need to eventually make themselves happy.

— Article Three: Children have a right to scream all they want over the decisions their parents make, albeit their parents have the right to confine said screaming to certain isolated areas of their home.

— Article Four: Children have the right to find out early their parents care deeply for them but don't give a hoot what their children think about them at any given moment in time.

— Article Five: Because it is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, children have the right to hear their parents say, "Because I said so," on a regular and frequent basis.

— Article Six: Because it is the most character-building activity a child can engage in within the four walls of her home, children have the right to share significantly in household chores.

— Article Seven: Every child has the right to discover early on he isn't the center of the universe, he isn't the Second Coming and that he

isn't even — in the overall scheme of things, and in strictly earthly terms — very important at all (no one is) so as to prevent him from becoming an insufferable brat.

— Article Eight: Children have the right to learn to be grateful for what they receive; therefore, they have the right to receive all that they truly need and very little that they simply want.

— Article Nine: Children have the right to learn early in their lives that obedience to legitimate authority is not optional, that there are consequences for disobedience, and that said consequences are memorable and therefore persuasive.

— Article Ten: Every child has the right to parents who love them enough to make sure they enjoy all the above rights.

I would only clarify one thing to this list of rights, which is that children have the right to a food, shelter, clothing, an education and a safe, loving environment in which to grow. Clothing doesn't necessarily mean Nike shoes or designer jeans and nothing says it is a parent's job to pay college tuition. Actually, if a child learns the "Bill of Rights" well enough, they will already have the tools available to them to continue toward their future goals.

Many years ago, I remember having this discussion with my own children about their basic rights. While I know they didn't appre-

ciate this character-building lesson, I do think they are all doing well and I am very proud of them.

Somewhat on the same subject, there's a lot of good information offering advice for parents and others wanting to protect young people from drugs.

As a community, we can effectively be an "extension" of the eyes and ears of local law enforcement by watching for warning signs of illegal drug or meth activity. Those warning signs include:

- High-traffic cars and pedestrians stopping at a home for only brief periods. The traffic may be cyclical, increasing on weekends or late night, or minimal for a few weeks and then intense for a period of a few days, particularly pay days;
- Visitors appear to be acquaintances rather than friends; People bring valuables into the home — televisions, bikes, VCRs, cameras — and leave empty handed;
- Visitors may sit in a car for a while after leaving the residence or may leave one person in the car while the other visits;
- "Lookouts" frequently younger people, tend to hang around the property during heavy traffic hours;
- Regular activity at extremely late hours, frequent commotion between midnight and 4 a.m. on weeknights. (Both cocaine and meth are stimulants, and users tend to stay up at night.)

If you suspect drug or meth activity, please contact your local law enforcement agency immediately. In Colby, the police department is 460-4460 and Thomas County Sheriff's office is 460-4570.

Patty Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays.

Something is better than nothing



Jim Morrison

• Capitol Review

Everyone agrees that a big health problem faced by all Kansans is cost and access to care. If health insurance is less expensive more people and small businesses will purchase coverage. And in tight times keeping your insurance, because you lost your job or because of cost, is especially important.

Last week we passed House Substitute to Senate Bill 81, the Health Care Reform Act of 2008. It begins to address the need for prevention and early health interventions; and improves portability and coverage for those who face losing their insurance.

Employees of large businesses may deduct health insurance saving 15 percent or more. Unfortunately employees of small businesses, especially sole proprietors, don't get the same break unless they create a complex plan called a 125 plan. The Kaiser Foundation estimates that 60 percent of Americans don't take advantage of this 15 percent savings. We made it simple for thousands of small businesses to save 15 percent or more by requiring insurance companies to offer a cheap and simple way to use the tax deduction.

There are Kansans who face losing their insur-

ance coverage because of a job loss or illness. House Substitute to Senate Bill 81improves the portability of insurance and protects Kansans who lose their insurance by extending the state Cobra policy from six to 18 months of optional coverage. This bill helps uninsurable Kansans by increasing lifetime benefits from \$1 to \$3 million.

Thousands of Kansans have little or no health insurance. This forces many to emergency rooms and passes on the costs to those who do have coverage. It is clear our state's health care system must be reformed for the betterment of all Kansans.

Thousands of uninsured Kansans struggling to make ends meet get the coverage they need. House Substitute to Senate Bill 81 will help

insure more Kansas children by requiring new efforts to enroll those eligible in programs for low-income families. It also establishes the Premium Assistance Program so the poorest Kansas families (up to 50 percent of federal poverty level) get the help they need to afford health insurance.

When it comes to prevention and early health intervention, the bill increases cancer screening available at Safety Net and Rural Clinics. It also will improve the health of poor expecting mothers by expanding Medicaid and providing dental care and stop smoking programs for them.

Budget restraints kept us from doing everything and I am not really very happy about the anemic House Substitute to Senate Bill 81. I actually was one of several voting against it (does not go far enough). Something is better than nothing and, hopefully, we will look at the true problem in cost which is lack of competition and openness (transparency) of the charges made by providers and suppliers in the monopoly we call health care.

Thank you all for your support, feedback and prayers. It truly is an honor to serve as your Legislator.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

