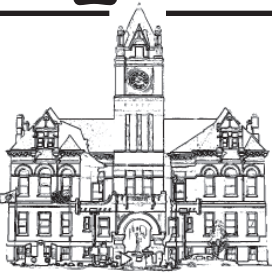


# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### We’re all in this one

By John Van Nostrand

For a long time now, people have been looking for an alternative to pretty much anything.

During the summer months, some people drive a motorcycle rather than a car to save on gas. People hang their clothes outside to dry rather than run the dryer.

Health care is no different.

Earlier this week, Thomas County Health Department Administrator Lisa Molstad informed county commissioners just how busy her department was. She said they could easily see a patient for every 15 minutes for the next three weeks. Molstad is needing more help.

Having that much work is not necessarily a bad thing. The health department’s purposes include giving children vaccinations and others flu shots to a list of other minor, medical services. In seven years, the department’s budget has more than doubled.

But the question is why is the department becoming so popular? Across the country other hospitals, more so in big cities, know their emergency rooms are used as primary care physicians because people don’t have health insurance or they don’t have enough insurance. Some of those hospitals financially suffer because of those people.

Those with adequate health insurance usually are victim of that process. As a way to make up the losses, hospitals increase their fees for services, which health-insurance companies notice, and then increase the premiums to policy holders.

The health department can’t deny anyone services based on ability to pay. That’s tempting, and too good of an offer, to pass up.

Molstad said the health department is not trying to take away service from other health care providers. Molstad and the health department can’t help it. They are just following the rules given to them. This is just another example of how crazy health care has become in this country.

Commissioner Paul Steele said if the county somehow can’t contain the expenses at the health department, taxes may need to be raised.

And should that happen, many people in Thomas County will pay for it, not just the ones with adequate health insurance.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press

#### Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts,** 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

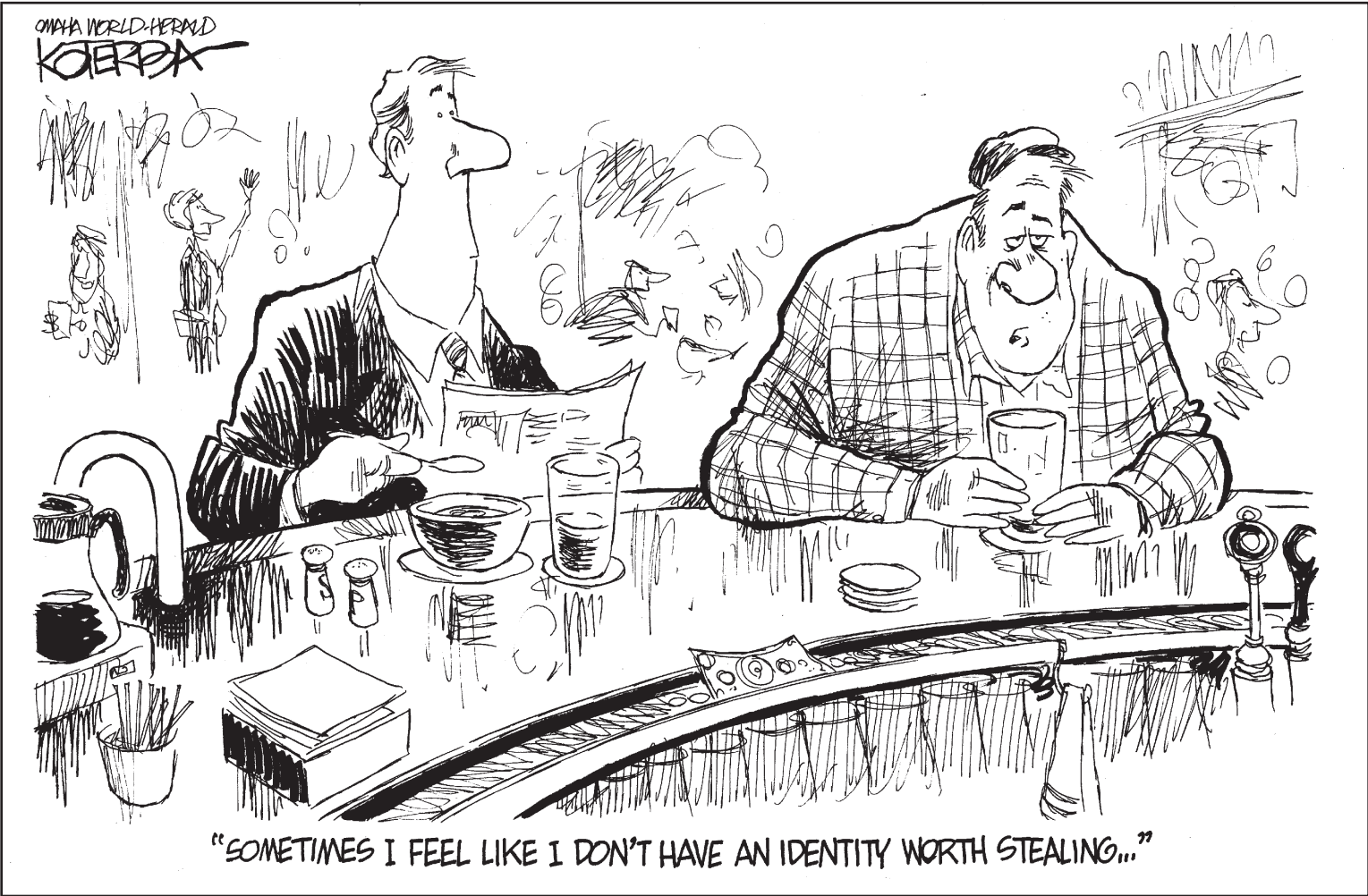
**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback,** 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521

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



### Glory days



**Joe Falkoff**

• A Sideline View

About seven months ago, the Colorado Rockies were the greatest story in recent baseball memory.

After starting the season 76-72, the Rockies reeled off 14 wins in 15 games, including a thrilling one-game playoff victory over San Diego just to get into the playoffs.

Colorado then swept Philadelphia and Arizona to reach their first World Series in team history.

Even though they got swept by the Red Sox in the World Series, the Rockies’ miraculous run to end the season will forever live in baseball lore.

It was a dream come true for Rockies fans, but now it’s back to reality.

Thursday night’s loss at Arizona leaves the Rockies with a 15-26 record. They’re now 11 games back of the Diamondbacks for first place and just 1/2 a game out of last place.

Their once vaunted lineup is all of the sudden punchless. Their starting rotation, which was nearly unhittable last fall, look’s like Rockies staff’s of old.

There is still nearly 120 games left, but as well as the Diamondbacks are playing and as poorly as the Rockies have played, this season already looks like a lost cause.

The question is: how did things fall apart so fast?

Well, the fact is the Rockies were never that good in the first place. Before they won 21 of 22 games last year, they were barely a .500 team. In fact, nearly a year ago today (May 21) they were 18-27.

Some might argue how that shows their slow start to this season is no big deal. I just think it is indicative of their talent or lack thereof.

Look at their starting rotation. Their ace is a journeyman right-hander named Aaron Cook. Jeff Francis, who was supposed to be their best pitcher, has started the season 0-4 with a 6.27 ERA and got roughed up again at Arizona Tuesday.

It’s kind of scary, but Colorado’s second-best starting pitcher right now might be Jorge De La Rosa, who was cast off by the Royals after last year.

I’m not even all that impressed with their offense, especially with shortstop Troy Tulowitzki on the disabled list. If I was facing the Rockies, no one in their order except Todd Helton and Matt Holliday would scare me. Even Helton is off to slow start. He’s hitting .276, but has just three home runs and 12 RBIs.

If he’s not going to get it done, the Rockies have to rely on Yorvit Torrealba, Willy Taveras, Jeff Baker and Brad Hawpe for production.

Not exactly household names. Baker and Hawpe are good, young players, but are still unproven, as are Clint Barnes and Garrett Atkins. Everyone thought they had arrived after last year, but it takes more than a couple of good months to establish yourself as a good, everyday player in the big leagues.

The more games you play, the more your record is indicative of your talent.

My team, the St. Louis Cardinals, found that out in 2007.

It was about the same situation as the Rockies. They snuck into the post-season as an underdog, but got hot at the right time and rode that hot streak all the way to a World Series title.

Once reality set in the following spring, the Cardinals were back to being a .500 team, which was actually better than their talent was last season.

The point is, unless you really are a good team, it’s nearly impossible to recapture any sort of magic you had the previous year.

We call them “Cinderella” in college basketball, but eventually the magic slipper no longer fits.

The tough part for a general manager of a team that overachieves is it’s not like they can do a lot of retooling in the off-season.

There’s no way Rockies General Manager Dan O’Dowd could of justified trading Hawpe, Francis or anyone for that matter in the off-season. Consequently, they stayed the same and other teams like the Diamondbacks and Dodgers got better.

That’s also what happened to the Cardinals. They thought they could be as good the next year with the same players, but unfortunately that’s not the way it works.

Hopefully, the good times are really good, because they aren’t going to last for long when you don’t have a proven team.

While it’s been tough to see the Rockies fall off like they have this season, it’s made me appreciate teams like the San Antonio Spurs and New York Yankees who are in the hunt for a championship year in and year out.

In this day and age, it’s so hard to maintain a high level of success. There are so many smart people running sports franchises and everyone is trying to get better in a hurry.

There is more parity in all four of the major sports in our country than at any other time I can remember, yet still there are teams like the Spurs who just keep on ticking.

I wish I could say the Rockies started their own little dynasty last season, but dynasties aren’t built out of a good month. They are built with proven superstars, great coaching and a solid front office.

Clearly, the Rockies still have a long way to go on all of those fronts.

—Joe Falkoff is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

### A return to Jimmy Carter’s energy policy?

**By Jonathan Williams**

Gasoline prices are skyrocketing, and as in every crisis, Washington is suffering from a predictable case of the “do something” disease. Products of the ready-to-eat microwave culture, Americans want an instant solution to high energy costs, and this lends itself to grandstanding and election-year maneuvering by politicians of all stripes.

Recently Congress summoned the CEOs of the major oil companies to come and defend their livelihood – more or less defending how the free market allows “Big Oil” to make “unseemly” profits from the sale of gasoline.

Record gas prices unfortunately bring out all sorts of political demagoguery and open a new battle in the never-ending war against corporate profits. Whenever high gasoline prices are in the headlines, various commentators and politicians immediately jump on the “price gouging” bandwagon, while others renew calls for a “windfall profits tax” on energy companies.

This nation’s experiment with windfall profits taxes in the 1980s proved to be economically devastating. When it was last tried, the windfall profits tax failed to raise even a fraction of the revenue forecasted and crippled the production of the domestic oil industry.

In all the crusading against oil profits, one very important fact is being neglected: The biggest winner from high gasoline prices is none other than government. For starters, American motorists pay an average of 47 cents per gallon in state and federal gasoline taxes. If your vehicle uses diesel fuel, you pay more than 53 cents per gallon on average.

Taxes on gasoline don’t end there. The government collects billions from energy companies in corporate income taxes, off-shore royalties, severance taxes, property taxes, payroll taxes, the list goes on.

According to Department of Energy data, from 1977 to 2004, federal and state governments extracted \$397 billion by taxing the profits of the largest oil companies and an additional \$1.1 trillion in taxes at the pump—that’s nearly three times what the oil industry made in profits over that same period.

While Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and others in Congress are touting their populist themes and continuing their calls for the resurrection of a 1980’s style windfall profits tax, it is important to note that America’s energy companies are already providing a “windfall” of tax revenue. Various proposals aimed at the oil industry have nothing to do with “fairness” or righting a so-called wrong. They are simply

attempts by the government to abscond with additional revenue. Taking aim at profits also sets an extremely dangerous example by targeting a certain industry based on its level of success.

Of course, no one enjoys paying more than \$3.50 per gallon to fill up, but gasoline prices will always be determined by the supply and demand for oil in the world market.

It is a shame to think profit has become a dirty word in a nation that built its industrial might through the free enterprise system. The relentless war against “Big Oil” and their profits will assuredly continue as long as gas prices are elevated, and as long as elections are on the horizon. However, when you feel the pain at the pump, remember who is really cashing in – your good friend, Uncle Sam.

Jonathan Williams is a Fiscal Policy Fellow with the Kansas-based Flint Hills Center for Public Policy and Director of Tax and Fiscal Policy at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). A complete bio on Mr. Williams can be found at [www.flinthills.org/content/view/24/39](http://www.flinthills.org/content/view/24/39) and he can be reached at [williams.jonathan.p@gmail.com](mailto:williams.jonathan.p@gmail.com). To learn more about the Flint Hills Center, please visit [www.flinthills.org](http://www.flinthills.org)

#### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

