



# Opinion



## Another Viewpoint

### Video is America’s wake-up call

If you’re already concerned about the level of civil discourse in American today, you shouldn’t watch a video now circulating on YouTube of two debate coaches “discussing” an issue earlier this year in Wichita.

The heated and profanity-laden argument was between two debate coaches, one from the University of Pittsburgh and the other from Fort Hays State University. (Note to Kansas legislators: Kansas University isn’t the only state institution that occasionally has a faculty-related controversy.)

The Fort Hays coach drew special attention because during the course of the argument, he chose to emphasize one of his points by dropping his shorts and exposing his underwear-clad behind to the Pittsburgh coach. It is a jaw-dropping moment but hardly the most offensive part of this video.

When we think of a debate, whether it’s a high school or college contest or a presidential debate, we think of intelligent people who make reasoned arguments based on factual evidence. We think Kennedy or Lincoln. The debaters often speak with passion, but they get no points for losing their tempers and certainly not for using profanity.

The Fort Hays coach’s job may be in danger. He’s a non-tenured faculty member, and the university’s provost clearly wasn’t amused by the coach, who “often forgets he’s part of the Fort Hays State brand.”

Obviously this display reflects poorly on both of the individuals and institutions involved.

What is even more disappointing, even depressing, however, is the possibility that these two debate coaches reflect the level of discourse that too often permeates the American dialogue, whether it’s on the campaign trail, in city hall or between two disgruntled citizens. Freedom to speak one’s mind is part of America’s bedrock, but there’s a limit.

On second thought, if you care about the level of civil discourse in America, maybe you should watch the video. It might serve as a much-needed wake-up call.

— The Lawrence Journal-World

### 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, Fax (202) 225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 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., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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Steve Haynes - Publisher  
s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor  
pdecker @ nwkansas.com

Jan Ackerman - Reporter  
jackerman @ gmail.com

ADVERTISING

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager  
j.stewart @ nwkansas.com

Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales  
hwoofter @ nwkansas.com

Steifon Matthews - Graphic Design  
smatthews @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping  
japplegate @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator  
support @ nwkansas.com

NOR’WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager  
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### Lots of changes

A dear friend once told me, the only thing constant in life is change.

In the last two weeks here at the *Colby Free Press*, I think it’s safe to say, we have had a lot of changes.

When Joey Falkoff, our sports writer, left in mid-July it was expected. Joey is young and was looking for experience to move on to the next level.

The publisher, John VanNostrand, resigned a week after Joey to accept a job in Iowa. This was a bit more unexpected. John had been with the *Free Press* just shy of three years.

The clincher, though, was Crystal Rucker, our advertising manager, who resigned in early August.

I worked eight hours a day, five days a week for almost 10 years with Crystal and, early on in that working relationship, we became great friends.

Even though we didn’t socialize much outside the office, it’s hard not to become close to someone you spend most of your waking hours with during the week.

I know change is constant, but that doesn’t mean I always like it.

Change might be easy for some people, but for me, three people leaving in less than one month is tough to deal with it.

We will be hiring new people to fill the jobs and that’s a good thing. In fact, we already have a new person in advertising and it looks like our owner, Steve Haynes, will be in Colby for awhile, replacing John.

We might even have a new sports writer coming in September.

The reality is people move around and situations change and that’s life.

Change is a funny thing for other reasons. For example, if someone would have asked me 40 years ago, “What is your favorite time of the year?” I would have said, definitely summer.

For that matter, spring because summer was



**Patty Decker**

- Deep Thoughts

At the time, I remember thinking the earth should stand still, but of course, it doesn’t work that way.

I can still remember asking my grandmother what was the hardest part about getting old and she said it was losing all her friends.

At 18, I couldn’t appreciate what she was saying. Today, I can.

I do have one last thought about change and that’s simply to live each day to the fullest. Even though that’s one of those cliché’s that is overused, it is still a good one for me to remember.

One time a friend asked me, Why do you think people are sad when someone close to them dies?

His response: It’s because of the things that went left unsaid.

It’s the reason we should never go to bed angry at someone we love or forget to tell family members how much we care about them.

That makes sense to me.

In fact, tomorrow is a milestone for my husband, Randy, and me. We will have been married 15 years on Aug. 21. Sure glad he hasn’t changed his mind about this commitment because I know I am not the easiest person to get along with.

Seriously, though, I do try to tell the people I care most about how much they mean to me and someday I do a better job at it than others. As I left the office tonight, I looked around at the people I work with and sighed because the office is missing a few familiar faces. It’s not the same as it was a month ago and I have mixed feelings.

Still, it’s neither good or bad — it’s just a change.

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*Patty Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column normally appears on Monday, but with the change in staff, she can place it in the Wednesday or Friday newspaper until something changes.*

### Protecting students

Recently, universities across the country, including those in Kansas, have taken additional measures to prevent crime and ensure that they can respond quickly and effectively in an emergency.

Research by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact reveals that 87 percent of the colleges and universities responding to its survey conducted comprehensive reviews of campus safety and security in the year following the terrible events at Virginia Tech; and that nearly 90 percent of those institutions made changes to procedures or security systems.

In Kansas, several campuses acted to install and implement new communications equipment and software allowing them to mass-mail safety warnings to students via text messages, e-mails, voice-mails, and public announcements.

When the Virginia Tech Review Panel Report was published, the Kansas Board of Regents began reviewing the recommendations, as well as the recommendations of a similar report from the National Association of Attorneys General, to ensure that existing campus security plans appropriately addressed the critical areas discussed in those reports. In addition, the Board of Regents adopted official policy that each of the six state university campuses be weapon-free, instructed the campuses to conduct criminal background

checks on all newly-hired employees, and will utilize a private security consultant to evaluate and objectively review the unique security plans of each of the campuses.

While we can not guarantee that bad things won’t happen, it is clear that the Board of Regents is working to make our state university campuses as safe as possible.

If each and every student also takes measures to promote their own personal safety, working together, we can reduce the incidence of crime on campus and enable the business of teaching and learning to flourish.

Kansas Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson  
Topeka

### About those letters . . .

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### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

