pinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Paper or computer? How about both?

Elections officials around the country have discovered that paper might not be so bad.

For every paper ballot with a hanging chad, there are more than enough computer glitches to sour a person on electronic voting machines.

The Associated Press reports that despite the government's \$3 billion plan to move to electronic voting after the 2000 Florida election fiasco, this November more Americans might vote on paper ballots than in any election in U.S. history.

Now, just 36 percent of registered voters reside in jurisdictions with electronic voting machines, down from a high of 44 percent

Paper has its liabilities, to be sure. Florida's punch-card ballots had to go.

And even in the recent primary, some elections in Kansas were marred by problems with paper ballots. Reno County sent bad ballots to 61 voters on the federal or "military" list.

But mistakes can be made in a computer program, too. And computers sometimes malfunction. And computers are vulnerable to hackers. All of which makes many people distrustful of electronic vot-

ing, sophisticated as it may seem. Election officers like computers because they seemingly make

their jobs easier. Counting paper ballots is time consuming. Paper balloting seems to work well with scanners at the polls that can read the darkened ovals on a ballot. Voters can feed their ballots themselves after they complete them.

The other good approach is having touch-screen voting stations that produce a paper backup.

Either way, both an electronic record and a paper trail are produced, seemingly giving election workers and voters the best of both worlds.

Kansas has moved toward more electronic voting, but the state's chief election officer has resisted requiring a paper backup. That is a mistake. — The Hutchinson News

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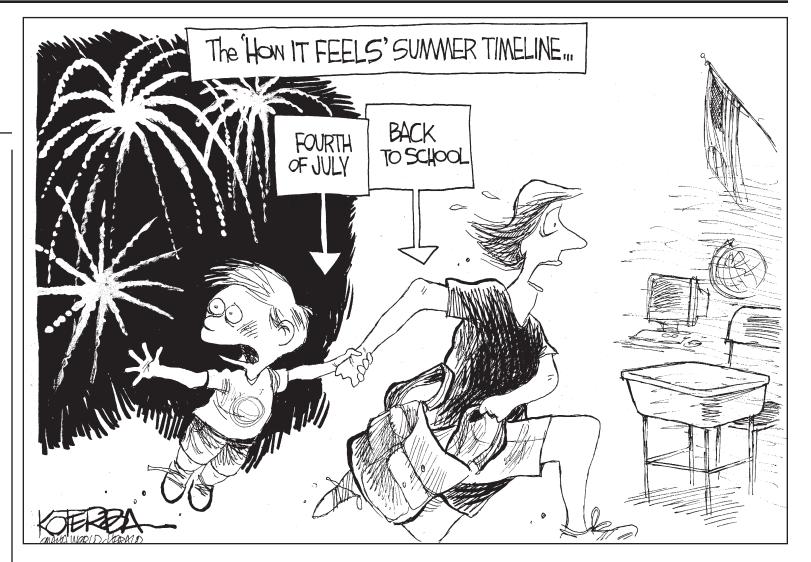
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House terrorists? No thanks!

Steve

Haynes

Leavenworth as Gitmo West?

With increasing pressure on the administration to close the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, on a U.S. Naval reserve in Cuba, speculation arose that all or some of the prisoners from the "War on Terror" might wind up at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, a military prison outside of Leaven-

It's not been a popular idea in a state that usually welcomes new government jobs. Both Kansas senators spoke up against the plan, though the military never really proposed it.

Sen. Pat Roberts said the barracks lack the space and security features needed for high-risk inmates.

"We'd be placing Americans in harm's way," he said. "It would be a logistical nightmare, costing the taxpayer hundreds of million dollars to make Fort Leavenworth even partially compliant with standards at Guantanamo.'

And, basically, that's true.

The military basically built a new prison at the remote naval base, where escape would be next to impossible and visiting terrorists would stick out like a sore thumb.

· Along the Sappa since the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that

the prisoners, classified as "illegal enemy combatants," not as prisoners of war, can appeal to federal courts on their status. As a practical matter, that means they'd have to be flown to a U.S. District Court on

the mainland for hearings, or a judge would have to fly there. Either presents logistical problems, plus the Guantanamo base sits in the middle of a

hostile foreign country. Both presidential candidates have promised to close the Cuban location, so relocation for at least some of the prisoners is only

a matter of time. But what to do with them?

Only one has gone to trial. That man, a former driver for Osama bin Laden, got a The administration is in a bind, though, sumably be released to go home. But many of the Colby Free Press.

nations do not want these accused terrorists back, closing off one option.

And American law might bar sending them anywhere they'd face torture or abuse, which includes most of the countries they come from.

If they are to be held in the U.S., they'd either have to be integrated into the regular prison system or the military system. But because of the possibility their friends might try to spring them, they pose a huge security risk.

And Leavenworth is the only maximum security site in the military prison system.

Which leaves the possibility of building a whole new prison somewhere to house these detainees, at least the ones convicted and sentenced to fixed terms.

Hum. Maybe Oberlin could offer the old youth ranch out at Sappa Park?

Or, remembering the problem with escapes the ranch used to have, maybe not.

Another suggestion was the Federal Penitentiary at Florence, Colo., near Cañon City, known as "Supermax." Maybe this time we should let Colorado have a few jobs. - Steve Haynes is co-owner of Nor'West five-year sentence, after which he'd pre- Newspapers. He is also serving as publisher

elebrating agriculture

of farmers and ranchers load up the family car, truck or van and head to Hutchinson. They come from every county in Kansas and they leave their farms to celebrate their profession at the Kansas State Fair.

Ag producers have finished wheat harvest, it's just a few days or weeks before fall corn, milo and bean harvest and it's a time for them to catch their breath before shifting into high

It's a slower time, if there is such a thing in today's farm and ranch calendar, and producers take this time to see what's going on in the world outside their farm gate. They go to the Kansas State Fair to see livestock, equipment, machinery and to talk to other farmers and ranchers. Some even stop and walk by the commercial booths, but those who tarry will be roped in and subjected to a sales pitch – many given by the same guy that's been selling the last 40 years.

There's so much to see. Some visit the livestock buildings where they check out cattle, swine, sheep, goats and fowl. The countless breeds of chickens were always a favorite for my aunt and uncle who regularly visited the state fair. For many it's also a social event. The state fair is like a country fair only a hundred

More than 8,000 usually go through the turnstiles during the 10-day event.

Many people visit the fair as families every year. Once at the fairgrounds they meet up with or run into other families they've know for years or have met before at this annual event. Farm and ranch family fairgoers start early too. It's not unusual to see mothers with baby strollers and young infants in tow. Many a farm kid experienced the state fair before their first birthday and well before they could remember the event.

Others come to look over the latest in farm and ranch equipment. It is also an opportunity to take advantage of "state fair specials." Many a producer leaves the fairgrounds with a good deal or that's what they'll tell you.

In addition to livestock and machinery, a stop to the Pride of Kansas building is a requirement for most Kansas producers. For those few who don't know the location, just look for the Butter Cow and the giant pumpkins. Here fairgoers have an opportunity to look at all the crops, vegetables, fruit and other goodies Kansans grow each year.

While folks are milling around the fairgrounds, either on foot or the miniature railroad, they scope out the tasty food along the Kansas Farm Bureau

For 10 days in early September, thousands times larger and with thousands of people. way. Who can avoid eating funnel cake, Pronto Pups, barbecue or the pork burgers of yesteryear.

And who could bypass the many homemade goodies served up by the various church groups? One of my all time favorites are the chicken and noodles prepared by a local Meth-

This year Kansas Farm Bureau celebrates a new statewide event at the Kansas State Fair. Sept. 12 has been designated as Farm Bureau Day statewide. All 105 county Farm Bureau associations will be celebrating this special day with events and promotions.

County activities will vary from image advertising campaigns to agriculture education activities. The variety of activities happening across the state are designed to showcase the valuable investments county Farm Bureau associations make in their communities.

If you haven't, plan to attend this year's Kansas State Fair which runs from Sept. 5-14. Come visit with neighbors and friends from across the state and stop by the many agriculture and youth exhibits scattered across the fairgrounds. Who knows, with such a mild summer, maybe you'll even be lucky and enjoy some fall-like weather. — John Schlageck,

Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

