Opinion



Other **Viewpoints**

Machine guns not playthings for kids

An 8-year-old Connecticut boy accidentally shot himself in the head recently while firing an Uzi machine gun at a pump-

He was pronounced dead a short time later at a hospital.... The incident is being noted here as a plea for caution by those who may take advantage of a new state law that spells out the right of Kansas citizens to own machine guns. These weapons shouldn't be treated as expensive toys or curiosities,

but as the deadly instruments they are. And they should never be placed in the hands of children.

The Legislature — in response to an opinion by then-Attorney General Paul Morrison that state laws didn't allow for such weapons — this year passed the law authorizing Kansas citizens to own machine guns.

Despite Morrison's opinion on whether earlier laws authorized machine gun sales, 32 businesses already had Class III firearms licenses, which included the right to sell fully automatic weapons, silencers and sawed-off shotguns, before the new law went into effect July 1. Since then, 13 more have obtained such licenses. ...

According to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, there were 2,166 licensed automatic weapons in the state as of Dec. 31, including those owned by police agencies.

The number of those weapons in private hands will surely grow. Some people with the itch and the cash to buy one will do it, regardless of the red tape. We just hope they have the wisdom to treat the gun with the respect it deserves....

Christopher had fired handguns and rifles before, but this was his first time with a fully automatic weapon. His father, Charles, was about 10 feet behind his son and reaching for his camera when the weapon fired. He said he let his son try the Uzi because it was a small weapon with little recoil....

This happened because someone thought it was OK to let a child play with a machine gun. It isn't, and we hope gun owners in Kansas will exercise better judgment when deciding who is allowed to handle their weapons.

The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press

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'Socialism' label blocks needed change

DEFCI

If there is one word that can make the hair on the back of many Americans' necks stand up, it's socialism. The mere mention of the word brings to mind horrid memories of the now-defunct Soviet empire.

One of the most effective ways to weaken a political adversary is to accuse him of being a socialist. Most Americans would rather walk through fire than elect a closet Fidelista into office. Of course. you don't have to tell this to conservative Republicans.

The Grand Old Party and its spin doctors learned the traumatic effects this word has on the American public a long time ago, and they have no qualms about using it to smear their Democratic rivals.

You have to give them credit. The "socialist label" has repeatedly prevented Democrats and moderate Republicans from investing in programs meant to benefit middle- and working-class Americans.

The fact that this strategy has been so successful proves that McCarthyism never died, it was just repackaged, rebranded and resold to the public in a more deceptive manner.

Perhaps the most damaging aspect the "socialist label" has had on our country has been how effective it has been at preventing our government from adopting a health care system that works for all Americans. It's pathetic that the richest country in the world has a health care system that is inaccessible to the people who need it most.

Dr. John R. Seffrin, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society, said that lack of access to timely and adequate care has be-



Andy Heintz

 Wildcat Ramblings

come a major cancer killer in America.

"Far too many Americans do not have access to cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment services that we know and have proven to save lives," he said.

The cancer society has launched a series of advertisements to run on network and cable television, in print and online from now through November. The ads highlight the struggles of people who have been diagnosed with cancer, but have no health insurance or have too little coverage to pay the costs of their cancer.

One person's life the organization will be highlighting is Raina Bass of Booneville, Mo. Bass had insurance through her own employer and through her husband's, but the plans did not cover the costs of her thyroid cancer treat-

When she became self-employed, she could not supplement her husband's coverage with

She tried contacting insurance companies, but they treated her the way they treat thou sands of people whose mental disorders, disable account to take on.

"Many told me goodbye as soon as I told sports and opinion writing.

them I had cancer," she said. "Some told me to call back in five or six years, once I'd been cancer free for awhile. I had insurance companies tell me they would look into some policies and return my call. Needless to say, I still haven't heard from them."

Such is life for those who are not seen as a smart investment in America's morally bankrupt, profit-driven health-care industry.

According to a study by the Commonwealth Fund, a nonprofit research group in New York, our country has fallen to last place among industrialized nations when it comes to preventing deaths through the use of timely and effective medical care.

According to the twisted logic of those who fervently believe in free-market fundamentalism, all these people are dying for freedom. This way of thinking provides further proof of the danger of adopting beliefs that place ideology over irreplaceable values like empathy, selflessness, mercy and fairness

We as a country need to quit worrying about the socialist boogeyman hiding under our beds and start paying attention to the real people who are being treated unjustly by our society. Health care should be made available to all Americans, no ifs, ands or buts.

I think Martin Luther King Jr. said it best: "Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane."

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, eases or other ailments make them not a profit- is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing,

Education fads come and go

Any veteran teacher can remember the fads that began in the 1960s. Each promised to reform education. Each lasted three to five years. And each failed.

Educational Television: airplanes circled over the state to beam down "Continental Classroom" and other programs. Forty years later, we beam the programs from satellite and they still don't work.

Educational Objectives: developed by Benjamin Bloom, they could clarify exactly what we wanted students to achieve. Veteran teachers already knew.

Programmed Instruction: read a lesson and if you could answer the question correctly, go to next page. Also called "drill and practice," it was "drill and kill" to any student interest.

Open Classrooms: No one today seems to remember why we built many schools in the early 1970s without classroom walls. We retrofitted the walls a decade later.

Individualized Instruction: each student learned different lessons at their own pace. It worked teachers to death and students as a group progressed slowly without the rich context of common classwork. Today, it survives only in Individualized Instruction Plans (IEPs) for special education students.

Phase-Elective Courses: an exciting short period of high-interest, variable short courses for high school students. It died because backto-basics believers despised the smorgasbord curriculum and imposed a bland uniformity.

Work Experience Programs: for a short time while high school graduation requirements



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

only took 3 1/2 years to finish, seniors could

leave school to sample a job. Time-on-Task: the students' day was parti-

tioned with a stop watch and students had better be on a learning task. No more field trips. Every-Teacher-a-Reading-Teacher: as if there were no specialized skills to teaching reading, we all had to incorporate it in math

and science. In Kansas, teachers had to go back and take a course to be a reading teacher. Every-Teacher-a-Special-Ed-Teacher: if there was no deep specialization needed to

teach special students. Kansas teachers had to go back and do a course in special education. Mastery Teaching: over-and-over again until

everyone gets an A or B. The state Department of Education sent out teams to teach mastery teaching, and at least one major high school still uses it today. Talk about grade inflation!

Madeline Hunter 7-Step Lesson Plans: From "establishing set" to "closure," Oklahoma evaluated all teachers on this cookbook for teaching. The fad died with Dr. Hunter.

Cooperative Learning: no more lectures. Assign lessons to student groups for a common grade. The good students did all the work and

the lazy ones got the same grade, and it prac-

ticed them in cheating.

Outcomes-Based Education: measures a student's learning and modifies teaching for a better result. Sounds good but doesn't work in practice; students vary in talent and outcomes are not the same.

Standards Movement: So states standardized outcomes. Ignoring that students come from different backgrounds with different skills and are heading to different lives and careers, teachers have been forced to standardize their coursework into teach-to-the-test monotony.

Virtual, On-line, and Distance Education: Appearing hi-tech, virtual education uses expensive and inefficient media to pull students from the rich context of classrooms.

Only a few bright students can learn with independent electronic correspondence courses, but this is purveyed for problem kids in alternative schools and for those left behind by No Child Left Behind. On-screen education didn't work when broadcast by plane in the 1960s.

Education schools lack credibility because they lack a "paradigm" - a knowledge base that does not change every few years. Unlike the sciences, where knowledge is stable and builds, education flits from fad to fad. Critics are right to disregard education schools that change curricula every half decade.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

Mallard **Fillmore**

Bruce Tinsley





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