# Opinion



### **Free Press Viewpoint**

## Hint of favoritism could offend voters

Those who have government jobs or appointments to high positions to dispense should always pay special attention to how news of their decisions will be received by the public.

Recent events at the Statehouse have us questioning whether those with government largesse to bestow have given enough consideration to how voters perceive their actions.

The state Supreme Court's newest justice and the new liaison to the House Republican caucus may be highly qualified for the duties associated with their positions. We aren't casting aspersions at their qualifications, but their relationships with the elected officials doing the appointing and hiring do leave that subject open to discussion.

We think that's unfortunate, because it damages the public's confidence in state government and the elected officials who have been placed in charge.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius appointed Dan Biles, her long-time friend and the law partner of the Kansas Democratic Party chairman, to replace retiring Chief Justice Kay McFarland.

That some Republicans spoke highly of Biles after his appointment was announced speaks of his qualifications....

In fairness to Sebelius, we must note Biles' name was one of three forwarded to her by a state nominating commission, and she acknowledged their friendship was among the reasons she selected him.

Elsewhere under the Capitol dome, incoming House Speaker Mike O'Neal said he had nothing to do with the new, \$27,000 a year job his wife, Cindy, had landed with the House Repub-

The hiring, O'Neal said, was done without his knowledge by the chief of staff for House Majority Leader Ray Merrick.

We'll accept that, and the fact Cindy O'Neal probably is well-qualified for the job as she has worked for the Legislature in different capacities for the past 21 years. But we'll also say no word from O'Neal was necessary once his wife submitted an application....

That no laws were broken doesn't mean the public's trust in government officials wasn't cracked a bit.

Our elected officials should do everything in their power to avoid cracks in that relationship by eliminating the appearance of favoritism in how they conduct the public's business.

The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press

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U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby,

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 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 herein. Member Kansas 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.



"FIRST, I LOST MY HOTEL ON BOARDWALK, THEN MY PENTHOUSE ON PARK PLACE WAS FORECLOSED ON, AND NOW, I CAN'T EVEN AFFORD A ROOM ON BALTIC AVENUE!"

## School of life teaches the art of waiting

Besides attending college classes to enhance my intellect, I have also been attending the School of Life to develop everyday skills.

These classes don't give grades. They are pass or fail, and failing often hurts deeper than an unsatisfactory percentage. Passing, however, is another step closer to success.

Lately, this "school" has been teaching me a lesson about the act of waiting. So far, I have learned that there are many sides to waiting.

Sometimes life compels us to wait. Sometimes we convince ourselves that we need to wait. And sometimes we are waiting when we shouldn't be.

For example, as a student, I tend to perform the act of waiting. I like to make future plans that may span five or 10 years. In college, it can be easy to think that life doesn't start until we step off the platform with a diploma in our hand and enter the workforce.

We like thinking and talking about what we would like to do after we graduate, how we want to raise our families, the places we want to go, the people we would like to be. This isn't an entirely bad way to spend our time. But when thinking about the future consumes our minds and time, it can be detrimental to the way we live in the present.



• A Moment with Michelle

the mark of an adult. But I can easily say that I'm learning day by day and moment by moment what it means to be a woman and a role model for the younger generation. I'm sure this will be a lifetime journey, but I can get caught up in dreaming and thinking about the person I would like to be instead of striving to become that person right now.

On another level, I like dreaming about the places I want to go and the things I want to accomplish. So often I say that I'm going to write a book, and in response, people have asked me, "So why don't you right now?" My only reply in defense is that I'm waiting to become a certain person, to visit certain places, to have experiences, for years to pass before I find the strength and ability to write a book.

But if I wait too long, my life and dreams will pass me by and I'll start wondering what I'm 21 years old now, so I've supposedly hit I was doing while I was waiting for life to be-

Dr. Seuss sums up this negative side of waiting in his poem "Oh! The Places You'll Go!":

RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH PROOFING

You can get so confused that you'll start in to race

down long wiggled roads at a break-necking and grind on for miles across weirdish wild

headed, I fear, toward a most useless place.

The Waiting Place...

...for people just waiting. Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come, or a plane to go c Everyone is just waiting. Waiting for the fish to bite cor a pot to boil, or a Better Break

or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants or a wig with curls, or Another Chance. Everyone is just waiting.

Michelle Myers, a Colby native, is a student at Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., majoring in Bible and journalism. She enjoys the 32 Starbucks found within five miles of her campus.

# Farms need to plead their own cause

Each day, farmers and ranchers pull on their boots, roll up their sleeves and go to work in rural communities across Kansas. They perform a litany of chores - feeding and doctoring livestock, cultivating their crops, pulling maintenance on machinery, paying bills - you name it and farmers and ranchers do it.

While all of these activities are necessary, advocacy for their industry has become a farmer and rancher's most important chore. Farmers and ranchers have an obligation to provide the public with an understanding of their profession.

Never has it become more important to help consumers understand how important agriculture is to the well being of our economic future. Without continuing success in the farming and ranching sector, consumers will be in danger of losing the high-quality, affordable food so many expect and take for granted.

How do farmers help consumers understand their profession?

It begins with the commitment of farmers and ranchers to tell their side of the story, whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. Whether you talk to grade-schoolers, service clubs or state legislators, remember to practice the art of relationship building between rural and urban, between agricultural producers and consumers.

When you have an opportunity to talk about production agriculture, do just that – talk about agriculture. Leave the other so-called "hot" topics of the day alone. Let someone else talk about them.

With less than 2 percent of our population engaged in food production, do not miss an opportunity to tell your story. If you are asked to comment about a recent election, talk about it with an agricultural flavor. Talk about how you believe your elected officials will be able to work with you to make sure our state and



#### John Schlageck

 Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

nation make energy development, rural transportation and finding new markets agriculture's top priorities.

Give people a glimpse into your profession a subject that affects your bottom line and one that affects the well being of your family, their families - everyone. It's easier than you might think to initiate a conversation about farming with your urban cousins.

Begin with a common denominator when talking to city folks. Start by discussing with them the fertilizer they buy for their gardens is no different from what you, as a farmer, put on your crops. The rose dust, like a herbicide or insecticide used to control scab, crabgrass or mosquitoes - similar to the plant protection chemicals you use.

Sometimes common ground revolves around nutrition. A good analogy could be the parallel between a person's need for healthly food and a plant's need for a well-balanced diet.

It's easy to move from nutrition to some of the more difficult challenges facing agriculture. Topics on everyone's minds today include safe drinking water, availability of credit and fiscal responsibility.

Today, many people are concerned about chemical run-off into rivers, lakes and streams. As a farmer, of course, you cannot afford to overuse these expensive chemical products. Tell them that. Let them know you, more than anyone else, are concerned about the land where your family lives and works.

Public understanding of how a modern farmer runs his or her operation is only half the challenge. Perhaps equally important is the need to be sensitive to the concerns of the community.

towns or cities, are the ones who call for regulations and new laws. It is this public that will enforce them. In the end, ironically, it is the public who

Remember that people, mostly living in

will suffer if the laws hamper our food production and consumption system. Tell your story – the story of agriculture. No

one else is going to. An employee of Boeing or Frito-Lay is not going to talk about farming and ranching when they have a chance to speak to the public or the media.

Let consumers know the value of food. Tell them how you go about producing the healthiest, best-tasting food anywhere in the world. It's a story only you can tell and tell well.

This is your livelihood. You are food production specialists. You must tell your story.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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