



Other Viewpoints

Kansas should OK bill to allow mergers

Here's the good news: The Kansas Legislature is considering a bill to remove two of the principal roadblocks to consolidation of city and county governments.

Here's the better news: The proposal faces no resistance from Kansas Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm association and one of the key opponents to past bills....

One current barrier to consolidation is the requirement that when a city and county want to consolidate, they must first seek approval from the Legislature....

Another roadblock is the concept of dual majorities, where city-county consolidation must be approved by majorities of both rural and urban dwellers in an election. This year's bill would allow local officials to decide whether to conduct or require a dual majority for a city-county consolidation plan to be approved.

Allowing local control over the dual majority question is a major change. In Saline County, requiring approval by both city and rural residents would allow 15 percent of the county's population to trump the wishes of 85 percent.

That simply is not fair and probably unconstitutional because it violates the one-person, one-vote principle. As stated by Don Moler, executive director of the League of Kansas Municipalities, the dual majority also generally ensures that most city-county consolidation proposals will fail.

This new bill tries to address concerns of rural residents by requiring at least one-third of a consolidation committee's membership be residents from unincorporated areas. In our county, a third gives rural residents more representation than if membership were based solely on population.

By far, this is the best hope we've seen for returning control to local citizens. It gives us a road map to explore the possibilities of consolidation and it includes rural residents in a meaningful way. It should become law.

- Salina Journal, via the Associated Press

Where to write, call

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Labels only fit part of the time

The temptation to label people is the achilles heel for today's society. The tyranny of labels and the groupthink it fosters can be seen when observing the political climate in America.

The four loosely aligned groups that dominate today's politics are conservatives, mainstream Democrats, libertarians and smallgovernment Republicans, and progressives. All four are depressingly predictable when it comes to their position on certain issues.

After perusing conservative websites, I have figured out what you have to believe in to be part of today's conservative base. First of all, your views about limited government must be restricted to opposition to government intervention in the economy. You must remain quiet about your party's big government policies on social issues (gay marriage, war on drugs) and foreign policy (wiretapping, the giant military budget, jailing foreigners without trial) or be prepared to face the same smear campaigns your allies hurl at their ideological opponents. You also must remember to never question the morality of America's foreign wars, no matter how questionable they may seem.

Small-government Republican and libertarians are more willing to question U.S. foreign policy then conservatives. Where libertarians dive into the world of ideological zealotry is



On the surface, this seems reasonable, but when this philosophy is used in a world as complex as the one we live in, it is in no way conducive to creating a just, humane society. For example if a pharmaceutical company decides to sell life-saving medicines at market prices that many people can't afford, this might cause some people to die needlessly.

Over the years, libertarians have stubbornly refused to acknowledge how their policies would lead to tragic results for our most vulnerable citizens.

Mainstream Democrats' biggest problem is their unwillingness to break from establishment thinking. When it comes to foreign policy, many Dems hold views that could be described as conservative lite.

Over the years, they have hesitated to question our country's imperialistic policies toward valve only leads to illogical herd behavior in their embrace of an unfettered free market Latin America, Vietnam and the Middle East, that undermines constructive dialogue and rawhere people only possess negative rights. or the fact that we use 25 percent of the world's tional thought. The negative-rights philosophy embraces the resources despite being only 5 percent of the idea of self-responsibility where people have world's populations. They are always more a right to not be attacked and not to have their willing to present the public with illusions inproperty taken from them. It rejects the idea stead of forcing people to face uncomfortable that people have positive rights, such as right truths. Their stubborn refusal to acknowledge to eat, a right to clean water or a right to health past and present skeletons hiding in Uncle

Sam's closet has seriously undercut alternative voices in American society.

Progressives' biggest problem can be summed up in a few words. They are too onesided. While they have courageously tried to challenge the nationalistic impulses of our society by exposing America's past and present double standards, they have often failed to hold themselves to the standards they expect from our government.

Progressives fail to ever recognize the good things about our country. It's a rare occasion when a progressive goes out of his or her way to applaud our country for its belief in freedom of speech, freedom of press or freedom of religion. People don't like to be constantly inundated with pessimistic viewpoints. In order to gain a stronger foothold with the public, progressives must define themselves by stating what they are for, not what they are against.

As Americans, I don't believe we should blindly align ourselves with any of these groups, even if society has labeled us as being liberals or conservatives. We should carefully scrutinize each issue and make our own decisions, even if it differs from the opinions of our normal allies.

Meaningless terms like liberal and conser-

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Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. *He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing,* sports and opinion writing.

We need to hear two sides of debate

To the Editor:

I have great concern that citizens in Kansas be presented with the truth regarding budget actions in Topeka. We, the taxpayer, need to be actively involved in the process if our state budget is ever to be balanced. A good resource for monitoring government spending and calling attention to wasteful decisions and appropriations is the KanView website at www.kansas.gov/kanview/index.html

Following is an excerpt from a report on the recent gubernatorial press releases regarding the budget. When you check out "the other side" of the story, you find our legislators using sound financial decisions to deal with budget issues. I am very sorry the governor chose to label them as"obstructionists" when the term more accurately applies to her actions.

> Roberta Bretz, Goodland

You've probably heard the dire warnings: "Tax Refunds delayed," "state employees won't get paid on time," "schools won't be funded...." None of which has to happen if the governor just does her job. "The sky is falling and it's not my fault; those bad legislators won't borrow money like I asked! They know they can do this, ... and we do it all the time!"

Really, could that be true? As I looked into it, I found myself even angrier than I had been last week watching the circus in D.C. You see, the governor has at her disposal procedures she can take to cut nonessential spending, allowing the government to pay its essential bills



on time. Has she done it? No. Instead she's out there scaring state employees by using taxpayer-funded e-mail to tell them that she cares, but those bad legislators aren't doing what I want, so you might not get paid on time.

Face it, we can't just print money and buy everything we want the day we want it. We must budget for it, plan ahead, make do when we can and be practical in our spending. That's what families do and that's what government needs to do as well. Spending by government will not save us, and taxing the people more will not magically bring the state increased revenues if the people cannot pay the bill!

Folks, it's time you take action. Usually we suggest you call your legislators and tell them what you think - and of course that's still a good idea now as well. But this time, we need something more from you. We need you to make your voices heard ... in your communities at town hall meetings, school activities, wherever you are, you need to speak up and say enough is enough, stop the madness, it's time we live within our means as a society.

Charlotte Esau, executive director Kansas Republican Assembly

Victim help appreciated

To the Editor:

Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Services has received funding from Thomas County in the amount of \$1,000 for the coming year. These funds will be used to provide direct services to victims of domestic and sexual violence in Kansas, and are greatly appreciated. It is a fortunate community indeed whose government officials recognize the need of all of its citizens.

Jennifer Follis, Hays

Bailouts need clarity

To the Editor:

So AIG is back asking for its fourth bailout, \$31 billion this time. \$31,000,000,000. That makes \$163 billion so far.

When (Federal Reserve Chairman Ben) Bernanke was asked by a lady representative from New York to divulge to whom the money was going he replied, "That might be possible."

Be possible! It should be a requirement with my money. Whatever happened to the transparency promise? Write, e-mail or call your senator or congressman.

Wilbur Leebrick, Colby

