



Free Press Viewpoint

It’s east vs. west for Senate primary

The race for the open U.S. Senate seat is shaping up to be a good one. The Democrats have yet to announce any candidates, and so all eyes are on the Republican primary contest.

On the right, we have U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran. Moran is our congressman, the representative of the “Big First” District. He has been elected seven times in this district, which gives him a record of support from a very large portion of the state. However, in some of those elections he had little or no opposition, which may make him weaker if it comes to a knock-down, drag-out fight.

On the other right, we have U.S. Rep. Todd Tiahrt of Wichita. Tiahrt, like Moran, is an institution in the Kansas delegation, having held his post since 1994. His district, the Kansas 4th, is the second largest in the state, and includes the state’s largest city.

So how does this east-versus-west-Kansas matchup look?

Moran’s first priority seems to be the economy. He voted against the financial bailout, opposing the Bush administration. He has also opposed further government spending, including as the infrastructure stimulus bill. He recently introduced a bill, aimed at the Obama administration’s handling of the auto industry, that would provide a timetable for the federal government to be out of all private-sector ownership.

Moran is on the steering committee of the House Rural Health Care Coalition and has focused health care issues during his tenure. In today’s column, Moran wrote about his concerns about access to care for rural people.

“It does not do someone any good to have an insurance card when there is no medical professional to administer care,” he wrote.

Tiahrt’s issues are also focused on the economy. He favors stabilizing health-care costs for employers, simplifying the tax structure and energy self-sufficiency. He founded the House Economic Competitiveness Caucus, which aims to getting the U.S. economy back into competition with other countries.

Tiarht says he favors repealing the stimulus act, on the grounds that it is increasing the national debt. In early June, he introduced the Repeal the Stimulus Act, which would rescind all of the money in the previous spending bill.

Speaking on the House floor, he said, “The government is borrowing money it does not have, inflating programs we do not need and making promises it cannot keep.”

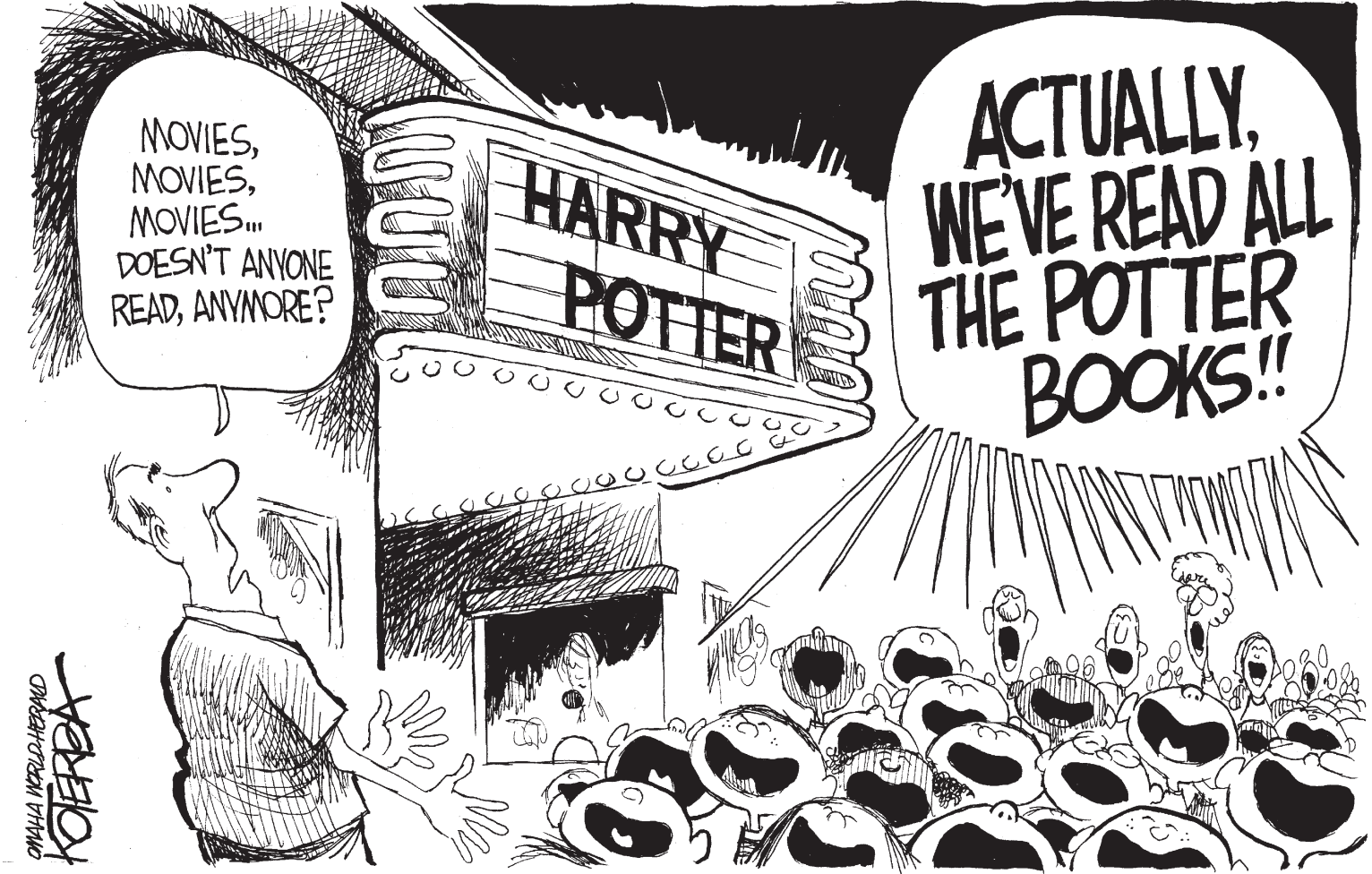
Both candidates also support Second Amendment gun rights, are against abortion and for energy independence.

Bottom line, this means that Kansas Republicans have two strong candidates for Senate, who are for the moment, almost close in most ways. In the next few months, we’ll see them try and distinguish themselves from each other. If not, it’s going to come down to a personality contest. Either way, we’ll see a strong conservative candidate come the general election.

The Democrats would be smart to pick a populist, a man or woman with strong local or even rural credentials who would stand in stark contrast to two men who have spent more than a decade in Washington.

It’s worth noting that no Democrat has won a Senate seat in Kansas in more than 70 years, and the mumblings of discontent with the president’s policies among the Kansas citizenry, it looks like this year will be no exception.

— Kevin Bottrell



Words misdirect when used as labels

The written and spoken word has the capability to influence millions of people to do heroic things and accomplish Herculean tasks. But when used by the wrong people, language can provoke people to commit horrific acts of violence based on fear, prejudice and absolutism.

When I observe American politics today, it becomes clear that there are far too many people willing to use words to prevent thought and promote conformist thinking.

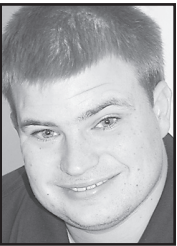
The left wing and right wing both have buzzwords designed to impede people’s ability to think. The words used by both parties in an effort to denigrate each other include secular progressives, elitist, liberal, socialist, patriotic, corporate, nationalist, protectionist, anti-American and environmentalist.

Keep in mind it doesn’t really matter what these words actually mean; it’s what the public perceives that they mean that’s important.

In their attempt to undermine Democrats and other left wingers, the right has demonized words like liberal and socialism to make their opponents unelectable in America.

While conservatives are right to question Democrats’ hard-headed refusals to make the necessary reforms needed in order to keep welfare programs like Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare intact, their attacks on “socialism” have become so oversimplified and clouded by ideological blindness that they owe the country an apology for engaging in rhetoric that will only make our country less intelligent as a whole.

It’s ironic that we live in a country where socialism is treated like a four-letter word despite the fact that our police forces, firefighters and soldiers work for “socialist” institutions that are highly respected by the majority of the public. The definition the conservatives have invented focuses on the socialistic policies



Andy Heintz

- Wildcat Ramblings

they disagree with, such as Social Security, unemployment benefits, public education and a public option in health care, while ignoring the socialistic policies they agree with such as military spending, subsidies for oil companies, subsidizing pollution and the drug war.

The fraudulent way this word has been used has caused people to forget that our country has always been run by both public (socialist) and private (capitalist) policies.

The word “liberal” has fallen into a state of disgrace since conservatives turned it into a four-letter word. Merely the mention of the word “liberal” evokes images of an uppity, Ivy League professor teaching innocent students the evils of the free market and the imperialistic nature of the United States of America.

In order to create this image in the minds of the public, the right wing machine had to create an atmosphere where nationalism and free-market fundamentalism are something akin to secular religions, not to be questioned or disented against. When this thought doctrine has been readily accepted by a significant portion of the population, then anyone who deviates can be labeled a liberal.

The left has always been hindered by some of its adherents who treat working people without a college education as ignorant souls who are easily manipulated by Republicans who feed them populist rhetoric, but enforce policies that leave them worse off than before. This belief reeks of elitism.

While it’s true that some Republicans have taken a page out of the old Democratic playbook by posturing as the party that wants to conserve the moral values in our country, which wealthy liberal elitists are supposedly trying to destroy, this style of campaigning is basically modeled after old left-leaning labor unions who cast themselves as standing up for the common man against Republicans who were allegedly in the pocket of big businesses. This new conservative form of populism simply replaces economic issues with cultural issues.

To believe that rural and working-class Americans vote Republican solely due to their susceptibility to propaganda is simplistic and arrogant. Many people vote Republican because it’s supposed to be the party of small government. Others vote for the Grand Old Party due to disagreements with the Democrats over issues such as gun control and abortion. These are rational decisions that should be respected instead of maligned.

Liberals should also be willing to admit that while having an education is important, it isn’t everything. Many of us who went through college could not survive working the blue-collar jobs featured on the hit show *Dirty Jobs*. In a sense, those who go to college get one kind of education, while those who don’t get another.

We have all been way to susceptible in accepting overly simplistic rhetoric that cast those we disagree with in a negative light. The seeds of animosity may have been planted by conservative and liberal strategists, but they never would have taken root if they were not accepted by a passive public.

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.

Rural health care needs are unique

My parents are 92 and 93 and still live in my hometown of Plainville, with a population of 1,900.

My Dad has morning coffee with Keith Unrein, our pharmacist, and Dr. Sanchez paid a house call on my Mom when she slipped and bumped her head a few months back. This sense of community is what I love about my hometown and other small towns across America, and this is why the current health-care reform debate is so important to me.

If we want a future of strong small towns across the country, Congress must address the unique health care needs of rural Americans when crafting health care reform.

Democratic congressional leaders and President Obama have vowed to pass a comprehensive overhaul of the health-care system before the August congressional recess. I believe this debate is long overdue, but I am troubled by the rapid pace that reform legislation is being drawn.

Under this arbitrary deadline, I am concerned that the unique health care needs of rural Americans will be neglected. On Friday, I met with Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to list my concerns.

While health coverage is vital for rural communities, the greater crisis facing rural America is access to care. It does not do people any good to have an insurance card when there is



U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran

- Capitol Notes

no doctor to see them.

Several reforms are crucial to increase health coverage and access. First, we need to adjust Medicare reimbursement levels to ensure that rural providers are receiving payments equal to urban levels. Demographics show that rural residents have greater inherent health risks and, without adequate reimbursement, these individuals will not have access to the health care providers they need.

Additionally, federal boards that set health policy, like the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, must include sufficient rural representation to ensure an equitable balance between rural and urban providers.

Second, the current medical workforce shortage must be addressed. The National Health Service Corps, a program that gives medical professionals incentives to practice in underserved areas through scholarship and loan repayment programs, needs to be expanded. We must support initiatives to address the current

shortage of primary care physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals and encourage them to provide critical services to our aging rural population.

Third, we must improve care options for rural Americans. Rural Americans must have access to mental health care, disease prevention and wellness initiatives, and quality cost-effective home health and long-term care services.

Fourth, we need to encourage the development of high-speed broadband networks to connect rural hospitals throughout the nation. A reliable broadband network is required to digitize health records and transmit medical data, resulting in streamlined costs and reduced medical errors. Electronic health records and broadband infrastructure will improve patient care by connecting rural communities with specialists in urban areas.

Rural Americans face a unique combination of health care factors and challenges. Rest assured that I will continue to fight to make sure that our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to raise their families in the communities that many of us call home.

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

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



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, Kan., 67701.

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, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72