



Leavenworth can finally relax

Residents of Leavenworth County and their northeast Kansas neighbors probably exhaled a sigh of relief upon learning ... that Fort Leavenworth was no longer being considered as a final destination for suspected terrorists and others being detained at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

We don't know how close Fort Leavenworth actually came to being named by President Barack Obama as the designated prison for suspected terrorists, but we are glad that possibility has finally been removed after months of uncertainty about the possible negative impacts on the surrounding communities and the fort's training mission.

Sens. Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts probably know more than most about how close Kansas came to hosting Gitmo detainees. Their actions to block confirmation of some nominees to key posts in the administration has been credited with forcing a decision on the issue ..., in their favor.

The senators said in a joint statement that they felt certain the detainees wouldn't be moved to Fort Leavenworth. Brownback went a step further and said Obama administration officials had indicated the fort wasn't a suitable site for detainees....

A maximum-security prison in Standish, Mich., which that state plans to close next month, also has been mentioned as the next home of the Gitmo detainees but officials in that community say they've had no recent contact with the Justice Department....

Fort Leavenworth has been the home of the Army's Combined Arms Center since 1882 and has multiple training and educational operations, including the Command and General Staff College, that serve our armed forces and those of our allies around the world.

Now, we'll never know what impact housing the Gitmo detainees at Fort Leavenworth really would have had on the CAC's mission or its location at the fort. But we're glad we won't have to find out the hard way.

— Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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Door problems just keep coming

I swear I didn't change the locks. I'm not even mad at Steve; but he still got stuck outside with a worthless key in his hand the other night.

It's been a bad month for us at the back door. Last week, it happened to me, too.

There are two doors to our home — one in back by the garage, and the front door. Because we don't use the front door and the wind has caught and broken the screen door several times, we always keep the screen locked.

It's the back door that we use for our daily comings and goings.

Earlier in the month, I got a call from Steve. He couldn't get into the back door because the door knob had come loose as he tried to get into the house after work. It would turn, but was no longer connected to the latch.

Since I had been complaining about that knob for several months, my sympathy level was pretty low. Still it was a problem.

Should he break the front screen, try to pry open a window or kick in the back door? All of those solutions sounded expensive and messy, but he went to the garage for a crowbar.

He said he had the bar in hand when he figured out the easy way.



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

me and the opening.

It took some squirming and crawling to get into the house, but I had frozen food in the car, and the 'fridge' was inside. A woman with frozen food can do amazing things.

I kept thinking that this plywood tunnel would have been a wonderful thing for a kid to crawl through, and if I couldn't make it, I could always borrow one of the neighborhood children. That is, if I didn't get stuck and have to wait for the roofers to return or the fire department to come pull me out like a cat caught up in a tree.

Luckily, I got inside, then went and unlocked the front door.

Steve had been telling me for several days that the roofers were coming, but I hadn't thought that meant they planned to keep me out of the house. I called him to complain.

For some reason, Steve's level of sympathy was quite low.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

Admission standards benefit all

The governor got it right. College admission standards need to rise — dramatically!

Kansas was the very last state to have "open admissions," where any high school graduate could enter the regents schools. "Qualified Admissions" were finally implemented for high school seniors graduating in May 2001, but are based on a weak set of requirements including a 21 ACT score, class rank and completion of a minimal college-prep curriculum.

But admissions standards only apply to students entering the six regents universities (not community colleges) and they have a 10 percent window to admit those who do not make the standard. Many students with an ACT below 21 are admitted through these "windows." Some regional universities "max out" their window while the University of Kansas only uses a little over a third.

Many students who have no chance of completing college-level work enroll in Kansas colleges. Parents may assert that a student is a poor test-taker or was ill the day of the test. But a student with an ACT score of 14 has no chance to complete real college work. And while students with scores of 16-18 may have been poorly served by their high school, or had a "bad day" the day of the test, students in that range have very low likelihood of completing college. In these economic times, can Kansas afford to admit 10 low performing students in order to save one or two?

In spite of some students' and parents' belief that they are "paying their full way" through school, the tuition paid by individuals is only a fraction of the actual cost of higher education. While administrators can weigh in external grants and scholarships, and otherwise fudge the numbers to make the state contribution seem lower, the state uses tax dollars to underwrite each college student. It is an investment in our next generation to make Kansas better in the 2030s and 2040s. But to "invest" in a student with an ACT of 14 who will never succeed is heartbreak for the student and a waste of state money.

How much state money matches each dollar of tuition paid by the student? If we use the yardstick of in-state versus out-of-state tuition, where the out-of-state student is supposedly paying for the full cost of their instruction (at KU, \$6,600 to \$16,107), then the state taxpayer is putting in well over \$2 for each \$1 paid by the student.

In the 1980s, only about 45 percent of high school graduates entered college and roughly 30 percent graduated in four years. Today, we are approaching 77 percent of Kansas high school graduates entering tertiary schools, but still roughly 30 percent of the total are graduating in four years. (Close to half graduate in six.)

Are university professors just unreasonably hard? No. The August 2009 ACT report confirms that only 26 percent of Kansas ACT test-takers were "college ready" in all four test areas, compared to 24 percent nationwide (www.act.org). And the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Employment Projections for 2016 show we only need 20 percent of the population with bachelor degrees and higher. The nationwide fever to raise college retention and graduation rates is a blatant call to inflate grades and decrease the value of the American college degree.

To save the integrity of Kansas degrees, and to match the pocketbook of the state of Kansas in a deep recession, it is past time to raise the admissions requirement at all state universities



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

and community colleges. The funding shortfall is now, not four years into the future, so there should be some mechanism to implement the higher requirements for next year. And it is wrong to single out one regents university to be the dumping grounds for students who cannot make the admissions standards (a requirement that guarantees the school will rank in the bottom tier on the U.S. News a World Report list). Exempting community colleges just gives a back door around the standards. We need admission standards for all.

Kansas is a populist state that historically has given its children a second and third and fourth chance. Letters to the editor have already protested the governor's proposal with: "I pay taxes, so my child has the right to go to college!" In hard times, we can no longer afford to pay 2-for-1 for students with no chance for success. It is time to tell our children that an ACT score of 14 no longer gets you into college.

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

