



Other Viewpoints

Retirement system needs an overhaul

Kansas teachers, firemen, city employees and all of the others who work in the public sphere look forward to pensions from the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System based on their earnings history and length of service.

But the system, along with most other defined-benefit retirement funds in the nation, has been hit hard by stock-market losses.

While the fund has about \$10 billion invested, that’s down sharply from pre-recession levels....

Kansas pension reserves are low for two reasons: past Legislatures set aside less each year than recommended by fund managers, depending on continued growth of stock market values to cover them, and the stock market tanked last year and remains more than 4,000 points below its peak.

Dire forecasts have prompted some Republican leaders in the Legislature to recommend moving away from the current defined-benefit system to the 401(k) retirement system broadly used by individuals and smaller businesses.

Defined-benefit plans promise specific pension levels. Some include automatic increases to cover inflation. In Kansas, the state system’s checks have been increased from time to time by the Legislature to recognize the cost of living.

In contrast, 401(k) plans provide income determined by the dividends and interest earned by the money invested.... The current recession devastated all 401(k) accounts, risky or otherwise....

The impact on the Kansas public employee work force of dropping the defined benefit system in favor of a 401(k) plan would be staggering.

The promise of a relatively early and adequate pension is a powerful incentive to choose teaching or some other public job. Take that prospect away, and it will be necessary to increase wages and other benefits to keep those ranks full.

Those who argue that 401(k) accounts will provide a better retirement and point to stock market average gains over history need to think again....

— The Iola Register, via The Associated Press

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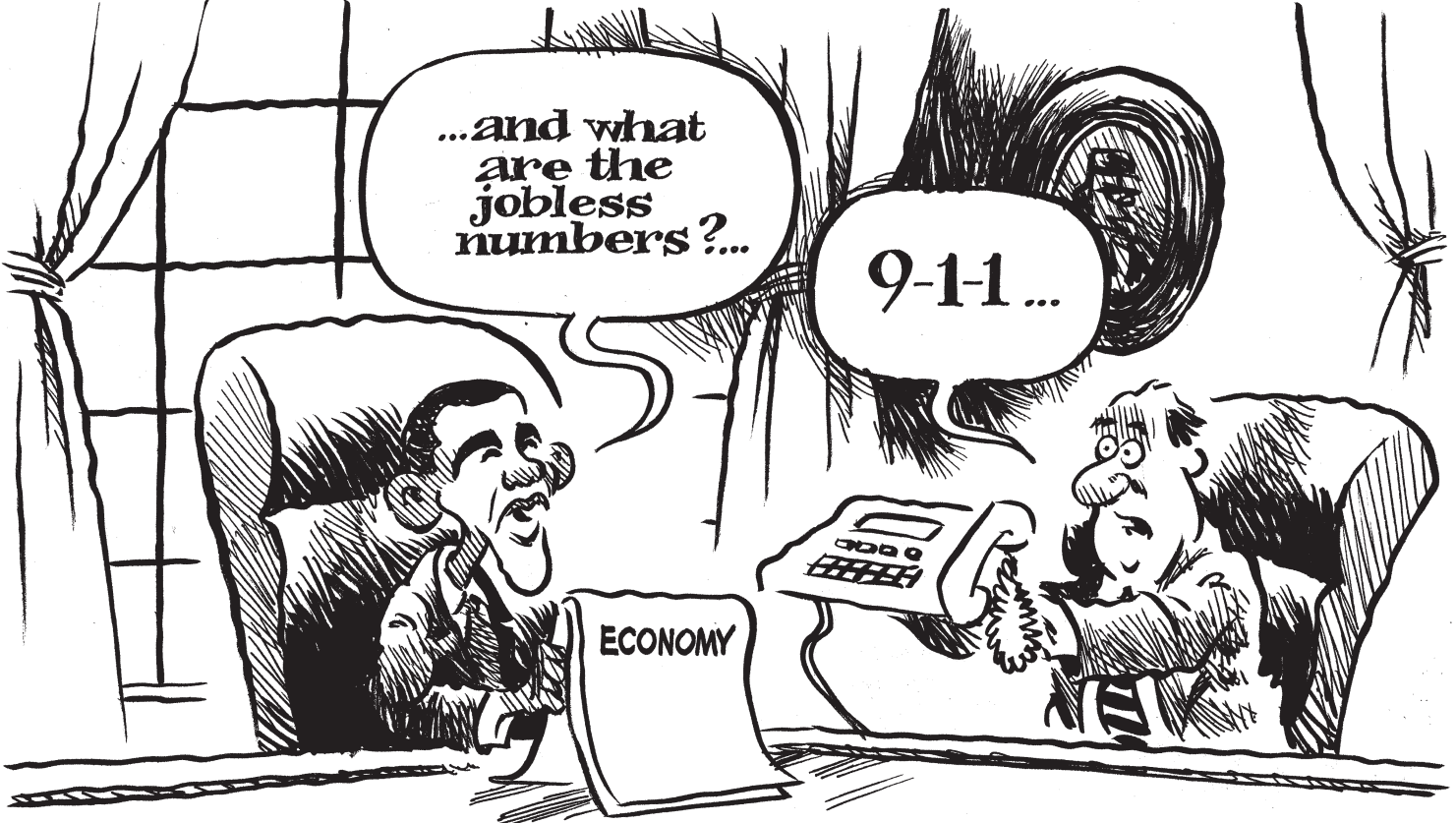
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Volunteers pull together in search

The search Friday for Tommy Dean of Colby seems a good example of what’s best in American life.

Searchers beat through some tough country, including a dense patch of seven-foot weeds and a cornfield so densely planted it was next to impossible to walk through. Even the trained spotters in a Highway Patrol plane that joined the search, and flew right over the field, did not see the man.



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

Tough, yes, but no one gave up. The whole crew was thrilled to learn that they had found the man alive last week, and most likely, saddened when they learned later that he’d taken a turn for the worse and been flow to a Denver hospital.

Finding him took a gang of volunteers on the ground, and that’s just what turned out on Friday, an estimated 45 searchers.

Colby Police had been looking for the 69-year-old Dean since he missed a doctor’s appointment the day before, then failed to meet his wife for lunch. The department logged a missing persons report about 5 p.m. Thursday, and an “attempt-to-locate” bulletin went out for northwest Kansas.

For most of the day, though, no one had any idea where Dean was. Friends and relatives went out to the countryside to check places he’d been known to visit. Officers kept an eye out, and checked with businesses around town. There were rumors he’d been seen west of town that night, but no actual sign of Dean or his blue pickup.

That night, the mercury plunged to 34 degrees at the K-State experiment station, but the

stiff north wind that had blown all day died down. Still, it wasn’t until a tip came in Friday that he’d sometimes frequented a farmstead out near Sappa Creek that anything turned up.

Police Chief Randy Jones said sheriff’s deputies and city officers were busy, so he went out to the area, about five miles north and five miles west of town, to take a look. From a hill on County Road X, more than a mile to the north, the chief spotted a glint of sun off the roof of Dean’s pickup down in the valley. When he worked his way down to the vehicle, he found it stuck in a gully next to a virtually impassible patch of weeds.

There was no sign of the missing man, who’d had heart surgery and needed oxygen, which he’d left behind, to breath. By that time, it was nearly 2 p.m. and more than a day since he’d gone missing. Deputies and Sheriff Rod Taylor arrived within minutes.

The sheriff didn’t hesitate. As the first-in troops fanned out to search the immediate area, he put out a call for “any and all volunteers” to respond to the valley, where the creek cuts diagonally across the northern half of the county on its way to Oberlin.

State troopers, volunteers from the Colby

Fire Department, city and county road workers, civilians and a batch of game wardens assigned to work the opening day of antelope season arrived in short order.

Others brought four-wheelers and horses. They searched fields, weeds and tall grass, looking for any sign of the man. Then they all gathered to walk the big corn field to the south, thick as it was. Some thought it was the most likely place, since the wind might have driven him south after he left the truck.

No one knows how long that had been. Jones said Dean didn’t seem to know. Everyone thought it was a long time to be out in the cold, but the searchers pressed on.

That persistence paid off a few minutes later when Jason Hawman, the wildlife officer from WaKeeney, spotted Dean face-down in the field, several rows into the corn. Jones said he was alert and recognized some of his rescuers. Volunteers rushed him to a pickup and hauled him down to the county road to meet an ambulance.

Everyone packed up and went back to town, happy and a little surprised at the outcome. Jones and Taylor tried to thank everyone as they left, but of course, there were too many to catch them all.

It’s nice to be thanked, of course, but isn’t this what life in a small town is all about?

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor’West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Corporate campaign gifts still a bad idea

To the Editor:

This September, Chief Justice John Roberts and others on the corporate wing of the Supreme Court may try to pervert our forefather’s intent, nullify the will of the people and rewrite a century of precedent — all to advance the political agenda of corporate power.

At issue are long-standing laws that ban corporations from spending their financial resources directly on election campaigns.



Free Press Letter Drop

- Our readers sound off

Concerning corporations, a recent study found that even as nine of Wall Street’s biggest bank failures were grabbing bailout money last year, they were lavishing bonuses of more than \$1 million apiece on about 5,000 of their top bankers. These banks lost \$81 billion in 2008 and pleaded with our government for \$165 billion in direct bailout funds — yet they awarded \$32 billion in bonuses to their executives!

Yes, they used our tax dollars to cover this bonus-for-failure program.

This year, the same flock is already setting aside billions of dollars for bonuses at the end of the year, and they’ve even returned to the practice of guaranteeing multi-million-dollar bonuses, no matter how they perform.

Jim Hightower of “Lowdown” publication, who I have been quoting here from *The Progressive Populist*, says:

“It’s time we quit pampering these sociopaths by allowing their absurd sense of self-entitlement to swamp common sense and the common good. No mere banker should be paid a dime more than what a good teacher, a fire fighter or a nurse makes.

“Chief Justice Roberts, a lifelong corporate shill, hopes to get a five-member majority to the court to rule that corporations have a First Amendment right to pour unlimited sums of money into our elections. Never mind that the founders feared and abhorred raw corporate power and deliberately wrote the Constitution as a document guaranteeing power to “We the People” — not to bloodless, soulless legal constructs that know nothing of morality and care nothing for our nation’s fundamental values of fairness and justice.”

Just before summer vacation, Roberts got the court to schedule an extraordinary September reconsideration of two major campaign finance laws that the court previously OK’d as constitutional. If the court reversed those rul-

ings, declaring that corporate speech is equal to human speech, corporations would be unleashed to spend billions to control elections.

What the Roberts Court is up to goes way beyond judicial activism — it’s a traitorous assault on America’s democracy by corporate autocrats intent on imposing their political will through five old men in black robes.

Edna Hatcher, Colby

Help Legion Riders help a young man

To the Editor:

The American Legion Riders of Colby was organized in February of this year with 25 founding members. We now are 50 strong. We were excited that we would be able to make a difference and we hope we have not disappointed anyone.

Our first project was helping a soldier in Iraq obtain school supplies for children there. Many businesses, organizations and individuals gave us a helping hand so these could be shipped for the “Read Iraq” project.

On our first fund raiser in June, everyone came together and we had a turnout far beyond our expectations. You made it possible for us to help our Legion post with repairs and give money to the Legion’s Legacy Scholarship Fund, the World’s Largest Truck Convoy for Kansas Special Olympics and the Fischer House in Denver and to have some operating capital to support our other missions.

When the Honor Run came to town, the people in Colby and surrounding communities got behind the event and made it possible to send just over \$6,000 to help the Fischer Houses. This makes it possible for families will have a place to stay nearby while their disabled veter-

ans get help during rehabilitation.

It is time for us to call on you again to help the American Legion family help others. Zach Thompson was injured in a car accident over three months ago and has been in the Swedish Medical Center in Denver. He recently was transferred to the Craig Rehabilitation Center for evaluation and help with his spinal-cord injury. His family has been by his side, helping in the healing process.

Zach and his father Brad are both members of the Legion Riders and the Sons of the American Legion in Colby. We will be helping with the Thompson Family Benefit Fund raiser on Monday, Oct. 26, at the Legion hall. A supper will be held from 5 to 8 p.m., along with a silent auction, to help the family.

Many people are out helping with the sale of tickets, collecting the suggested \$10 donation. If you, your business, organization or place of worship would be willing to help with this event, please let me know. Donations of money, items for the silent auction, help with the food preparation and serving, cleanup, ideas, suggestions, anything will be very much appreciated.

C.W. Hamilton II
American Legion Riders, Colby

Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.