



Other Viewpoints

Domestic violence not a private matter

The slaying deaths of a mother, her two daughters and a grandmother were the latest tragedies in a brutal year in Kansas.

Domestic violence was blamed in the shooting deaths of Karen, Emily and Lauren Kahler, and Dorothy Wight over Thanksgiving weekend near Burlingame.

That brought the number of domestic violence deaths this year in Kansas to 32 adults and 13 children — a notable increase over 2008, when 19 adults and 14 children were killed as a result of domestic violence.

Of 118 homicides so far in 2009 in Kansas, 26 percent stemmed from domestic violence.

The Kahler case was the latest example of a problem that can turn into a long pattern of abusive behavior and result in tragedy.

After 23 years of marriage, Karen Kahler cited physical and sexual abuse in filing for divorce in January 2009. Her estranged husband, Kraig, now stands accused in her death, as well as the deaths of their two daughters and his wife’s grandmother.

Such a horrifying, high-profile crime naturally fuels support for legislation aimed at keeping such tragedies from happening again.

As much is expected in a proposal that would require a domestic violence tag to be placed on all legal documents associated with a criminal act that is based on an intimate relationship.

Jana’s Campaign — launched after the death of Jana Mackey, a University of Kansas law student slain by her ex-boyfriend — proposed the DV tag as a key in preventing offenders from repeating their crimes.

While such legislation would help, more must be done.

Domestic violence too often is considered a private issue, with both victims and abusers reluctant to admit what happened. But it’s a public problem that demands public solutions.

To determine whether domestic abuse cases could be handled more effectively, communities should demand top-to-bottom reviews of how the criminal justice system deals with those cases from the time they are reported until sentences are rendered.

Policymakers cannot be satisfied until the troubling trend of domestic violence is reversed.

Indeed, we all owe it to those who lost their lives to place more emphasis on the potentially deadly problem that plagues every community.

— The Garden City Telegram, via The Associated Press

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

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Bath explosion tangles mind and hands

Years later, we might refer to this as the Great Loofah Explosion of ’09.

Might be funny by then.

A loofah, you probably know, is a bath sponge. They take the place of a washcloth in the modern shower.

I’d never seen one until our much-younger and much-hipper children introduced us to them. They’re supposed to “exfoliate” your skin, whatever that means. Make it healthier, shinier and younger looking by removing dead cells.

Whatever.

They do make nice scrubbers, though, and they soap up faster than a washrag in our hard Oberlin water, so those first few gift loofahs sort of won us over. Pretty soon, that’s all we used.

Usually, we get them at the grocery, but once, a daughter gifted us with a couple from Bath and Body Works, a chain store found in strip malls, in cities where we seldom visit and more seldom shop.

And these were fine loofahs indeed, long lasting and especially scrubby, or however you say that something scrubs well. Over the years, I might add, as the company sought to trim costs, they seemed to get less durable, but still, we use them now and then.

And as it happened, we got two last year. One lasted in the shower for nearly a year. But its time had come, I noted, when major portions of it seemed to becoming untucked. So I got out its twin.

Well, nearly its twin. For while the first one had been a nice shade of blue, this one was



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

my hands. But try to imagine.

Eventually, I had to grab a washcloth, but don’t tell the children, please. It’s sooooo old fashioned.

And if you’ve ever wondered how much material is in one of those little scrubby balls, it is exactly 12 feet, 4 inches. I measured.

I admit, I was a little traumatized by this accident, but not so much so that I won’t take up a loofah again.

Loofah. Interesting word. Said to be arabic in origin. I did some research.

A loofah is actually a Eurasian vegetable or fruit, said to be edible. The bath sponge originates with a certain type which is treated by removing the seeds and flesh to leave a network for veins used as a sponge or scrubber.

These organic loofahs are still sold in some shops – you can recognize them by the pattern of three seed holes that runs through the veins – but most bath sponges today are made of nylon mesh or similar materials. Less scrubby, perhaps, but usually more durable.

These days, though, manufacturing quality ain’t what it used to be.

So, I have a new loofah, and I’m working up nerve enough to try it.

And if anyone out there has an industrial use for 12 feet, 4 inches of nylon mesh tubing, eight inches wide, just call. I have some.

And I don’t need to know what you’re going to use it for.

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.

Economy hurt by environmental strategy

As Americans make their holiday wish lists this season, one item stands alone at the top — jobs.

With one in 10 Americans currently without work, the highest unemployment in a quarter century, the president should be focused on job and economic growth. Yet, the president is pursuing an environmental strategy that reduces the hope for an economic recovery.

The president’s latest attempt to achieve his goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at any cost occurred last week at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The president’s aim was to develop a successor to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which sought to reduce worldwide greenhouse gas emissions but failed to do so.

Had the U.S. Senate ratified the Kyoto Protocol, one thing is certain: the economy would have suffered. An Energy Information Administration study done during the time Kyoto was negotiated projected it would have cost the U.S. between \$100 and \$397 billion a year.

But it is not only an international treaty at Copenhagen that Americans have to worry about. Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ruled that carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases are a danger to public health and welfare. This means the EPA can impose regulations on greenhouse gases without congressional action.

The announcement coincided with the opening of negotiations in Copenhagen and was meant to show the international community that the U.S. was committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions — even by bureaucratic regulation.

This threat is no reason to agree to a harmful international treaty or to pass cap-and-trade as some have argued. To the contrary, the president should refrain from entering into international agreements, and the EPA must be stopped from making decisions that circumvent Congress and are not supported by cur-

rent law.

At the same time, the president continues to seek cap-and-trade legislation from Congress. The cap-and-trade bill approved by the House of Representatives in June remains one of the most damaging pieces of legislation passed by the House during my time in Congress. One study of the House-passed cap-and-trade bill by the Heritage Foundation showed that the legislation would result in annual losses of almost \$400 billion in the U.S. economy and would lead to the elimination of a million jobs.

The bill would increase the cost of doing business in the U.S., force small-business owners to close their doors and cause companies to leave the country for nations where costs are lower. At a time when so many Americans are without work, this is the last thing our country needs.

The president’s holiday wish list is clear: reduce greenhouse gas emissions at any cost. An international treaty, EPA regulations or a cap-and-trade bill would be devastating to our economy. Those are Christmas gifts no American wants, Mr. President.



Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley