



Free Press
Viewpoint

Freedom of speech
applies to everyone

After watching the Super Bowl commercials, you have to wonder what all the shouting and complaining was about. The Focus on the Family ad with quarterback Tim Tebow and his mom was, well, cute, but not exactly controversial. Women’s groups had demanded that CBS not run this ad, apparently fearing that the conservative Christian group, based in Colorado Springs, planned to spring some sort of hidden anti-abortion agenda. The network, to its credit, stood by its decision. The opponents were way off base, as it turned out. Pam Tebow, who reportedly had a difficult pregnancy with her now-famous son and at one point was advised to consider an abortion, didn’t lay any heavy message in the ad.

If you know her story, then you know the choice she made and you know how she feels about it today. It was an effective ad from a lot of perspectives, but it played to choice – something the other side in the abortion debate always claims to back.

Abortion is all about choices, really, and not laws. Women make choices whether the law allows abortion or not — and in the Tebow case, an abortion likely would have been legal under any set of laws. If one side promotes giving women a choice and the other counsels them not to have an abortion, isn’t that what a free society is all about?

The really scary thing here is the pressure mounted to get CBS to drop the ad. This was a legitimate, though soft sell, expression of a viewpoint. It’s true that networks often have shied away from anything vaguely resembling controversy in prime-time ads, but there’s no law or ethical rule that requires it.

Networks, the press in general, deal with controversial topics in news programs, even in entertainment, all the time. They accept political ads. They accept ads from big corporations that many might abhor. All of this is free speech, protected by the First Amendment.

So where do the liberal women’s groups get off calling for CBS to can this or any other ad they might not agree with?

The same could be asked of right-wing groups which demand that networks drop this or that show or ad because it “promotes” something they don’t like.

It’s all political pressure designed to suppress an opposing view, and it should not be allowed in a democracy. Our focus always should be on allowing, even promoting, opposing views. No side has such a corner on right that it can be allowed to suppress all other viewpoints.

If we truly believe in freedom, then we need to defend freedom of expression, even when we don’t like the ideas. That’s what the First is all about.

It applies to Focus on the Family the same as it does to choice advocates. Church and family groups have as much right to promote their viewpoint as anyone else.

And any threat to that right is a threat to us all, no matter which “side” we are on. — *Steve Haynes*

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansas.com or colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

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Safe to be in front of a Toyota?

My father-in-law made sure that all his vehicles and those of his children had excellent tires and brakes. His theory was that if the brakes and tires worked, if anything else went wrong with the car, the dang thing would stop.

My husband has followed his father’s advice and for the most part, it’s worked pretty well. We’ve had flats and slid off the road, but good tires and good brakes have brought us to stops before we could have any really serious wrecks.

Now, however, I have a special problem. I drive a Toyota Solara, a type of Camry.

For anyone living without newspapers, radio, television or the Internet, Toyota is in trouble for putting out cars with gas pedals that stick. Not every car, mind you, but enough that it’s caused a good-size scandal, and I’m glad I don’t own any stock in the company.

I haven’t heard anything from the company about repairing my faulty pedal, which seems to go down some times and not come back up, causing the car to go faster and faster and faster.



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

I may not even have one of those sticky gas pedals. The percentage of vehicles reporting the problem has been pretty small compared to the number of Toyotas on the road.

However, it’s always good to be prepared, so Steve and I discussed what to do if the throttle on my car suddenly turns against me.

My first instinct would be to put on the brake, but that has not proved effective, as the brakes will soon burn out. They are just not made to compete with the gas pedal.

A little thought brought up a simple solution — just take the car out of gear. Once the engine is no longer attached to the wheels, it may rage and roar, but the car will stop going faster. It’ll slow down and can be moved to the

side of the road.

Don’t however, put the car in reverse or park. That will kill the engine faster than a shotgun blast to the computer. The transmission, too.

Steve’s solution was also very simple: Turn the car off.

Reach up and turn the key to off. This will stop the engine, and even if gas keeps flowing, it won’t be able to keep going. It will slow to a stop.

The kicker with this solution is you can’t take the key out of the ignition, or the steering wheel will lock. This could be bad, because then you have a car you can’t control.

I doubt if I will ever have to use any of these tricks to control an unruly gas pedal, but just in case, I suggest if you see me coming — just get out of the way.

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

Tax receipts still low in January

Here is a recap of activities and information from the Kansas Senate for the past week:

January Revenue Collections: January was the third monthly report based on the revised consensus revenue estimates made in November. Through January, total State General Fund receipts for the 2010 fiscal year were \$39.1 million, or 1.3 percent, below estimates. Tax collections to the general fund were \$36.5 million, or 1.2 percent, below predictions. Total receipts through January were \$301 million, or 9.2 percent, below comparable receipts from the previous year. For this year, tax receipts are \$252.2 million, or 7.9 percent, below the same period in FY 2009.

Many tax sources fell below estimates by more than \$1 million, including a \$24 million drop in individual income tax collections, \$5.3 million in compensating use taxes, \$5 million in the severance tax, \$3.5 million in estate taxes, and \$3.5 million in estate taxes. Corporate income tax receipts exceeded estimates by \$9.9 million, or 7.7 percent, the only tax source to exceed estimates by \$1 million.

SB 391 Anatomical Gifts: Amends the 2007 Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act by including language that a person who has agreed to put their name in the Midwest Transplant Bank registry has also given full legal consent to the donation of their organs or tissues upon their death. The bill also allows a donor to amend or revoke an anatomical gift by accessing the registry website or by notifying the organization designated for organ procurement in Kansas. If a donor chooses to withdrawal their consent to be listed in the registry, it does not withdraw their donation of organs or tissues. Passed 39-0 on Tuesday, Feb. 2.

SB 393 Administrative Hearings: Would allow the Department of Agriculture to provide notice and an opportunity for a hearing when the agency revokes a license. The bill also authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to temporarily suspend licenses and permits issued under the Kansas Dairy Law without a hearing and notice as required by administrative procedure law. Temporary suspension could not exceed 90 days. Passed 39-0 on Feb. 2.

SB 421 Election Crimes: Changes the pen-



Ralph Ostmeyer

- State Senator

alty for voting without being qualified from a class A misdemeanor to a level 9 nonperson felony. Passed 39-0 on Feb. 2.

SB 426 Absentee Ballots: Expands absentee voting opportunities for federal service voters and military personnel and their family. Allows overseas voters to apply for, receive and return their ballots electronically. If needed, overseas voters are also allowed to vote a full ballot for all elections and vote by write-in ballot. Passed 39-0 on Feb. 2.

SCR 1615 10th Amendment Resolution: The Senate Judiciary Committee favorably passed out SCR 1615 on Wednesday, Feb. 3. The concurrent resolution declares the sovereignty of Kansas and serves as a notice and demand to the federal government to immediately cease and desist all mandates that are beyond the scope of the powers delegated under the 10th Amendment to the Constitution. In addition, SCR 1615 prohibits all federal legislation that requires states to comply under threats of penalties or sanctions or requirements that states pass laws to maintain certain funding. The resolution is now up for consideration by the Senate.

SCR 1621 Litigation Financed with Public Funds: The Senate Judiciary Committee favorably passed out SCR 1621 on Wednesday, Feb. 3. The concurrent resolution declares the view of the Kansas Legislature that courts lack the constitutional authority to order the legislature to make specific appropriations. In addition, SCR 1621 declares that no public money or money derived from taxes should be used to finance or support any lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of appropriations by the Legislature. Now up for consideration by the Senate.

Appointments: On Tuesday, Feb. 2, the Sen-

ate confirmed these appointments 39-0:

- Suzanne Valdez to the Kansas Crime Victims Compensation Board.
- Dr. William Allen Reed to the Kansas Health Policy Authority.
- Suchitra Padmanabhan to the Kansas Development Finance Authority.
- Thomas M. Cohen to the Kansas Technology Enterprise Corp. board.
- Belinda Sue Vierthaler as Kansas Long-Term Care Ombudsman.
- John Poertner to the Kansas State Board of Indigents’ Defense Services.
- Scott M. Slabotski to the University of Kansas Hospital Authority.

Saturday, Feb. 20, is the deadline for bills to be passed out of their house of origin, known as “turnaround day.”

We are beginning our “town hall” meetings on Saturday in northwest Kansas. Rep. John Faber and I hope to see as many of you as can make it. We will be in Oberlin at the Decatur County courthouse, third floor, from 11:30 to 1 p.m.

I can be reached by writing to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 225-E, Topeka, Kan., 66612, or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

