



Other Viewpoints

Rethinking needed on alcohol price law

When the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Division announced last week that it would start enforcement of an old liquor law, the result was like pouring beer into a glass too fast. It quickly bubbled up into a mess.

Fortunately for Kansans, Gov. Mark Parkinson was quick to mop things up.

Parkinson made the right call Thursday when he ordered the division to halt its plans to enforce the law, passed in the mid-1980s, which deals with pricing of alcoholic beverages.

In taking decisive action, Parkinson scored a victory not only for businesses but possibly for public safety as well.

The trouble began when division announced that the 20-year-old state law required alcohol to be priced equally per ounce.

That was bad news for bar owners, who said it would no longer be cost-effective for them to offer smaller drinks.

The reason is that bars generally have adopted the same attitude toward pricing that you see in other businesses — it pays to buy in bulk. A tavern owner who offered a 16-ounce beer at \$3 might sell a 32-ounce beer for \$4.50 and a 64-ounce pitcher for \$6.50.

But under the ABC's interpretation, the law would have required the owner to sell the 32-ounce beer for \$6 and the pitcher for \$9. Bar owners said patrons wouldn't pay that much for a pitcher, so their strategy would have been to eliminate smaller portions in order to maintain reasonable prices on their larger sizes.

That wouldn't have been good from a consumer's standpoint, or for public safety, either. Patrons should have the ability not to purchase a super-sized drink if they just want to whet their whistle. Our tendency to eat everything on our plate and finish everything in our glass could lead to dangerous consequences if bars quit selling smaller drinks.

The memo also led to confusion about how it applied to mixed drinks.

So considering the concerns the memo generated, it was wise for Parkinson to tell the division to back off of the enforcement and get guidance on the law from the 2011 Legislature.

Let's be clear that there's a good reason the law was passed. It was designed to prohibit bar owners from offering irresponsible specials, such as "drink and drown" nights in which patrons who paid a charge at the door could receive an endless supply of drinks at drastically reduced prices — like a nickel a draw or a quarter per pitcher.

ABC said its decision to reinstitute enforcement came after some chain establishments sought clarification on pricing regulations, and the agency heard concerns about bars offering special deals to patrons who participated in "mug clubs."

Clearly, there's no harm in looking into those concerns.

But considering what a can of worms the division opened, it's just as clear that Parkinson made the right call in calling off the agency.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

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Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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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

OBAMA'S
RECOVERY
SUMMER
CONTINUES...



Pharmacist's husband has trials, too

Most of you are familiar with Cynthia, the columnist who writes for the newspaper. Not all of you know Cynthia, the pharmacist who fills in at drug stores from Norton to Colby and sometimes as far as Goodland, Quinter, Hoxie and Smith Center.

She was a pharmacist married to a reporter long before we bought our first newspaper out in Colorado. But then we had this business to run, there was no drug store in the county and so she started to learn about the newspaper.

Soon, she was an award-winning columnist and photographer, as well as the bookkeeper and a volunteer emergency medical technician in our little mountain town. But she yearned to keep her hand in her chosen profession. Eventually, she took a one-day-a-week job at a chain store in the Valley, some 60 miles away. She even learned the store cheer.

Then she switched to the pharmacy at City Market, which is what they call Dillon's in southern Colorado. Then the manager quit, and she moved up to his full-time job. And pretty soon, she was working a whole lot. The kids and I had to make dinner most nights, and I think she kinda liked that.

When we moved to Kansas, she said she didn't want to work that much. For a few years, she stuck with that, too. But pharmacists across western Kansas learned there was someone they could call to cover a day off, or even a week. She was, and is, in demand.

Lately, she's been working in Oberlin and Norton mostly, but then Dillon's called and



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

she decided to try working there. There was nostalgia for a company she liked, and besides, she said, they paid better than most.

So, she's been working a day or two a month down in Colby. It didn't add too much to her burden, until one day she got a notice that all Dillon's pharmacists needed to be trained to give immunizations.

She always claimed that nurses emptied bed pans and gave shots, and her sister might do that, but she wouldn't. There was money involved here, though, something like 21 hours' pay for study, the class in Salina and drive time. Plus expenses.

She came back from Salina sporting three Snoopy bandages.

"We had to practice," she said. "Not real vaccine; just saline solution."

But those little blood spots on Snoopy's nose looked real enough for me.

"I thought you practiced on oranges?" I said.

"Naw," she said. "They told us oranges have tougher skins than people. We had to practice on each other."

Grad schools rejecting online courses

Students considering all-online programs in some sciences and performing arts may want to check professional requirements and doctoral programs first. More graduate programs are establishing policies that limit or exclude online coursework.

Syracuse University responds: "Will any psychology course transfer?: No. We do not accept online courses or courses in which you view videotapes and then take a test."

The George Washington University program for a Doctor of Medicine bluntly states: "No, we do not accept online coursework." The University of Colorado School of Pharmacy declares: "We do not accept any pre-pharmacy math, science or public speaking courses taken online."

With the first generation of undergraduates from online programs applying to professional and doctoral programs, faculty can make decisions on the adequacy of students who have taken online courses. Their rationale is explained in the restrictions established by the University of California system:

"Online lab science courses will not be approved unless they include a supervised wet lab component. Since UC has not seen computer software that adequately replicates the laboratory experience, computer simulated labs and lab kits will not be acceptable. UC faculty considers the experimentation process a critical component of any laboratory science course because it brings the scientific process to life. Although online labs have been created ... UC faculty is not convinced that they adequately replicate the wet lab experience...."

While questioning online science labs is obvious, similar concerns are mounting for performance classes. The California policy continues: "Online visual and performing arts



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

courses will not be approved, because it is difficult for students taking online courses to experience the required performance component of performance arts courses and/or replicate the expected portfolio component of visual arts courses. UC faculty believes that performance is a necessary component of any performance arts course.

"Whether it is a course in band, choir, drama, dance or painting/drawing, the immediate feedback and coaching of an instructor (adjusting the toe point of a dancer, correcting the musical intonation of a student, advising greater voice projection for a student actor, or demonstrating correct technique for a student artist) is a critical and necessary component of any course."

Heaviest exclusion of online coursework currently is for science courses. The University of Southern California School of Pharmacy declares: "We do not accept on-line classes for math and science pre-pharmacy courses." The University of Wisconsin Pharmacy School concurs: "All prerequisite science courses must be taken in a classroom setting."

Texas Tech University Physicians Assistant program states: "Online science courses will not be accepted." And some programs now exclude online courses completely: "Currently at the University of San Diego, the College of Arts and Sciences and School of Business do

not accept online courses at the undergraduate level."

A tension exists between administrators who want to compete with online for-profit schools, and faculty who are less enamored. A survey, "The Paradox of Faculty Voices: Views and Experiences with Online Learning," released last August by the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, found 70 percent of faculty believe online courses are either inferior or somewhat inferior in learning outcomes to face-to-face instruction. Even among faculty who teach online, nearly half gave it an inferior or somewhat inferior ranking.

Just across the Kansas border, there is a non-thesis Master of Science in Biology offered completely online and designed for "... high school and middle school teachers, scientists, researchers, or anyone who could benefit from an advanced education in biology." Yet when I ask biology colleagues from Kansas doctoral programs whether they would accept such a student into their graduate program, a decision that rests in the hands of the major professors alone, their response has been a uniform "No!"

There is not yet any "no online degrees" statement in their catalogs. The number of no-online-courses/degrees statements is likely the tip of the iceberg as more faculty are confronted by this truth-in-labeling problem.

Young students face a dilemma. Without up-front labeling, students are investing time and money in online courses or degrees that will not gain them access to the professional program they seek.

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

