



Free Press Viewpoint

After the battle, Republicans reunite

Kansas Republicans are making noises about trying to make peace after some bloody primary battles. While we expect the party to pull together this fall, some of the wounds will take longer to heal than others. Perhaps the nastiest fight was between Rep. Jerry Moran of Hays and Rep. Todd Tiaht of Goddard for the open U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Sam Brownback.

This one degenerated into bitter name-calling before it was over, with each candidate's staff issuing blistering attacks on the other guy. Mr. Tiaht's campaign tried to use ancient votes from Mr. Moran's days in the state Senate more than 15 years ago to prove he was not a "true conservative."

Dedicated groups including Kansas Right to Life backed Mr. Tiaht despite the fact both had sterling records on the group's issues. You'd think the group would have done its cause more good by sitting this one out.

Alliances among right-wing "social conservatives" such as Mr. Brownback, Right to Life, Mr. Tiaht and others are strong, apparently, and Mr. Moran is seen as too independent, not "one of them."

Still, when the shouting dies down and he's the new senator, who will they turn to in Washington? Even the new governor will have to go hat in hand when he wants help in the Capitol. And Mr. Moran is a conservative, though more in the mold of Bob Dole than Mr. Brownback.

So Sen. Moran should survive with little damage. Our bet is that Mr. Tiaht will stay in Washington and become a highly paid lobbyist for conservative causes or maybe the aerospace companies he was so fond of in Wichita.

He'll live, and live well.

Out West, the six-way campaign for the House seat Mr. Moran left generated it's own heat. Candidates tried to outdo each other at calling themselves conservative. State Sen. Tim Huelskamp won handily, maybe because he'd proven over the years that he was the most conservative. Unlike many of the candidates, he had a voting record to prove it.

Sen. Jim Barnett has his Emporia-based Senate seat to keep him warm next winter. Other candidates did not fare so well.

Tracy Mann, a young businessman who lives in Salina but made much of his roots in Quinter, took the brunt of the last-minute attacks. Trouble was, in his case, the charges stuck.

Mann stood accused of being a carpetbagger, having moved back to the district only last year from Johnson County, and being on record as having given \$500 to the Senate campaign of former Rep. Jim Slattery, a liberal Democrat, against Republican Pat Roberts just two years ago.

There's nothing illegal about either thing, of course, but if you're going to run in a Republican primary, those count against you. We'd be willing to bet that's why he lost.

Many other races involved smaller fights, some mostly clean, others not so. The Kansas Republican party generally survives these. It will this year too.

Mr. Moran and Mr. Brownback, leading the ticket, both have proven they can win elections and appeal to a large spectrum of voters. Both should win handily in November.

Their positions to the right and farther to the right will not hurt them. Voters will see them as good men trying to do the right thing for the state.

Some of the others will be trying to figure out what happened for years. — *Steve Haynes*

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Close the 'window' on college admissions

Will your child graduate high school and enter a Kansas regents university? That depends on whether they meet "Qualified Admissions" requirements.

The Kansas Board of Regents has held several working-group meetings to revise those requirements, with action possible this September.

Kansas was the last state with "open admissions" — any high school graduate could go to a state university. But by 2001, graduating Kansas seniors were supposed to meet new requirements: an ACT score of 21 or in the top one-third of their senior class. There was a high school curriculum as well, requiring three units of science (including chemistry or physics), four units of English, three units of math, and three units of social studies with certain specifications.

The regents approved temporary changes to the Qualified Admissions criteria in 2009 but faltered on how much math to require.

A draft of the final proposed criteria is now under consideration. New rules move requirements from 13 to 18 units by adding one math unit, requiring one-half unit in civics, requiring one unit of fine arts and requiring three elective units chosen from: math, English, natural or social science, foreign languages, computer/information systems, personal finance and speech/debate/forensics. Much of the debate is on the added math requirement.

But the real debate should center on increasing the exception window from 10 percent to 15 percent. Currently, students who do not meet the other criteria for attending regent's



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

universities are still accepted through a "10 percent window." And in this era of tuition-driven enrollment, every warm body counts. Several state universities are very close to filling their 10 percent windows.

Currently, a student with an ACT of 14 to 20, in the bottom third of their class, who has completed far less than the required curriculum with barely a 2.0 (C) grade average, can still enter through the window. Those students can make up 10 percent of the freshman enrollment but they do not have a chance of completing a bachelor's degree.

Still, they are underwritten by the Kansas taxpayer. In the 1980s, barely 43 percent of graduating Kansas high school students entered college. For each dollar in tuition paid by the student toward instructional costs, Kansas paid two dollars. Today nearly twice that percentage enter tertiary education within five years after graduation. And today, Kansas can only afford to pay about one-to-one.

The reason is simple. Too many students are going to state universities who are not ready. And it costs the universities to staff the year or two of courses for them until they flunk out.

Because the state cannot afford to subsidize

twice the number of students, state support-per-student has shrunk. Today's college-ready students are paying higher tuition because state resources are being spread out to support students who should be in technical schools and industrial training.

To prevent further state tuition increases, the admissions "window" should not be expanded to 15 percent, but should be reduced: Ten percent in 2010, but then 9 percent in 2011, 8 percent in 2012, etc. until in 2020 there is no window. All students would have to score an ACT of 21 (or 990 SAT) to enter regents schools, from high school graduation, community college transfer, or to enter any other degree program. International students of course would not have this test score but would need the equivalent credentials.

This would give the state Board of Education time to implement a statewide ACT-for-every-student program similar to a dozen other states. With a new state emphasis on career-readiness, ACT provides a WorkKeys job skills assessment to accommodate students pursuing vocational routes.

Not every Kansas student wants a college education. Nor is every student college ready. It is time to begin closing the window, not open it wider.

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.

First Argentina, now Greece; who is next?

On June 8, the U.S. Treasury Department reported to Congress that the national debt, currently sitting at \$13.6 trillion, will balloon to an estimated \$19.6 trillion by 2015. The ratio of debt to Gross Domestic Product would reach 102 percent by that year, up from 93 percent this year. To keep this in historical perspective, the U.S. government has only crossed the 100 percent threshold of debt-GDP once, and that was to fight World War II.

Even more frightening, the Treasury Department report does not include the additional federal government spending soon to come on health care.

The new health-care law does not fully take effect until 2014, which means that the additional spending on health care, and the creation of health care exchanges, will add more money to the debt. Cost estimates range from \$890 billion to \$3 trillion for full implementation of health-care reform.

The long-term prospect is that a viable U.S. economy is not sustainable with debt-GDP ratios of 100 percent or higher. Growth rates will decline, ratings agencies will downgrade U.S. debt and inflation will rise as the Federal Reserve is forced to print more money to pay for the expansion of government spending.

In April, the *New York Times* reported that the U.S. has now become a nation where there are fewer taxpayers (under 50 percent of the population) than there are beneficiaries of taxation.

If this sounds eerily familiar, then check out the recent sovereign debt crisis in Greece. Rioting and a European bailout have led to austerity measures on a government-led economy

Other Opinions

• Gregory L. Schneider
Kansas Policy Institute

which routinely paid workers not to work and expanded the welfare state to the point that it caused the economy to collapse.

Europe seems to be slowly learning its lesson that unsustainable promises of cradle-to-grave security cannot be long maintained, although many countries have not imposed austerity measures on promised welfare spending. Governments in those countries face angry electorates and there are reports of the rise of fascist-style movements in many eastern and central European countries as a result.

Meanwhile, our government continues to expand the welfare state. Deficit spending on health care, economic stimulus, bailouts and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq continue to drag our economy closer to the edge. Foreign governments are buying our debt for now, but how long can we expect that to last? If they stop loaning us money, who is going to bail out the U.S. government?

Once upon a time there was a nation in the western hemisphere that faced very similar circumstances. It was prosperous, flush with cash and riches, and its government chose the path of spending rather than saving and bankrupted its economy and people. That was Argentina in

the early 20th century.

Almost a full century later, Argentina still defaults on debt, imposes hyperinflation on its citizens and borrows routinely from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Argentina was once a wealthy nation poised for greatness in the international economy. A century later, it remains a basket case.

Let's learn from the mistakes of others before it's too late.

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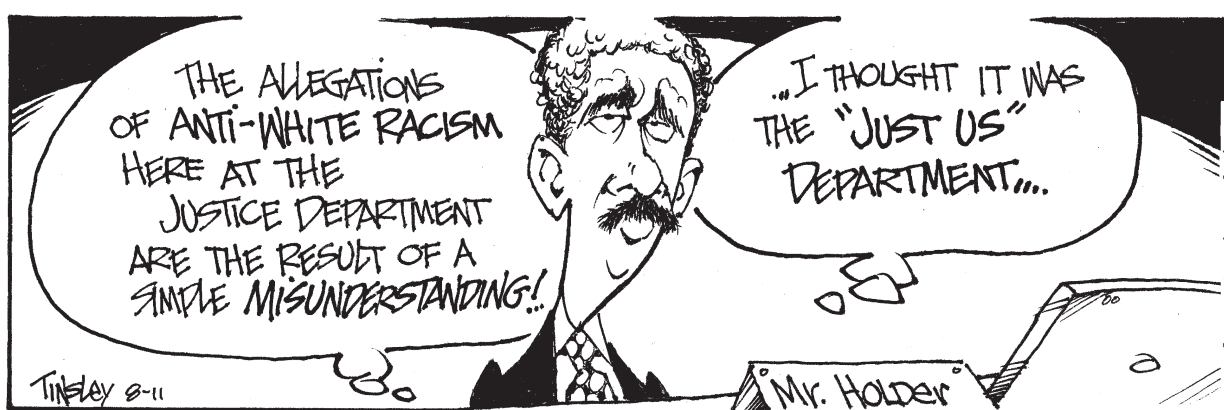
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