

Other Viewpoints

Journalism remains subject to be taught

It seems that Kansas education officials are using 19th century spectacles while reading about a 21st century profession. Using a change in federal law, the state Department of Education says it will no longer provide money for journalism and yearbook courses at Kansas schools. State money needs to go toward courses that "lead directly to occupations," and apparently the board doesn't consider journalism one of those.

It's true that the form of journalism is changing and shifting. Where printed newspapers dominated the media landscape a generation ago, websites, mobile devices and other electronic forms may come to dominate a generation from now.

Regardless of how people receive news and information, though, there'll still be a demand for people who understand how to gather information from multiple sources, process it and send it out for mass consumption. People will still need to write about the inner workings of government, and people will still need to write about the people and events that make their local communities unique.

Those people will work in journalism – not necessarily journalism as we know it today, but journalism nonetheless. In fact, Neilson Research, in a 2009 report, indicated that Americans are increasing their consumption of media – with an increasingly larger part of that consumption coming in the form of online and mobile sources.

That means today's students interested in journalism need to know about the Internet, web design, online utilities and mobile media. They'll need to know about programming, and how to turn words and photos into a digital, instant format that can then be consumed by a large audience.

Yet, they'll still need to have a thorough understanding of the English language, and they'll need to know how to organize facts and information in a way that makes a reader want to read.

The skills students learn in high school journalism also can translate into other fields. Journalism students learn how to interview people. They learn to ask questions – even questions that people won't want to answer. They also learn digital photography and the elements of design that make a newspaper – or a website – attractive and engaging to its readers.

No, journalism is alive and well; it's simply moving ahead, much as the industry has done during the last several decades. To slash the budget for these programs in high school unfortunately places a burden on school districts – many of which recognize the value of an education in journalism but worry about how to pay for those programs....

– Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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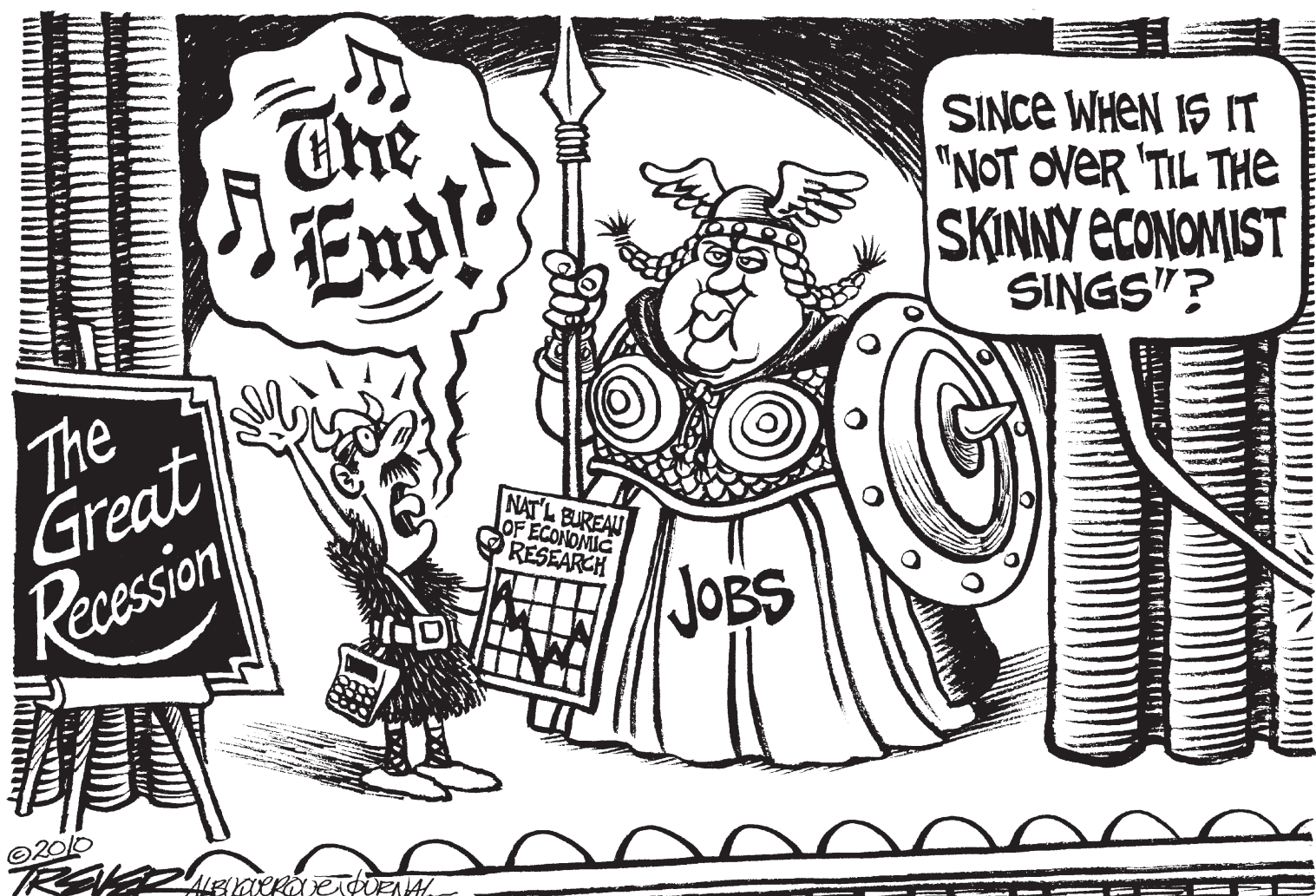
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Democrats' enthusiasm gap frightening

While the Republican Party and the "tea party" become more enthused with each passing day over the gains they are expected to make in the November midterm elections, the enthusiasm from the Democrat's traditional voters can best be described as somewhere between waning and nonexistent.

This enthusiasm gap is particularly frightening when considering how extreme the Republican Party has become. Once they get into power, and God forbid, get some of their policies passed, the public will quickly become disenchanted with this crowd, but there is no need for America to go through this again.

Eight years of the George W. Bush administration should have been enough. And some of today's Republicans are making Bush look like a moderate.

In spite of his many shortcomings, at least Bush didn't indulge in the Islamophobia that has been fostered by many on the right recently. He also endorsed dealing with illegal immigration in a way that was far more humane than what some Republicans, including so-called moderates like South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, are proposing today.

Many liberals and progressives have expressed legitimate frustrations with President Barack Obama's failure to roll back some of the more intrusive national security policies supported by the last administration. They also have been upset about the Democrat's timid, watered-down Wall Street Reform and



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

Consumer Protection Act, as well as the president's willingness to take the "public option" in the Health Care Reform bill off the table.

Criticism of Obama's unwillingness to roll back the Bush security policies is warranted, but the complaints about health care and Wall Street regulations fail to take into account the political realities of the day. Even if he wanted to, Obama doesn't have the political capital to get a health care reform bill with a public option. Neither does he have enough support within his own party to get a bill that places more stringent regulations on Wall Street.

Like it or not, backing Democrats in the midterm elections is the politically expedient thing for progressives to do. Rejecting this notion for ideological reasons makes no sense. Sitting out the elections will only help the Republicans. Unfortunately, there is no legitimate third party capable of challenging the two traditional parties, and there may never be one. The Democrats are clearly the more natural ally of progressives.

While it's true that Democrats, like the Re-

publicans, are in bed with special interests, too willing to continue the failed, illogical war on drugs, too implicated to truly regulate Wall Street, too timid to challenge the military budget or the national surveillance state and too weak to stand up to Rush Limbaugh and Fox News, consider the alternatives.

Returning to power the same people who drove the country into a ditch will only lead to tax cuts for the rich, continued discrimination against gay Americans, a further widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, cuts in safety nets for low-income and elderly Americans, more people imprisoned without being given access to lawyers, more torture, more jails, more amnesty from accountability for oil companies and corporations and a widening deficit that will eventually be lowered by slashing what remains of the welfare state created by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration.

Liberals and progressives can choose to sit out the elections if they want, but they should be willing to take responsibility for their actions if their absence leads to our country being run by clones of Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Farmers' markets a winning proposition

In communities across Kansas, farmers' markets continue to offer homegrown and homemade products, everything from freshly picked fruits and vegetables to mouthwatering baked goods, fresh eggs, beef, lamb, pork and colorful flower arrangements and bedding plants.

Farmers' markets are one of the quickest growing industries in communities across this country. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently reported there are more than 6,100 such markets today. This is up 16 percent since 2009, meaning more than 850 have opened just this past year.

This access to fresh, high-quality food and the joy of connecting with a farmer is something that is resonating with more and more people. Key here is the opportunity for consumers to talk to the people producing the food.

When people have the chance to talk to someone one-on-one, they believe that because the food is grown closer to home, it's probably safe. There's also a sense of responsibility for the vendors who stand there and face the people buying their goods.

Vendors like markets because they can sell their home-produced products with no middleman. Farmers' markets are unique because the producer is also the marketer.

In most phases of production agriculture, the farmer rarely has a chance to participate at this level. If a farmer grows wheat for example, he can sell it but has no control over price. In a farmers' market, he can set the price and negotiate with people.

Farmers' markets are popular with a wide range of people. In university towns like Manhattan and Lawrence, international students, accustomed to shopping in markets rather than



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

stores, frequent these establishments. Senior citizens are also regular customers.

Markets are popular with people who have been transplanted from rural to urban areas. Folks who were raised in rural areas like that connection with the farm.

Without a doubt, farmers' markets are a happening, a community event and a place to socialize. Many shoppers rise early in the morning so they can talk to people and sometimes more importantly, grab the best produce. You remember, the early bird gets the worm.

Shopping in an outdoor venue is also just more fun. There's nothing like an open-air venue to buy fresh, healthy food.

On a trip a couple weeks ago, I listened as a younger shopper told me buying local produce is a serious part of a socially responsible life.

"I'm buying from people in my own community," she told me. "I'm supporting people who I live with."

Farmers' markets are family affairs. Kids are as much a part of scene as the vendors and customers. In case you hadn't noticed, kids like to eat, and they know what they like.

For the children who help their parents sell products, it's a learning experience. I've seen many a second or third grader making change as Mom hands over the goods.

The friendly relationship between buyers and sellers, the festive atmosphere and the

quality produce all make the farmers' market a popular community event.

While I go to the market mainly for juicy, mouth-watering tomatoes and fresh, brown farm eggs, I sometimes find a real treat, something I haven't bargained for or something my wife or I can't replicate at home.

My favorite purchase at the downtown Manhattan farmers' market is homemade tamales and salsa brought to town by a vendor who lives in Topeka. Talk about wonderful.

You know, I'd go to our farmers' market even if I didn't buy something, but that'll never happen because I love to eat too much.

I just like being there. It's the best show in town.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Where to write, call

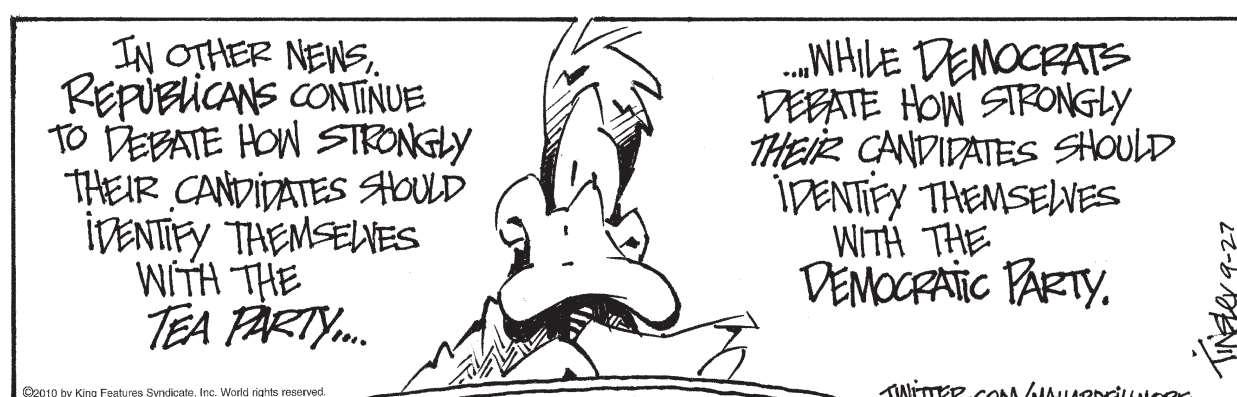
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