



Other Viewpoints

Outside dollars skew Kansas races

Kansas voters have been bombarded by commercials for candidates for various offices, but nothing like the surrounding states as spending on politics has reached a record level – especially by outside groups spending millions to influence outcomes.

A report by the Center for Responsive Politics last Friday showed independent ideological groups for both parties, business associations (Chamber of Commerce) and unions have set a record by spending more than \$167 million on the election process including advertising, setting up systems to poll and influence voters and to get out the vote on election day.

The total is up 367 percent from the \$35.7 million spent during the 2006 midterm elections – the previous record. It does not match the total of \$220.4 million spent during the presidential election cycle two years ago.

The money is coming in at a rapid rate as the Center reported the outside groups’ spending jumped \$13.6 million in the 24 hours before the latest report was released.

The report said the figure does not account for spending by party committees. When added together, combined outside spending by independent groups and party committees reached \$247.6 million, again a record-setting pace for this point in a midterm election.

The leading groups spending on campaigns include: National Republican Congressional Committee, \$34.3m; Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, \$26.2m; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, \$22.8m; Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, \$22m; American Crossroads, \$12.8m; Service Employees International Union, 10.5m; American Future Fund, \$8.5m; American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, \$8.1m; Americans for Job Security, \$8m; and Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies, \$7.9m.

The top races money is being spent on include the Colorado Senate race where the total spent by outside groups is more than \$22.3 million. The Missouri Senate race has attracted more than \$10.7 million. The Nevada Senate race has attracted more than \$9 million.

With election day two weeks away, the Democrats have 40 Senate seats for sure and 6 considered solid, giving the Dems 46 seats and needing five to stay in control. Republicans have 23 seats and 12 considered solid to give them 35 seats, but need 16 to take control. Of the remaining 19 seats Republicans have 8 leaning their way to get to 43 and the Dems have 3 leaning their way to get to 49. In the mix are 8 seats considered tossups including Colorado, Missouri and Nevada.

The tossup races are attracting the big money with control of the Senate the goal.

In the rush for control the truth is getting trampled – especially by the outside money groups – and adding more voter dissatisfaction with the political process. When the clouds clear after the Nov. 2 election, it will be interesting to see what influence the big money had in determining who is in control in Washington.

The bet is the Dems will barely hang on to the Senate and the House may narrowly move to the Republicans.

No matter the outcome people can be sure the big money groups will be in control on both sides of the high stakes game.

– Tom Betz, Goodland Star-News

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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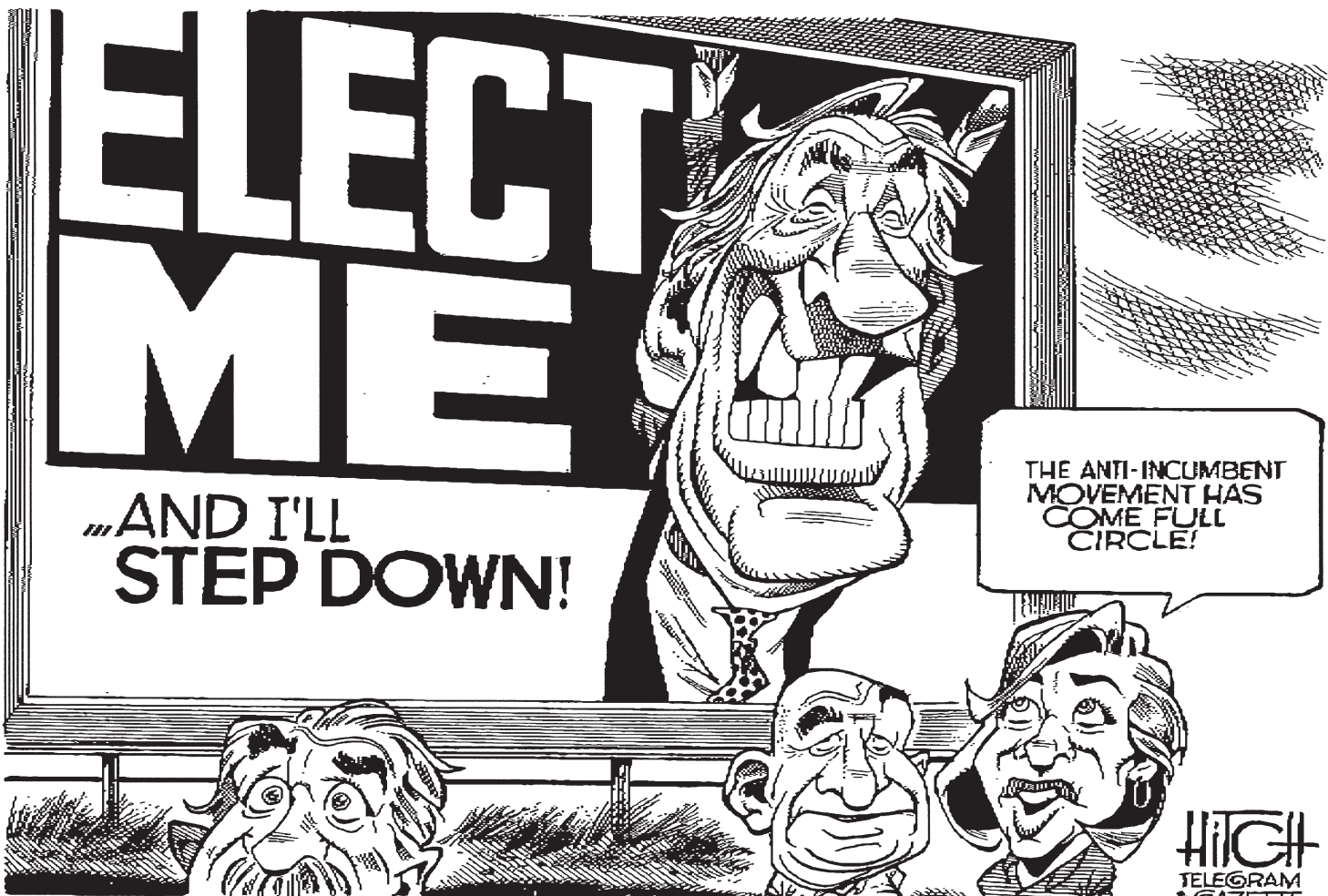
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Did you see that tree down the street?

It's that season again, when it's not unusual to have someone begin a conversation with, "Did you see that tree at ..."

So I can start off asking if you have gone down West Fifth Street lately – I'll fit right in.

Autumn is a beautiful season, for those who are blessed enough to live in a place where the trees change color. Most of the trees usually seen in this area turn to various shades of gold or bright yellow. That can certainly be beautiful; I've seen the Black Hills in full splendor, and I imagine Colorado is even more spectacular. A river valley full of yellow cottonwoods is a sight to behold.

That said, it warms my heart to see that someone has taken the trouble to plant a tree that turns red in the fall. That explains my enjoyment of Fifth Street right now. It seems to be a neighborhood where the movers and shakers of the early years of Colby built their homes, and when they built they planted some beautiful trees.

Tree planters, of course, rarely see the true value of their work. They see a scrawny stem, anywhere from six inches to six feet tall. It looks fragile and temporary, and hardly worth the trouble of digging a hole to put it in.

Planting a tree is an act of faith. In a county



Marian Ballard

Collection Connections

where commercial crops are planted and harvested within a year, a tree doesn't seem to do much at all. If you build a new house and plant a new tree, your new yard is still going to look rather bare for a long time to come.

That new tree will, however, show its true colors. It may have only three branches, but when fall comes, they will be pretty branches.

The payoff comes 50 years in the future, when those gangly adolescents of the plant world have really come into their own. That's when they can offer shade and color that makes a difference to the character of the whole street. That's why I love the view on Fifth Street, and on similar streets in other places I've lived. They are beautiful any time of year, but especially in the autumn.

When conditions are ideal, as they seem to be this year, the transformation is gently,

with fresh changes appearing every day – here a leaf, there a branch. Meanwhile there are people wanting a picture of this or that special sight.

The sad part is that a photograph can't even come close to storing the experience of seeing a tree in full autumn dress. The best it can do is serve as a reminder of a memory.

In a photo, the whole experience shrinks down to a package, a frozen moment in time that has lost the life of the original.

The original won't last either. Though the tree is durable, the fancy dress is simply a sign of the changing season. Bright fall days are replaced by gloomy rain or wet snow. The most colorful leaves are already dying, and will soon be on the ground.

Other seasons also have their beauty, but it's hard to compete with those breathtaking moments in the fall when all you can do is gasp in surprise and say, "Did you see that tree?"

One more thought: it's a good time to plant a tree for someone to enjoy 50 years from now.

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

Antibiotics need good stewardship

If you read the accounts of physicians caring for patients in American hospitals before the coming of antibiotics 75 years ago, you will be astonished at how little they could do to fight the ravaging effects of many of the everyday infections they saw.

Without antibiotics, the "miracle drugs" that revolutionized medicine by the middle of the 20th century, bed rest and good nursing care were just about all that doctors could offer patients when they showed signs of succumbing to infection.

In those preantibiotic times, ordinary wounds or illnesses acquired from contaminated foods, unprotected sex or uncovered coughs would quickly amount to a death sentence for tens of thousands of Americans every year. It was a time in humanity's age-old struggle with the invisible agents of infection when the microbes clearly held the upper hand.

Of course, antibiotics changed all that. But humanity's struggle against the germs that infect us did not end when these drugs appeared on the scene. Growing resistance to antibiotics in the microbial world today threatens to swing the balance back in the microbes' favor.

Many experts now warn that we are rapidly heading into a post-antibiotic world, a time when doctors will again stand by their patients' beds helpless, unable to treat a host of common infections with more than bed rest and good nursing care, because none of their antibiotics works any longer. In fact, the World Health Organization now calls antibiotic resistance one of the three greatest threats to human health.

Antibiotics work by killing or inhibiting bacteria. With frequent use, these drugs exert "selective pressure" on populations of bacteria they encounter, enabling individual bacteria that are somehow capable of resisting them to survive and gain a competitive advantage. Over time, excessive or inappropriate use of particular antibiotics can promote the emergence of resistant strains.



Jason Eberhart-Phillips

Kansas Health Officer

The spread of resistant organisms has already brought certain infections to the brink of incurability. Many so-called gram-negative bacteria are now resistant to almost every drug doctors can throw at them, even agents once reserved for "last resort" use because of their cost and toxicity.

Multi-drug resistant tuberculosis has become a global challenge, exceeding 20 percent of cases in certain parts of the world and posing an ongoing risk to the United States. Each drug-resistant case costs 10 to 100 times as much to treat as a drug-susceptible one. Cases of "extreme" drug resistance, where none of the usual combinations of drugs is effective, are increasingly common.

The bacteria that cause gonorrhea, a sexually transmitted infection that is on the rise, have begun to resist one antibiotic after another in recent decades. Now only one class of drugs still works, and resistance to these agents is starting to turn up in Asia.

In the past, as resistance to antibiotics developed, new drugs would come on the market to take their place. This is no longer the case. Antibiotics account for less than 2 percent of drugs under development by the world's 15 largest pharmaceutical companies. The pipeline for new drugs to fight gonorrhea and other high-priority infections is almost dry.

This means we need to become better stewards of the antibiotics we've got. Each of us – whether we are consumers, prescribers or dispensers – must work together to prolong the effectiveness of these amazing agents for as long as possible, as we encourage govern-

ments and drug makers to collaborate on ways to address the dearth of new antibiotics under development.

Hospitals and clinics throughout Kansas, as in the rest of the United States, are starting to find ways to reduce unnecessary antibiotic use as part of a comprehensive strategy to lower the risk of infections picked up during health care, in hospitals, clinics and the like. Policymakers in public health, veterinary medicine and agriculture are coming together to discuss how to ensure the appropriate use of antibiotics in animal husbandry.

These are important steps to reduce the risk of antibiotic resistance in Kansas and around the world. As health-care consumers, though, we must do our part as well:

• Don't lean on your doctor or provider to prescribe antibiotics for colds and other infections when he or she advises that they are not necessary.

• When antibiotics are prescribed, take them exactly as directed for as long as they are prescribed, even if you are feeling better sooner.

• Never share your antibiotics with anyone.

If we all become good stewards of today's antibiotic resources, appreciating their value to society and working to protect that for future generations, we can overcome the problem of antibiotic resistance and help humanity regain the upper hand over our microbial foes.

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Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

