



Other Viewpoints

Temper criticism of 401(k)s, please

It is understandable that teachers and other state employees want to fight a proposal in the Kansas Legislature to move their retirement system from a pension plan to a 401(k)-style plan.

However, they should be careful not to seem out of touch with current financial realities.

Recent comments surrounding the 401(k) discussion have left some observers questioning whether state employee groups fully understand the challenges facing private employers and workers.

For example, a March 8 Associated Press article quoted a lobbyist for the Kansas Organization of State Employees: “Do you really want to take your retirement security and gamble it on the stock market?” the lobbyist asked while opposing the 401(k) plan.

That, of course, is what many private sector workers do each day. It is not that they necessarily want to take that gamble, but for their employers, traditional pension plans are quickly becoming nothing more than a memory of a different time.

In an era when profits are highly unpredictable, especially for small businesses, it is unreasonable to expect a company to offer a pension plan that guarantees a certain retirement income regardless of what else happens in the economy — or in the stock market, where many of those pension funds are invested.

Whether the state should move to a 401(k)-style retirement system is a question that requires study. The details of how such a switch would be made and how the state would finance it should be carefully examined. It is a complicated and important issue.

We expect the leaders of state employee groups to remain engaged and closely follow the process. But we hope that they will do so in a way that acknowledges that private sector workers already have had to adapt their retirement strategies to new economic realities.

If leaders of state employee groups maintain their current rhetoric, dwindling pension funds won’t be their only concern. Public sympathy will quickly dwindle as well.

— *The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press*

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774 roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.
Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Sports
colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor

Shelby Pulkrabek - Society Reporter
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING
colby.ads@nwkansas.com

Andrea Bowers, Kathryn Ballard
Advertising Representatives
abowers@nwkansas.com kballard@nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

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



Pet boa constrictor, meet feral cat

OK, so it’s a little irreverent, but I see a chance for the city of Oberlin to take care of the alleged problem with feral cats living in the storm sewers downtown.

Short of a three-inch rain, nothing seems to put much of a dent in the cat population.

Now the city has a request from a woman to allow her to keep her seven-foot boa constrictor in town. (See article on Page 5). I say the council should say yes, as long as she agrees to have it patrol the sewers whenever it gets hungry.

Some of those wild cats are pretty mean, but they’d be no match for a seven-foot snake.

The city would have to find some way to absolve itself of liability for people who might be startled when the snake pops up through a manhole, of course. Or snatches their poodle.

Seriously, the snake is an issue the council will have to decide. I don’t envy them some of the things they have to get into. Every time the city deals with animals, the council gets beat up. It’s hardly fair, of course, even though they



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

did volunteer for the job.

This would be a good time to thank all the present members, and Mayor Joe Stanley, who put in countless hours to do the city’s business, struggle to do the right thing, and get paid mostly in late-night phone calls and complaints.

So thanks, council people, for doing a thankless, but important, job.

☆☆☆☆

A couple of interesting typos that turned up this week:

“A tough roe to hoe....”

Shad, salmon or sturgeon?

The expression, of course, should be “a tough row to hoe.” Like in gardening, back in the days when hard labor was the only way to kill weeds. You also see “road to hoe,” but that’s not right, either.

Ever try to hoe a road?

“Hopefully, that can be kept to a bear minimum.”

Because the bears are real grouchy in the spring? A bare minimum, maybe?

Those two got caught. That’s what editors do. The ones that get, through.... I knew an editor once who told his readers those were a free benefit of taking the paper.

And that’s the way we look at it here, unless we can find some way to charge extra for the funny ones.

☆☆☆☆

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Can U.S. impose its values on world?

Perhaps a short history lesson on the birth of this wild experiment of a United States of America and how it was to be organized is in order.

We were, essentially, tribes, some from the same ethnic backgrounds, but definitely from different religious loyalties and doctrines. The English background was dominant.

We didn’t have the unified power to face the West, with its hostile entrenched residents, and across the ocean was a mother country that didn’t want to relinquish parental control.

The basic Christian philosophy was dominant, but quite fractured in theology. Survival and individual freedom to pursue choice of lifestyle were the dream of most of the colonists.

Open opposition to the British colonial power surfaced about 1765. This led to open rebellion and the war of independence began in 1775. Total independence was finally achieved in 1783. A brief and short-lived attempt to survive under the loosely organized Articles of Confederation (1777) resulted in the calling of the Constitutional Convention (1787). And, finally, George Washington was inaugurated as our first president in 1789. We look back and see the process took kist 25 to 30 years.

With the exception of the native inhabitants, the new nation didn’t have to deal with entrenched ethnic tribes that had raided each other’s territories for years or even centuries. They weren’t threatened by weapons of mass destruction that could be launched from their neighbors or even from the other side of the world. The established world powers were



Ken Poland

- Ken’s World

busy protecting their territories from one another and vying for commercial dominance.

Now let’s look at the present political and social realities of the Middle East, Africa and much of Asia.

For the most part, the colonial powers have been replaced by harsh dictatorial leaders. Those leaders have been supported and backed by world governments. That support has been based, primarily, on economic benefit to the supporting governments.

Can we hope to establish a United Nation of Libya, Egypt, or Iraq by military force in today’s environment and culture? Those territories have existed for centuries and been deprived of self rule by the colonial world powers for most of those centuries. Their boundaries were established with no consideration of tribal or religious history. In fact, those lines may have been drawn to divide tribes and weaken their power or influence. (Does that sound like how our legislative redistricting is done?)

Can the United States of America establish the playground rules and fight off the “colonial” greed of other nations to establish a free and independent democracy where none has existed before? Are we guilty of backing re-

gimes that are favorable to our economic interest and ignoring how they handle their civil rights and social problems?

We may be that we have turned the African proverb, “Speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far,” completely around. (Incidentally, Teddy Roosevelt was not the originator of that saying.) We carry a big stick, but rather than speaking softly, we talk loudly.

The United States is the largest manufacturer of military weaponry and paraphernalia in the world. With that arsenal of war power, we tend to let the world know we can and will use it if we don’t like what someone is doing. We are the super power! We welcome allies, but they will join us on our terms or we’ll go it alone.

Uncle Sam has the marshal’s badge pinned on his vest, and he will be judge, jury, and executioner.

Do you think for a minute that even those who favor President Obama’s decision to get involved in Libya will not rip him apart if he takes a back seat to the U.N. or some other country in directing the military or political decisions?

I didn’t support President Bush’s and I don’t support President Obama’s military involvement in the Mideast.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

