



Other Viewpoints

Raise speed limits, but only with care

Sitting on Gov. Sam Brownback’s desk is a bill that, among other things, would allow higher speed limits on divided highways in Kansas.

Proponents say the measure is designed to draw truck traffic from other states – notably off of Interstate 80 in Nebraska – and, therefore, is a plus for Kansas economic development. That makes some sense.

If the governor signs the bill, the secretary of transportation still must initiate raising speed limits from 70 to 75 mph on specific roads. It’s fortunate that, instead of making a blanket change, the secretary and her staff will evaluate whether 75 mph truly makes sense on all of the eligible highways.

“The inclination would be to increase the rural sections of Interstate,” said Steve Swartz, a spokesman for the department.

As anyone who’s ever driven an Interstate west of Salina can attest: Making better time would be a plus. A real plus.

So while the bill to increase speeds on these roads would drive up gasoline consumption and cost the state some money to change signs – up to \$24,750, according to testimony – it makes sense for the governor to approve it.

However, if the governor does sign the bill, the department should take an especially hard look at highways in urban areas. One nearby road – the portion of Kansas Highway 10 between Lawrence and Kansas City – would be a poor choice for a higher speed limit. Already, many motorists are traveling far faster on K-10. It only makes sense that increasing the speed limit would translate into an increase in the accident rate.

Swartz says that during the evaluation, the agency will look at the history of crashes, as well as whether eligible roads are hilly or curvy.

And while it’s pretty much a straight shot down K-10 and it has controlled access, it makes absolutely no sense to feed the need for speed on an already hazardous highway.

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

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

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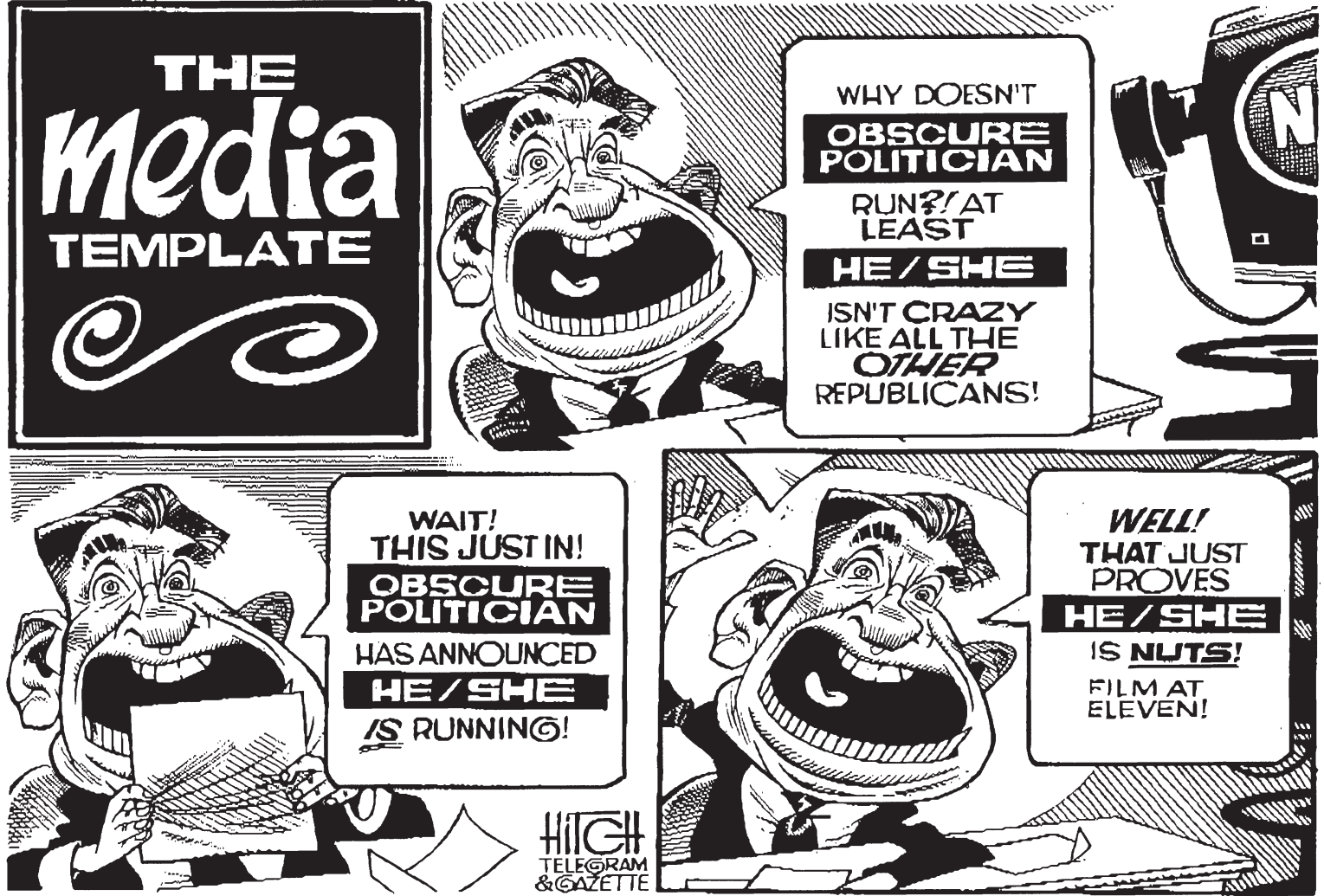
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Spring week is just full of surprises

On my way back to work from lunch Monday, I saw a fire drill, a yellow boat parked on the street – next to a yellow car, a yellow dandelion – or maybe more than one.

Seems like there’s a color theme going there. Do we just notice bright colors more in the spring? All told, Monday was well-qualified for the title “beautiful spring day.” Granted, a school fire drill doesn’t qualify strictly as a sign of spring, but these kids were smiling, enjoying the day and not shivering and hurrying to get back inside.

On Tuesday, I saw a sort-of-yellow fire truck with a lone fireman dressed in red checking fire hydrants in downtown Colby. I say sort-of-yellow because I’m not sure they’d be happy if I said that color’s a kind of a sick green. (I don’t know what they call that color, though Steve Haynes tells me it’s apparently lime yellow. That’s better than the other names I can think of for it.)

This of course, was hours before fire crews from Colby, along with several counties around, were called to a fire north or Rexford. But the fire truck, and the fireman, were busy doing “spring” maintenance.

So much for spring.

On Thursday, when I went home for lunch, the predominant color was gray. And since lunch is sometimes late for people who are busy putting together an afternoon newspaper, the rain started just about 10 minutes before I walked out the door. The day was gray and WET.

I think it was rain, anyway. When I turned on my windshield wipers, they were pushing around something that really looked more like snow, or at least slush.



Marian Ballard

- Collection Connections

liveliness from driving a tractor or from flipping hamburgers, they depend on the crops, which depend on the rain. Yet to hear many talk, they only like the weather when it is dry and sunny.

So I have a suggestion. We talk about the weather a lot, for some reason. How about trying to say, once in a while, “I’m glad it’s raining.”

Wet hair and mud puddles go away, after all.

And one last thought – the perfect spring day just might hold a rain shower in it.

I must add a postscript here. Thursday night, after this column was tucked away, I heard on the scanner the Highway Patrol going about closing the Interstate. Today schools are closed here in Colby and around the area, along with pretty much every road between here and Colorado and beyond. A blizzard is also one of those occasional signs of spring. I admit to being grateful for signs of civilization – streets and street lights – to guide me through it.

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.



Chinese children carry heavy burdens

“Isn’t it terrible how Asian children have so much homework, study all weekend, and have to give up any social life?”

This has been a common response in American households. Amy Chua’s book, “Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,” revealed how demanding a parent can be: no sleep-overs until your piano lessons are perfect. And network television aired a documentary on Korean students slaving to pass college entrance exams.

But a few months ago, Americans were distressed to see students from Shanghai eclipse Korea, Taiwan and Singapore for top scores on the PISA, an international test where the U.S. barely rated average. There is a connection here folks! We cannot be fretting over poor academic achievement while dismissing the work and study ethic required to excel.

Asian versus American attitudes on education have been studied extensively by researchers. Poll Asian parents and they will rate their child below their actual performance and lay responsibility for doing better on the student. American parents generally rate their children much higher than their actual performance, and lay any blame at the foot of the teacher. It is a matter of culture and history.

The parents of the current generation in China have known hunger. Their grandparents have seen starvation. China’s parents have worked hard and saved hard – an average of 40 percent – to give their child a better life. But this sacrifice has strings attached.

China envies our Social Security system but has been unable to implement a nationwide equivalent. When a child fails academically, it



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

tle and it is difficult to stand out among a sea of others who are doing likewise. But come to the U.S. and they easily stand out.

The U.S. did have a widespread study ethic following the Great Depression and World War II, when hard work and hard study were the ticket to a better future. Get in trouble at school and you got in trouble when you got home. That was five to six generations ago.

China has advanced that far in the last two generations. “Responsibility” and “sacrifice” may disappear from the vocabulary of their next generation. Chinese parents and professors, while glad to see some of the austerity and pressure gone, regularly lament how this generation of students “have it easy” even while they are still blowing the rest of the world away in test scores.

Studies of Asian-American immigrants show superior scores and study ethic begins to fade with the second and third generations. They become more like pussycat America – Where most parents let television and video games babysit their children – Where we value sports, entertainment, self esteem and “finding yourself” over the rigorous hard work that leads to genuine accomplishment.

Before we decide to condemn “tiger moms,” maybe we should decide if we want to remain a pussycat nation.

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

