



Other Viewpoints

Line-item veto: governor wins?

The remaining slim hope for the Kansas Arts Commission slipped away during the 2011 Legislature's ceremonial adjournment session, as the House fell far short of the two-thirds constitutional majority necessary to override Gov. Sam Brownback's line-item veto of the commission's funding. So Brownback wins. The arts lose.

In just five months, Kansas' new governor buried a state agency that had spent 45 years making grants, mentoring arts groups, promoting arts education and fostering a cultural identity for the state.

Never mind that lawmakers, targeted by thousands of e-mails and calls from Kansans, had voted to spare the commission — first when the Kansas Senate blocked Brownback's order abolishing the agency and then when the House and Senate approved a budget including \$689,000 in continued arts funding.

Or that the savings was minuscule in the context of the state's \$13.8 billion budget or even the \$47 million in more-than-expected tax revenue the state collected in May.

Brownback and groups such as Americans for Prosperity may take conservative pride in making Kansas the first state in the nation to eliminate its state arts agency and zero out state funding for the arts. Given that he doesn't believe in state-level funding for the arts, perhaps the governor is unconcerned about the risk that Kansas now will lose \$778,000 in federal funding and \$400,000 in Mid-America Arts Alliance grants.

But Brownback's actions on the arts — including his decision to sign the state budget and quietly veto the arts appropriation just as Kansans were off beginning the Memorial Day weekend — have been hugely disappointing for Kansans who love the arts and understand the reach and impact of the commission's grants making, especially in rural areas without a lot of arts activity. Would it have mattered if he'd campaigned last fall on his desire to kill off the Kansas Arts Commission? Perhaps not. But the heads-up would have been appreciated by many Republican voters, who've since been dismayed and baffled by his defiant refusal to heed public and legislative will on the issue.

The sequence of events also would seem to doom valued programs of the commission such as the Governor's Arts Awards, the Kansas Arts on Tour Roster, the state's poet laureate appointment and the Kansas Poetry Out Loud competition.

But Brownback claims that the state is starting "a good trend" nationally by defunding the arts. He has promised: "I'll be working to raise private monies for the arts in this state."

He's talking about the nonprofit Kansas Arts Foundation, which he set up in February and he contends can pick up where the state agency left off and achieve even more for the arts.

We'll see. Perhaps he and others will demonstrate that a private, non-profit effort can drum up funds in a way that assists arts organizations, rather than competes with them.

But at this point, it's hard to have much faith in Brownback's commitment to the arts.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press*

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address of the author.

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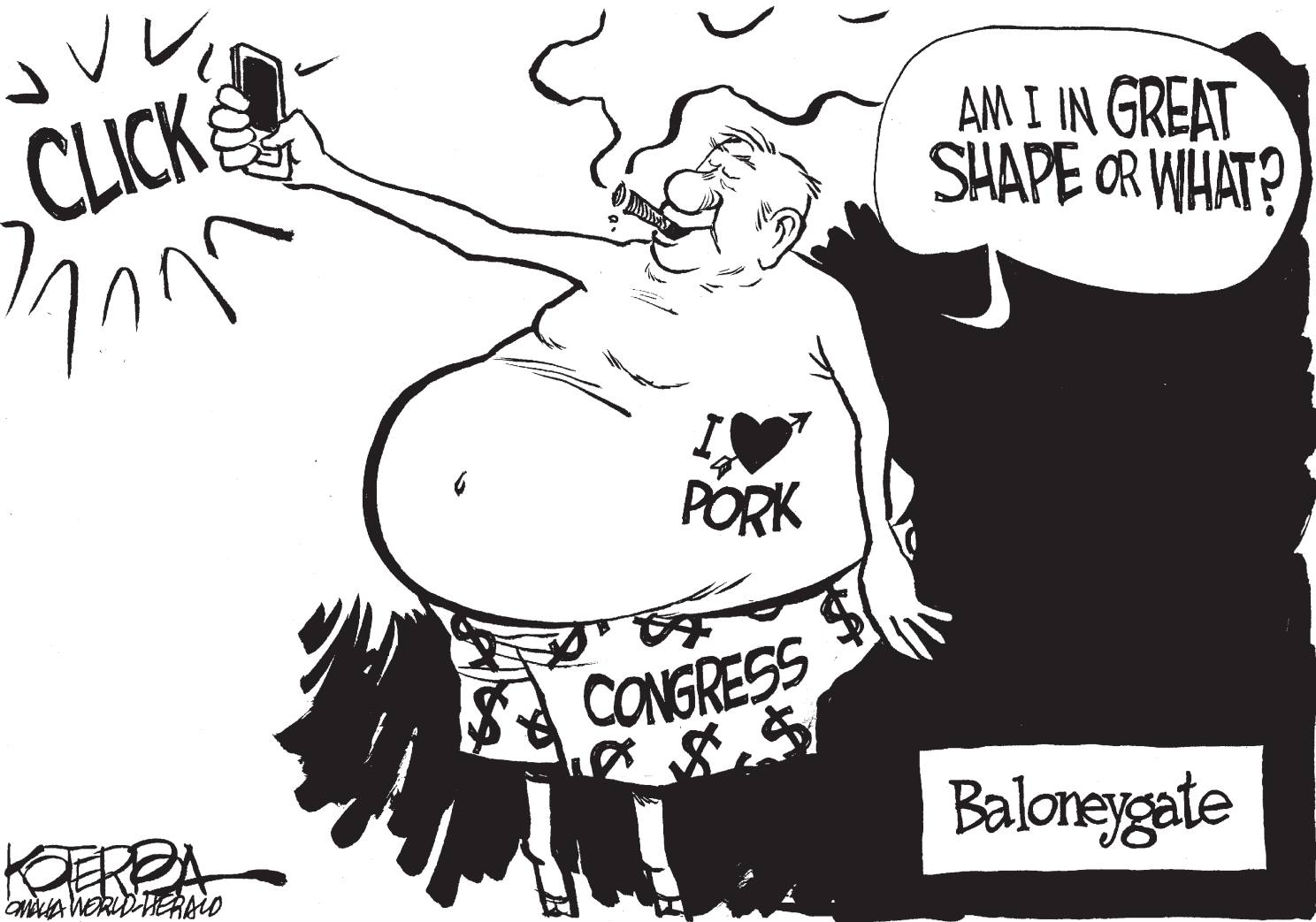
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Combat shoot a new adventure

I have often been told that I make the perfect tourist because I am curious and open to an adventure or two. When I heard about a combat shoot from Mike and Cindy at the C&M Gun Shop, I just had to check it out for myself.

I got the directions to the shooting range and on Sunday morning my husband and I started out to follow the directions. Lucky for me the directions were easy to follow and we soon found ourselves on a dirt road that didn't look as if it went anywhere. The last instructions read "the pasture gate will be open."

Well, there was a panel gate open and it did lead down into a pasture. The Angus grazing in the next pasture didn't pay us much mind as we went down a road that didn't look as if it went anywhere but to the bottom of the hill. We started making jokes about being led astray, but kept going anyway.

At the bottom of the hill we made a 90 degree right turn and could see other vehicles up ahead. We made a few more jokes about being lost forever in a Kansas pasture but soon reached the shooting range.

To my surprise, it was a well set up, target-rich range. There were many targets at each station and appeared to be quite challenging and interesting for any level of shooter. We



Sharon Friedlander

• Musings

were quickly greeted by Cindy and Mike, the hosts of the shoot, and invited to look around.

The competition was already underway so we settled in to do some watching. The course is set up to compete on a timed basis with penalties added for missed shots. There was quite a bit of good-natured ribbing going on and you could tell these competitors enjoyed the trash talk as well as the shoot. You could hear the conversations over the sounds of the pistols, shotguns or rifles being used.

The targets were either silhouettes or buildings with windows with targets in them to shoot at. Each station presented a different challenge and a different shooting position to be used. I particularly liked the targets that had to be set in motion by hitting the anchor and then had to be repeatedly hit to keep them in motion. Some of the targets resembled a carni-

val shooting range setup with falling targets. The competition shut down for lunch under the shade of the cook shack — still under construction. Everyone grabbed a sandwich and a chair and the talk ranged anywhere from the different manufacturers of weapons to the safety that needs to be taught when a new owner buys any type of weapon.

Everyone generally agreed that protecting yourself comes with responsibilities that need to be taken very seriously to keep everyone safe. I think more folks need to practice handling their weapons to keep themselves and their families safe.

This range and the activities offered there are worth the trip. This could be a great family activity, with picnic lunches and safety lessons being enjoyed. Mike and Cindy said the range is available for company parties and family reunions for the active set.

I enjoyed my trip to the shoot and look forward to an invite to the western shoots, complete with the costumes of the times.

Sharon Friedlander, publisher of the Colby Free Press, enjoys reading, hot rods and critters. Contact her at sfriedlander@nwkansas.com.

Challenges face college; future positive

Dear Community:

Thank you for all of the kind words and thoughtful gestures since I arrived in town back in April. Accepting the presidency at Colby Community College has been both a rewarding and humbling experience for me; rewarding, because of the new relationships and support, yet humbling, due to the challenges that everyone in education, including the college, currently faces.

Many of you have shared with me just how important the college is to the community and how it has transformed the lives of many. Our history is rich with anecdotes of past successes in which the college and community should take some measure of pride.

Just as important, though, we must be ever vigilant about our future. Where do we want the college to be in twenty years? We face serious challenges as we look ahead.

Enrollment is the first great challenge. The college has a diverse and vibrant student body. The reality is, however, that we have around 13 percent fewer students today than we did seven years ago. That is not surprising, given that during that same period the number of high schools graduates in our service area decreased by nearly 20 percent.

Nonetheless, we cannot settle for a continued retrenchment. Our goal must be to increase enrollment. To that end, we have worked locally to establish outreach programs to offer classes to high school students. We have employed a full-time recruiter in Colorado and have broadened our recruiting scope to the entire region. We have continued to maintain affordable tuition and fees in addition to generous student assistance packages. These strategies and others are part of our comprehensive plan as an institution to address enrollment shortfalls.

Another challenge before the college is aging facilities. Many of the buildings on the campus are in immediate need of renovation. Paint, fixtures, furniture — much of this has become dated and obsolete.

In an effort to be good stewards of money



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

entrusted to the college, we have often deferred maintenance rather than addressing it in a timely manner. In the short term, it didn't hurt too much; in the long term, it is costly. And not just in terms of money for repairs and improvements. Back to challenge number one — enrollment.

Without modern facilities and desirable amenities, it is difficult for the college to continue to attract students. Thus, it is a tribute to the determination and strength of our faculty and staff that we have continued to bring in such high-quality students and maintained enviable instructional programs. This issue of facilities must be addressed — and soon.

Our other challenge as the college moves forward, really the greatest, is funding and revenue, which is determined by enrollment and affects facilities and everything else. What I have found in my short time here is that we find ourselves in something of a vicious cycle.

In order to increase our funding, we need more students — but, to attract more students, we need to improve our facilities and increase or improve our course offerings and programs — and to improve facilities and programs, we need additional funds.

Sounds crazy, but it is true. And please understand, I am not complaining. Today's economic climate is tough on everyone. But, to try and match our budget to expected revenue for the coming year, we have already made some very difficult choices because we will not have the money to address all the college's needs. These cutbacks eventually weaken our com-

petitiveness — and make no mistake, institutions of higher education are in a competition for students locally and around the world.

For the future of the college to be as great as it could (and should) be, we must — and will — address enrollment, facilities and revenue. So if you ever wonder what concerns keep me up at night, now you know.

Don't think this is a "doom and gloom" scenario, though — far from it. With great challenge comes great opportunity. And all three of these challenges are ready to be conquered; it will simply take patience, time and most importantly, your support. My goal is for the college to be different and better.

Over the coming years, I would ask that you help when you can, as you can. When we do something right, let others know; if you have a concern about the college, let us know. In many ways, the success of Colby Community College is intertwined with the success of northwest Kansas. Our future is yet to be written. Where will we be in twenty years? My desire is that we're at least a little different — and a whole lot better!

Dr. Steven Vacik
President, Colby Community College

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