

Free Press Viewpoint

Don't forget; war isn't over yet

The death of a Kansas soldier in Afghanistan last Thursday should serve as a stark reminder for everyone that we still have one war left to finish.

Yes, Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are dead. The Taliban and Al Qaeda are shells of their former selves, and half the Arab countries that have sponsored terrorism are too busy fighting internally to worry about us, but our soldiers are still dying on foreign fields.

Since the invasion in 2001, more than 1,900 Americans and more than 1,000 allied troops have been killed. On Monday, three U.S. soldiers were killed by an explosion in the Ghazni province.

Yet, here at home it is all too easy to forget there is still a war going on.

This isn't World War II, where million-man armies are slug-ging it out on European fields and Pacific beaches. This isn't a war where we have rationed food and scrap metal drives.

This seems to be a war that slips from the public mind until a fresh wave of horror happens or some misstep brings interna-tional outrage. But for most, the war that is thousands of miles away affects them very little.

How many days go by where the war in Afghanistan doesn't make the front page of the major newspapers or the nightly news shows?

Even the war protests are long gone. In 2001, tens of thou-sands demonstrated in the U.S. and around the world. In 2002, 75,000 people marched in Washington D.C.

So how many people took to the streets last year? A few hundred in the U.S. and just over 1,000 in the United King-dom. These days the protests are against Wall Street fat cats or abortion doctors.

However, there may be signs of an end to the conflict. The president has committed to withdrawing U.S. troops by 2014.

The time to end this war is now. The American people obvi-ously feel they have bigger problems. We are all asking fun-damental questions about the economy, energy independence, the role of religion and the direction in which the country is heading.

But whether or not you believe the war in Afghanistan is still worth fighting or never was worth fighting, we should all make sure that we never forget the sacrifices made by our soldiers.

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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Time for kids to take to the field

It's that time of year – for graduation, for proms, for emptying out college dorms.

It's time for another long-term memory building event as well. It's field-trip season.

Kids and teachers have been off on ventures from circuses to career days.

The sheer variety of activities planned to get kids from 3 to 23 out of the classroom and off the campus boggles the mind.

Some go to the museum. Depending on where you live and what museums are handy, this can be a venture into regional history or into natural history, dinosaur bones or gold panning or fine art.

Chimney Rock, of Oregon Trail fame, was the destination of one field trip I went on as a long-suffering parent chaperone. The adventure included viewing graffiti over a hundred years old – every wagon train that passed the spot had some who etched names and dates, along with other tidbits, into the rock.

There are lots of reasons, both practical and educational, for scheduling field trips in the spring. Practical, real-life examples of class-room lessons can be seen. Fun can be had.

And last, but most definitely not least, teachers get a little relief from trying to keep all



Marian Ballard

- Collection Connections

those little angels-turned-spring-fever-mon-sters in their seats and on task.

Be that as it may, one field trip is worth a thousand spelling worksheets.

By example, one of my field trips took us to a railroad roundhouse. I think I was a kind-ergartner. I was awed, overwhelmed, half-amazed and half-terrified at the noise and sheer size of the locomotives.

Years later I was a sponsor when my kids had a field trip to the same place. My second visit was instructive, too. The locomotives were a little smaller, or so they seemed. The yards and roundhouse had been reconfigured some.

Other field trips either my children or I took include a frontier cavalry outpost, a farm fea-turing baby chicks, a cement factory, a power-

generating plant and a fish hatchery.

In an informal newsroom poll, favorite field trips included a museum, a dairy and an opera, not to mention a two-headed calf, a band trip and a psychiatric hospital.

For lasting lessons, a school field trip can't be beat.

Lessons in fossils and growing things.

Lessons in career opportunities and draw-backs.

Lessons in the effect of not using sunscreen along with eating six hot dogs and four ice cream sandwiches.

Most of all, there is the lesson that there is a great big wonderful world out there just wait-ing to be discovered. That's a lesson to encour-age all students, whatever their standing in the classroom.

That's a lesson that will stick long after the prom music or "Pomp and Circumstance" fades into memory.

Thanks, teachers and sponsors and hosts, for giving kids the memory of a lifetime on their field trips this spring.

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

Farmers and ranchers made voices heard

Agriculture is a way of life, and today – thanks to your help – that way of life will be easier to preserve for our children and grand-children.

Kansas farmers and ranchers voiced their concerns about the Department of Labor's proposed youth farm labor rule, and the department withdrew the proposal which would have fundamentally altered the future of ag-riculture in America. In the announcement, it was made clear that "this regulation will not be pursued for the duration of the Obama Ad-ministration."

This news speaks to the power of engaged citizens making their voices heard. Without the efforts of individuals like you, the depart-ment would have moved forward with their plans to regulate the relationship between par-ents and children on the farm. If this precedent had been set, virtually nothing would be off limits when it comes to government intrusion into our lives.

Throughout this process, I shared the con-cerns of Kansas farmers and ranchers with the department. The level of detail and specificity of Labor's proposed regulation made many of us wonder if those responsible for this rule had ever worked on a farm or ranch. For example, the rule would have prohibited youth under age 16 from participating in many common farm- and ranch-related tasks like cleaning out stalls with a shovel and wheelbarrow, rounding up cattle and even operating a battery-operated screwdriver.

The department also proposed banning youth from working on a farm or ranch jointly owned and operated by multiple family members – evidence of a complete lack of understanding of the structure of modern agriculture. And the Department's proposal would have effectively eliminated successful and critical farm safety programs like those run by cooperative exten-sion, 4-H and FFA. Today, more than 800,000 students participate in formal FAA agricultural



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

- Moran's Memo

education programs each year.

Ask any farmer or rancher about the im-portance of safety, and they would tell you that safety is their top concern. Local experts should be the ones conducting safety training programs to educate our nation's young peo-ple. And parents and communities should be allowed to look after the best interests of their families and citizens.

It was the Labor Department's responsibility to ensure a thorough vetting of a proposal with such far-reaching consequences. But from the time the department published the proposal in September 2011 – and set the public comment period during the fall harvest season – it continually turned a blind eye to the concerns of farmers and ranchers.

Together we were able to make certain your voices were heard. First, we successfully per-suaded U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis to grant an extension to the comment period. We then launched the grassroots effort www.Keep-FamiliesFarming.com with other members of Congress, to invite farmers and ranchers to ex-press their concerns about the rule. Because of our efforts, the department announced it would withdraw the parental exemption portion of the rule. Finally, I joined Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) in introducing legislation – the Preserv-ing America's Family Farm Act – to prevent the department from enacting the remaining portion of its controversial proposal.

Our efforts were successful. In total, the department received nearly 20,000 comments from Americans just like you – and the admin-

istration agreed to not pursue the regulation further.

This is a tremendous victory for farmers and ranchers across the country, but we still have plenty of work left to do. Our argument throughout this fight was that parents, grand-parents, neighbors, local vocational agricul-ture instructors and local 4-H and FFA teach-ers are in a better position to teach our youth how to be safe on the farm or ranch, than a bu-reaucrat in Washington. Now that we've won the argument, we must live up to the standard we've set.

I am pleased the department says it will now work with rural stakeholders – such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Na-tional Farmers Union, FFA and 4-H – to ensure the educational programs needed to promote safety among youth workers in agriculture are in place. This is exactly what we have been asking for all along, and I know those who know agriculture best look forward to finally being consulted.

In addition to working with the department, I will work with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to make certain the family farm remains a safe place to work – and the best place for our youth to learn essential life skills like hard work, personal responsibility and perseverance.

Thank you for coming together to protect and preserve our values for the next generation of American farmers and ranchers.

Jerry Moran of Hays is the junior U.S. sena-tor from Kansas. His com-mittee appointments include Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Af-fairs; Veterans' Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Com-mittee on Aging.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

