



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Electoral system relic of slow travel

The time has come to do away with the antiquated Electoral College.

In the history of the United States, there have been three times when the electoral college has produced a different result from the popular vote. In 1876, Democrat Samuel Tilden won the popular vote by more than 200,000, but Rutherford Hayes edged him out in the Electoral College 185-184. Kansas went for Hayes.

In 1888, Democratic incumbent Grover Cleveland, looking for a second term, won the popular vote by less than 100,000, but Republican Benjamin Harrison won a huge victory in the Electoral College, 233-168. Harrison carried states with large electoral counts such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois, even though Cleveland won every state south of Maryland.

Most people voting today will likely remember the 2000 election that saw Democrat Al Gore winning the popular vote by 543,000, but losing to Republican George W. Bush in the Electoral College 271-266. The election famously came down to a recount of Florida's 25 electoral votes.

In the days of horses and buggies and telegraphs, having an electoral college made sense. It was easier to count up the vote in each state and then send representatives in to a central location. But it's just not necessary anymore. The three examples above need not happen today, because of the speed at which we can count the vote and get that result out to the public.

State lines mean far less today than they did when the Constitution was being written. When the Electoral College was first conceived, the states had not long before been separate colonies with separate interests. We are far more united and far more closely intertwined in commerce, politics and every other aspect of life.

The Electoral College also ensures that some states — such as Kansas — are considered completely irrelevant by presidential campaigns. Money is spent in swing states and states with large electoral vote counts such as Pennsylvania, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin and Florida. With the electoral college, it is entirely possible to win only 11 states — California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Georgia, North Carolina and New Jersey — and still win the presidency because the Electoral College takes precedence over the popular vote.

This, in turn, can lower voter turnout in states that are predicted to be a landslide one way or the other as well as states with low electoral counts — both of which describe Kansas.

Simply taking the popular vote, which we can now do within a day thanks to the computerization of not only voting but of counting the votes, gives a more accurate representation of the wishes of the country.

This week's election was expected to be close and it was, with Barack Obama winning by just 2 percent of the popular vote, though that translates to almost 60 percent of the electoral votes. In future close elections, we could end up with yet another instance of the Electoral College taking one of the most important parts of our national identity out of the hands of the people. If there are any fans of democracy remaining among the populace and our legislators, they should push for the elimination of the Electoral College before the 2016 election. —Kevin Bottrell

### 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.

**Sharon Friedlander - Publisher**  
sfriedlander@nwkansas.com

#### NEWS

**Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter**  
colby.sports@nwkansas.com

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**  
mballard@nwkansas.com

**Sam Dieter - News Reporter**  
colby.editor@nwkansas.com

**Christina Beringer - Society Reporter**  
colby.society@nwkansas.com

#### ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansas.com

**Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative**  
kballard@nwkansas.com

**Janene Woodall - Advertising Representative**  
jwoodall@nwkansas.com

**Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design**  
khunter@nwkansas.com

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

**Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager**  
medmondson@nwkansas.com

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
support@nwkansas.com

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**  
Gary Stewart, Foreman

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Pressmen

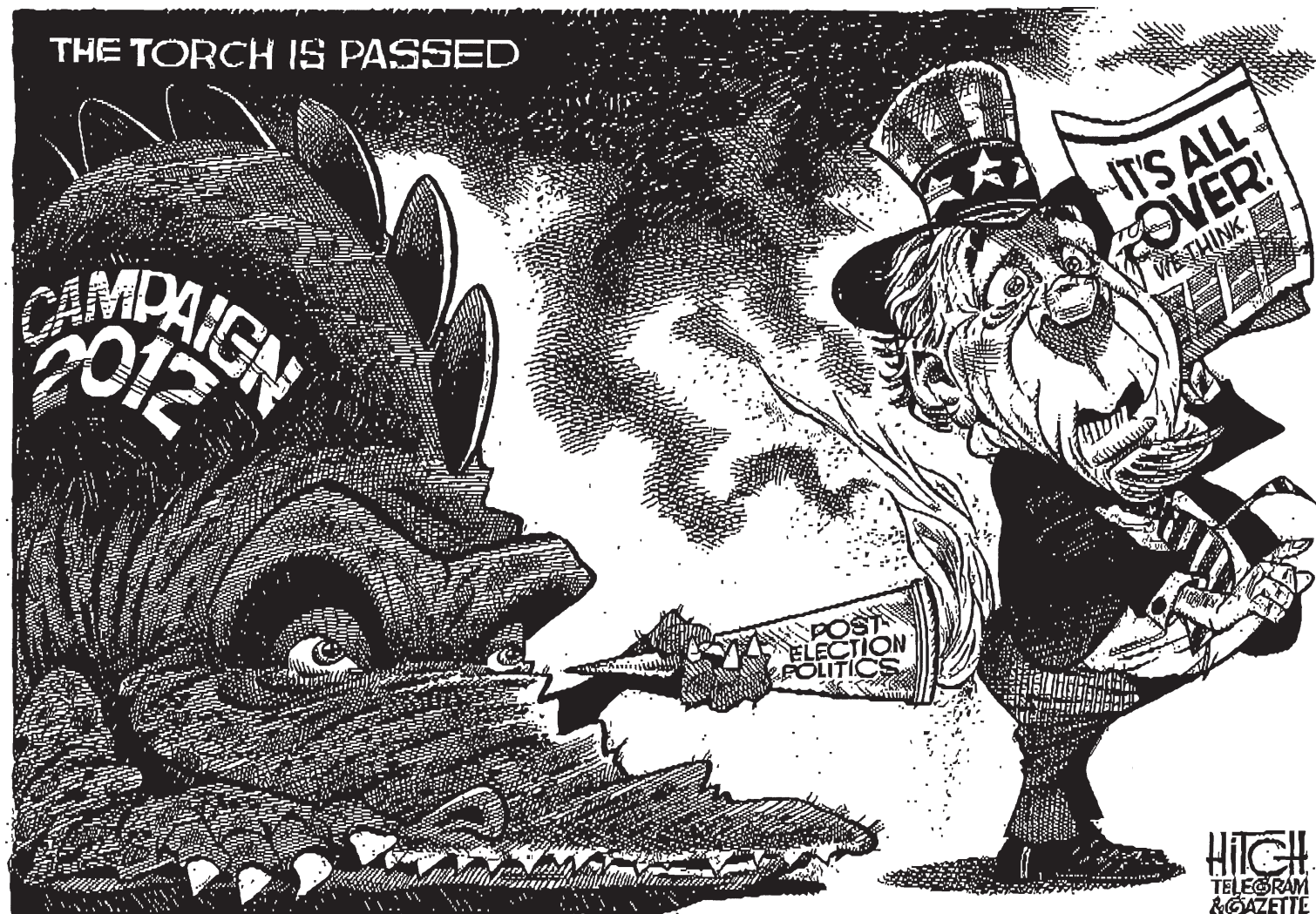
Kris McCool, Judy McKnight, Tracy Traxel,  
Sheri Arroyo, Mailing

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.



### Bird feeders popular with neighbor's cats

Those of you who read these pages know, probably, that Cynthia has taken to feeding the birds the last couple of years.

I find this hobby to be mildly amusing. Birds are interesting, and while she has bought a lot of seed and a whole forest of double-shepherd's-crook bird-feeder holders — empty ones dot our yards — it's on the whole less expensive than, say, shopping.

Even our cats seem to tolerate, or at best, ignore, her new pursuits. But to be fair, we lost our two "best" hunters this year. Of the two we have left, Jez is too paranoid to spend much time outside, and Molly mostly just sleeps these days.

One positive result of this new pursuit is that Cynthia writes more about the birds today than she does the cats. This has resulted in a 99 percent reduction in letters to the editor from angry old men who hate cats without loss of support for her column from women who adore them.

One group that has wildly endorsed her efforts should not be overlooked, however. That would be the two young cats that just moved into our neighborhood. One is black, the other a dark tabby. Both fancy themselves as mighty hunters.

At least, they've taken to lurking under the



**Steve Haynes**

• Along the Sappa

bird feeders enough that I'd say they, at least, have reclassified them as cat feeders.

There is no record of a kill for either of these two in the four or five days they've been hanging out in our yard, but that does not keep them from trying. Both seem fascinated, entranced, even, by the multitude of feathered friends that flock to the seed site.

So there they crouch, ready to pounce on the first sparrow that touches the ground or swoops a hair too low on his approach.

The bird population this time of year seems to be equally made up of assorted sparrows, red-wing blackbirds and a whole flock of Stellar's jays. And while the first two species might be a tasty snack for an admittedly well-fed cat, those jays are big. They'd put up a fight. And there is a mighty gang of them, half a dozen at least.

I keep waiting to see what will happen, but

so far, nary a pounce.

These might be nice cats. I'm not sure we'll ever get to know them, though, because they are not the type to just come up and purr at strangers, even while hanging out in your yard for hours on end.

They're pretty little things, to be sure, but hunters? We'll see.

They don't seem to be giving up the hunt, anyway. Maybe for them, it's more the thought of birds than the catching.

I know their presence has cut down on the bird-seed bill, because the flock has gotten mighty careful about when and where they peck. They hang out in flocks, 20 or 30 sparrows and finches, half a dozen jays, whole families of redwings. Which makes this hobby all that much cheaper, and makes me happier, and watching the cats watching the birds is kinda entertaining in its own way.

I'm just not sure how this story ends. Badly for some sparrow, I'm sure, but you never know. Those jays might just get a cat.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

### Hunting is a privilege not to abuse

This weekend, the hills, fields and woods will once again awaken to the sound of booming shotguns as hunters and their dogs swarm the countryside searching for pheasants, quail, ducks and other wildlife.

It goes without saying that Kansas farms and ranches have always been a handy, ready-to-use outlet for urban dwellers in search of recreational hunting. On opening day of the upland game season, the Interstate and U.S. highways will carry a steady stream of pickups, sport-utilities and cars headed for central and western Kansas.

If you're one of these hunters who plans to hunt on private land, remember one key word when your thoughts turn toward hunting. This word is "consideration." Translated, it means thoughtful and sympathetic regard.

In this country, wildlife belongs to the people, but the owners have the right to say who goes on their land. If you are interested in hunting, make arrangements before you go.

Don't wait until the day you plan to hunt someone's land and then pound on their door at 6 a.m. Once you've secured permission, here are some suggestions to follow that will ensure a lasting relationship between you and the landowner.

Agree on who, and how many, will hunt on the land. Specify number and furnish names.



**John Schlageck**

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

Talk about specific times and dates you plan to hunt.

Phone each and every time before you plan to hunt, and let the landowner know your intentions. The landowner may have forgotten about your original conversation. It's just common courtesy to say hello before hunting and ask again for the opportunity — or privilege, as I consider it — to hunt on someone's property.

Determine exactly where on the land you have permission to hunt. Some areas may be off-limits because of livestock or crops.

Always, and I can't stress this enough, leave gates the way you find them. If they are open, leave them that way. If they are closed, shut them after you pass through.

If you ever leave a gate open and a farmer's cow herd gets out of the pasture, "Katie bar the door." You'll never be invited back.

Once you've enjoyed a successful hunt, stop by to thank the landowner for his generosity.

Offer to share the game you bag.

After the season ends, write a note expressing your appreciation for the opportunity to hunt. You might also find out what the landowner and his/her family enjoys eating or drinking and drop by later with a gift.

Leasing of land by the hunter from the landowner is becoming more popular in Kansas. Such agreements allow hunters a guaranteed hunting site. It also provides the landowner income to recoup some of the investment he needs to leave habitat suitable for wildlife to survive and prosper.

If you enter into such a lease, make sure it is written and includes all provisions both parties deem necessary. This should include a clause allowing the landowner and his or her family to hunt on the land.

Remember that the hunter and landowner should always discuss the terms of the hunt before hunting begins. This is important. And hunters, never forget you are a guest and it is a privilege to hunt on the owner's land.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

### 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**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. 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

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

