



Other Viewpoints

State gun battle is 'silly legislation'

No one should make a rash decision in the heat of the battle. Yet that is exactly what gun enthusiasts in the state have done with the Legislature's consideration of a measure that would attempt to override federal laws regulating guns.

Some think the action is just a statement by lawmakers — telling the federal government to stay out of the state's business. Yet if it is just a statement, it is a ridiculous waste of legislative time. That shouldn't surprise us.

Kansas is considering a measure to assure that Kansas-made guns which remain in the state avoid congressional oversight. Incredibly, the bill has 50 sponsors, including Rep. Jan Pauls, D-Hutchinson. What a waste of time for those legislators as education issues and spending cuts loom over the Statehouse.

Could lawmakers find a better use of their time rather than trying to exempt Kansas-made guns from federal oversight?

The Second Amendment rears its head once again while the Newtown, Conn., shooting remains fresh in the minds of the nation.

The Second Amendment, said Rep. Kyle Hoffman, R-Coldwater, is "a pretty fundamental freedom that we have in the United States."

The more important question, aside from lawmakers wasting their time on silly legislation, though, is why the need for exempting Kansas-made guns from congressional oversight? Gun owners who have nothing to hide from the feds have no fears. They own the guns legally and face no retribution.

The ones to question are the gun owners who decide to hide their firearms from the government. If they're on the up-and-up, their gun ownership ought to be an open book.

The Second Amendment gives us the privilege to bear arms but not the right to abate congressional oversight.

— *The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press*

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

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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

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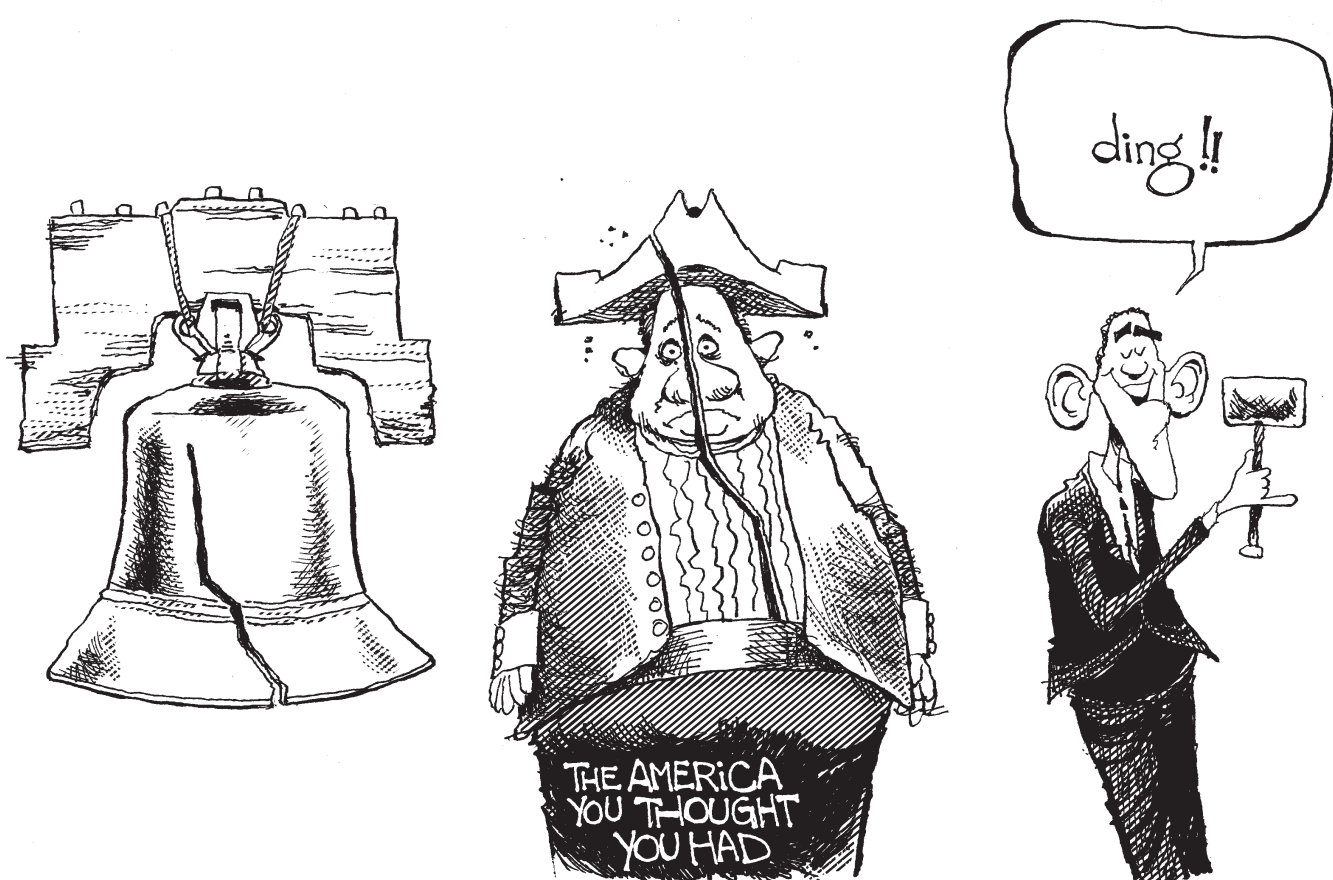
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Perceptions feed off extremists

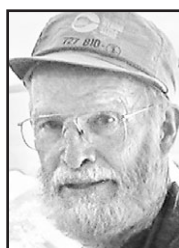
A cartoon in the Monday, Feb. 11, *Salina Journal* inspired this observation.

Some people think our national elections are a rat race. I don't think so. If the last election had been, the Republicans would have won. Our state election might fall a little closer to that kind of race. It's a matter of perception and priorities isn't it? I'm, obviously, a Democrat.

No, I don't think Republicans are rats!

But, the analogy seems to work for me. Rats under the farmer's granary are known for their indiscriminate destruction of the farmer's efforts to save his business and continue the next year. In the process, they fare sumptuously and hope the farmer will replenish the store room for next year's gluttonous waste. Rats don't care who plants or harvests. They just want access to the spoils — and the leaky floor gives them that.

The truth is, both parties are accusing one another of destroying the granary. There are legitimate examples to draw that conclusion. Perhaps a better analogy would include starlings with the rats. The Democrats think the Republicans are starlings getting under the rafters and stealing off the top. The Republicans think the Democrats are rats getting under the floor and stealing off the bottom.



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

Extremism is running amuck in both parties. Extremists usually yell the loudest. What we need is for the majority, who are moderates, to become a little more vocal and involved in demanding equality for all. We need to fix both the top and the bottom.

A little pragmatism and honest evaluation of where we are and how we got here might be in order. Our nation has not been stagnant for these 200-plus years. We've had ups and downs and bitterly fought campaigns fraught with accusations as to who should get credit for the ups and who should be charged with causing the downs. Who gained from the ups and who lost in the downs.

State's rights and individual rights have been pitted against federal responsibility for the protection of the unity of the states and society. Religion and morality have always

been a tool for persuasion of people. Wealth and social prestige has held the winning hand too many times. The participants in the Constitutional Convention that gave us our national Constitution dealt with all these factors. They produced a document that pretty well protects the interests of all.

We didn't get into the economic situation we faced in 2008 purely from the Bush administration's policies. We aren't presently where we are solely on Obama's four years. And, we aren't going to find utopia in the next four, either.

We will most likely see the pendulum of political solutions swing back and forth for the duration of our existence as a nation. When that pendulum stops swinging, we will be in big trouble. It sometimes hangs to the left or to the right for a little too long, but it has always gotten back into rhythm.

Clocks work. What are our grandkids going to use for an illustration? Digital timing devices don't have a visible pendulum.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired 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 rwinc@cheerful.com.

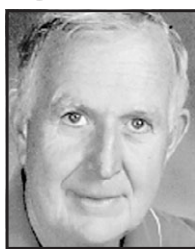
Expanding Medicaid a hot topic

Expanding Medicaid coverage in Kansas is another hot topic for the Legislature this year. The federal government has indicated they will cover 100 percent of the expansion costs for the first few years, then reduce its participation to 90 percent.

What the governor and Legislature are unsure of is whether the feds will be able to keep this commitment to the states.

I am aware of how once Kansas accepts federal money, how tied we become to it, and how much paperwork is required to conform to federal standards. At the same time, the federal government begins to address our national debt and the unfunded liabilities of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. As your representative, I have an obligation to ensure our state has the ability to cover the costs of this expansion now and in the future.

I understand many Kansans are struggling in these tough economic times, and many simply lack the income to cover the high costs of medical care. I have heard from the Kansas Hospital Association, which would like to see approval of Medicaid expansion. The hospitals are concerned about lower health-care reimbursement from the federal government and the "desired outcomes" part of the Affordable Care Act resulting in fewer Medicaid patients visiting the emergency room because of ex-



Ward Cassidy

• This week in Topeka

panded health insurance coverage.

I have not yet seen the budget numbers or forecasts on the costs of expanding Medicaid. Knowing the facts and figures will make the discussion more accurate.

All current Medicaid recipients were enrolled in the new KanCare program effective Jan. 1. In an earlier article, I listed the three main managed-care organizations for Kansas. The first problem is that as of Jan. 1, only 10 percent of those receiving services have their card. This had an immediate effect on pharmacies, as patients had no way to get prescriptions. Also, pharmacists found that several of the prescriptions cost them more than the state would pay. It is frustrating that we would start a program without all the pieces in place.

There has been a great deal of effort to ensure continuity of care, but it is falling short. There is a wealth of information for anyone who's interested at www.KanCare.Ks.gov.

There is also a customer service number at (866) 305-5147. If all else fails, please contact me.

Two KanCare educational meetings are set for 1 to 3 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the City Limits Convention Center, Otterbourne Room, 2227 South Range in Colby.

Rep. Ward Cassidy of St. Francis represents the 120th District in the Kansas House of Representatives, covering the northwest part of Thomas County (including Colby), plus Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman and Wallace counties. This is his second term in the Legislature, and he is chair of the Education Budget Committee and vice chair of the Education Committee. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

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 and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters.

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