

## Other Viewpoints

### Term limits exist in the voting booth

As often is the case when people gather to talk about government, the subject of term limits comes up, as it did at the most recent Salina Area Chamber of Commerce legislative forum. In fact, the first question Salina-area legislators got was from someone wanting to know legislators' position on term limits. Rep. Steven Johnson, R-Assaria, who said he's willing to discuss term limits, noted that there is a large freshman class in this year's Legislature, 55 new members. That's out of 125 members in the House, a more than 42 percent change. That's on top of the 35 new members in the 2011 class and 20 in 2009. A lack of turnover doesn't seem to be a problem. Johnson also noted that it was helpful when he first got in the Legislature in 2011 to have a longtime member he could turn to, to lend perspective and explanation on legislation. Rep. J.R. Claeys, who is part of this year's freshman class, said he'd co-sponsored a House bill to limit House terms to 12 years. Claeys said Kansas needs a "citizen Legislature." "I think we need people who serve and then go back home," Claeys said. As for tapping into legislative experience, those people "are a phone call away."

Sen. Tom Arpke, R-Salina, who's in the first year of his four-year term and was part of the House freshman class of 2011, said he doesn't see term limits as a concern, although he did say he didn't know if he'd run again. Another freshman House member, Rep. Diana Dierks, R-Salina, said the number of years a person serves should be settled at the ballot box. Like Johnson, she appreciates having experienced politicians she can turn to for help. Like many others, we, too, have our frustrations with the Legislature, but we don't think term limits are the answer. These are the people we elected. If we kicked all of them out today and had another election tomorrow, our guess is that their replacements would look almost exactly like the ones we'd booted. In reality, we've always had term limits. As Dierks said, it's called the ballot box. At least at the state level, we don't need anything else.

— The Salina Journal, via the Associated Press

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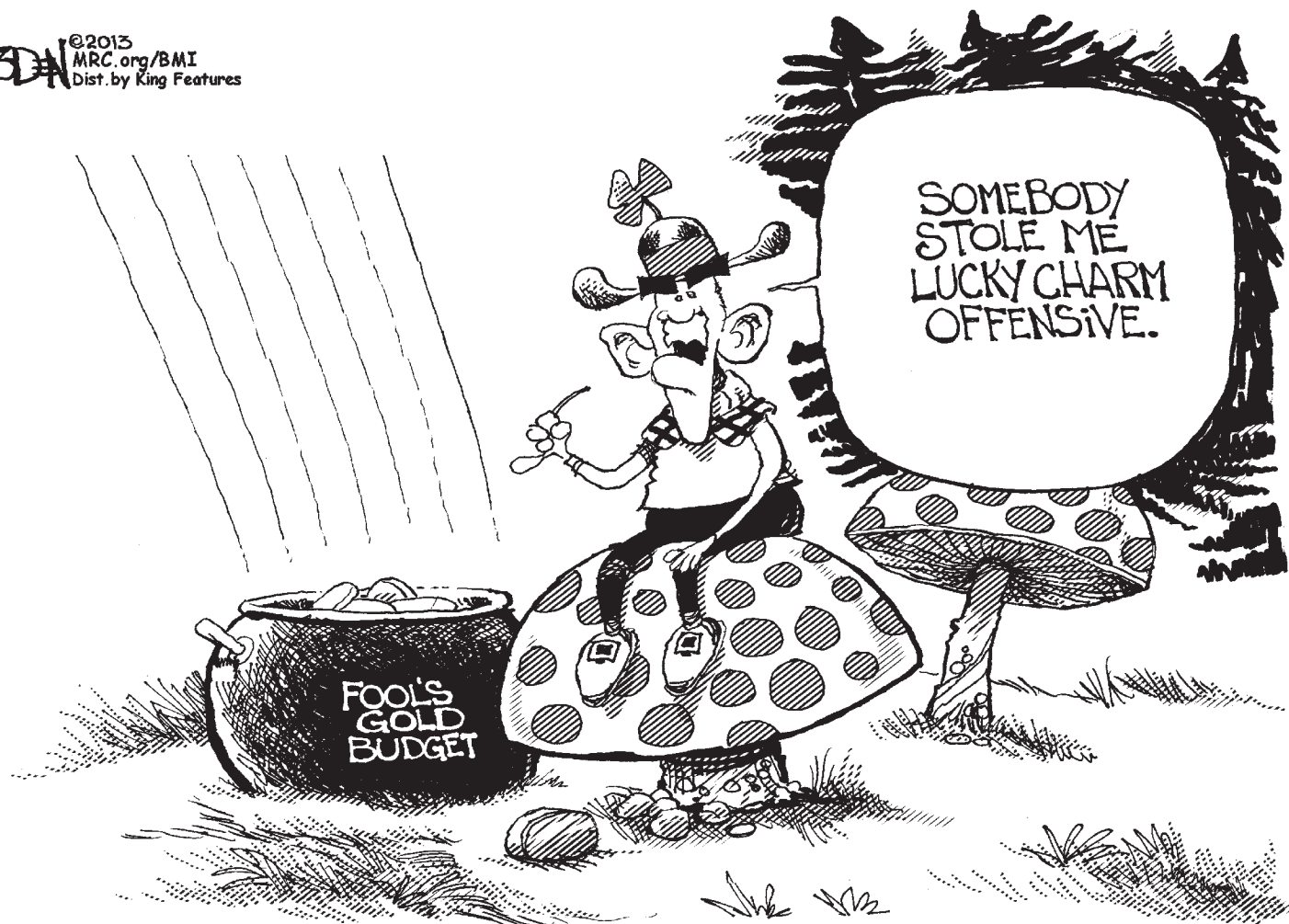
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### Bills on firearms pass House

Early this session, I had the opportunity to be a co-sponsor of House Bill 2199, the Second Amendment Protection Act. This bill would exclude from federal regulation any personal firearm, firearm accessory or ammunition manufactured commercially or privately and owned in Kansas.

As long as any such firearm, accessory or ammunition remained in Kansas, the bill would provide that it would not be subject to any federal law, regulation or authority. Also, the bill would prevent any federal agent or contracted employee, any state employee or any local authority from enforcing any federal regulation or law governing a personal firearm, accessory or ammunition manufactured and owned in Kansas, provided it remained within the state.

This bill essentially reaffirms the Second Amendment, which guarantee the right of Kansans to keep and bear arms. The bill also says that because the Constitution does not grant the federal government authority in this area, any leeway to determine how the Second Amendment right is exercised is the preroga-



#### Ward Cassidy

• This week in Topeka

...tive of the state. Thus, any attempts by the federal government to regulate the use of firearms manufactured and owned in Kansas would be considered unenforceable by the state.

The bill passed the House by a vote of 94 to 29. It headed to the Senate for further consideration. My best guess is this will become law in Kansas.

HB 2052 would establish a uniform state law addressing unlawful discharge of a firearm within or into a city. This bill would unify the law for all Kansans, ensuring them the ability to use a firearm lawfully to defend themselves or others anywhere in the state. It passed 212 to 2.

The third bill passing the House this week

was an addition to the Concealed Carry Act which ensures Kansans have the right to protect themselves in public places where security is not provided. I believe that placing a sign saying guns are not allowed is not a deterrent and does not provide the public with a safe environment. I also argued that citizens who have gone out of their way to obtain training from a licensed individual, as well as a background check by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, are not the people who shoot up schools and movie theaters.

This bill passed the House 84 to 38, and I voted for it.

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.

### Tech school general courses miss boat

Not have enough credit hours to teach a subject in high school? Apply to a Kansas tech school and teach the college course!

Yes, some Kansas tech schools have advertised for instructors of general education courses; the minimum requirement is a bachelor's degree with 24 credit hours of coursework in the subject taught. This upside-down rule — permitting a teacher to teach in tech schools who would not have the content background to teach in high school — is a result of a poorly-thought-out action by the Kansas Board of Regents in 2005.

There were plenty of folks asleep at the wheel on that decision: Kansas regents, university administrators and Kansas university faculty. In a bad decision on the minimal credentials needed to teach concurrent enrollment courses in high school, they opened the barn door and let rigor and quality gallop away.

Kansas technical schools are excellent at providing technical education. They have the expertise to offer technical courses across a range of areas from auto mechanics to nursing assistants. But they do not have full-time faculty on deck to offer academic courses.

One key issue is faculty qualifications and involvement in academics. Regent's universities require faculty with terminal degrees to teach in academic programs. Faculty must pass six years of annual inspection by colleagues to demonstrate they know and can teach their subject. They must be active in their discipline and attend conferences to keep up on new de-



#### John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

velopments in their field. They must understand what they teach at a level deeper than their students in order to teach accurately and to help advanced students go further in discussions.

Tech schools have technical specialists. They are an important route for many Kansas high school graduates pursuing career and technical training. And Kansas has a new technical training initiative. But tech schools lack an academic faculty to evaluate academic colleagues. Nor do they provide the intellectual environment that educates students for non-technical academic careers. Hiring part-time general education teachers (hire-a-profs) is done by administrators — no peer evaluation.

Some accreditors are cracking down. Cheap-and-quick courses are popping up under the push to enroll every student with a heartbeat and a credit card. The Nov. 16 Chronicle of Higher Education describes a short three-credit hour course offered by Western Oklahoma University to ball players who have fallen below their required coursework. Their title says it all: "Need 3 Quick Credits to Play Ball? Call

Western Oklahoma." Their course is offered in just two weeks.

But Western Oklahoma's accrediting agency took notice. "Two weeks is pushing it if you're talking about three semester credits. In two weeks, I would have a lot of doubt."

So just think what that accreditor would think about one Kansas tech school that is offering a three-credit hour course, not in two full weeks, but in just two weekends.

The president of Western Oklahoma defended his two-week course by saying: "We are not a course mill. Course mills offer any classes regardless of faculty credential."

Some Kansas tech school academic courses meet this definition of "course mill." They fail both the teacher credential test and the course duration test.

What is being lost is the integrity of Kansas higher education. We are cheapening any resulting Kansas credentials.

Kansas tech schools are an excellent place to get a technical education. They have good technical teachers.

But Kansas universities are not in the business of training auto mechanics.

And Kansas tech schools should not be in the business of teaching academic university courses.

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

