

Other Viewpoints

Keep options open on Medicaid change

Good for Senate President Susan Wagle, R-Wichita, for being open to expanding Medicaid in Kansas. The rest of the Legislature and Gov. Sam Brownback should be, too.

During a debate on an amendment to require legislative approval for any effort to expand Medicaid, Wagle said she supported the amendment (which passed), but not because she was trying to block expansion.

"We need to remain flexible here in this state and find our own Kansas-based solutions," Wagle later told the *Topeka Capital-Journal*. "If that means drawing down some of those federal funds, we need to be flexible in how we draw them down."

That's smart. A study by the Kansas Hospital Association concluded that expansion would enable more than 150,000 Kansans to get needed insurance. It also would inject more than \$3 billion into the state's economy and create 4,000 jobs over the next seven years. What's more, expansion could save the state more money than it costs.

Conversely, not expanding Medicaid would be a major financial blow to the state's hospitals. That's because the Affordable Care Act reduces payments to help hospitals that serve low-income uninsured patients (in expectation that many of these patients would be joining Medicaid). Losing this funding could put some small hospitals out of business.

Wagle is interested in crafting more of a free-market approach to expansion. She has cited Arkansas, which has received preliminary approval to use federal Medicaid money to help low-income residents pay premiums for private insurance (an idea that is similar to the Obamacare insurance marketplace).

"One thing we need to do is keep doors open, keep talking and keep trying to find Kansas solutions," she said.

Wagle's pragmatism isn't out of character. In 2008, she supported an expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program in Kansas. She called the program a "tried-and-true program" and noted that the federal government would pick up most of the cost of expansion.

That's even more the case now, as the federal government will cover the full cost of this expansion until 2016, and nearly all the cost afterward.

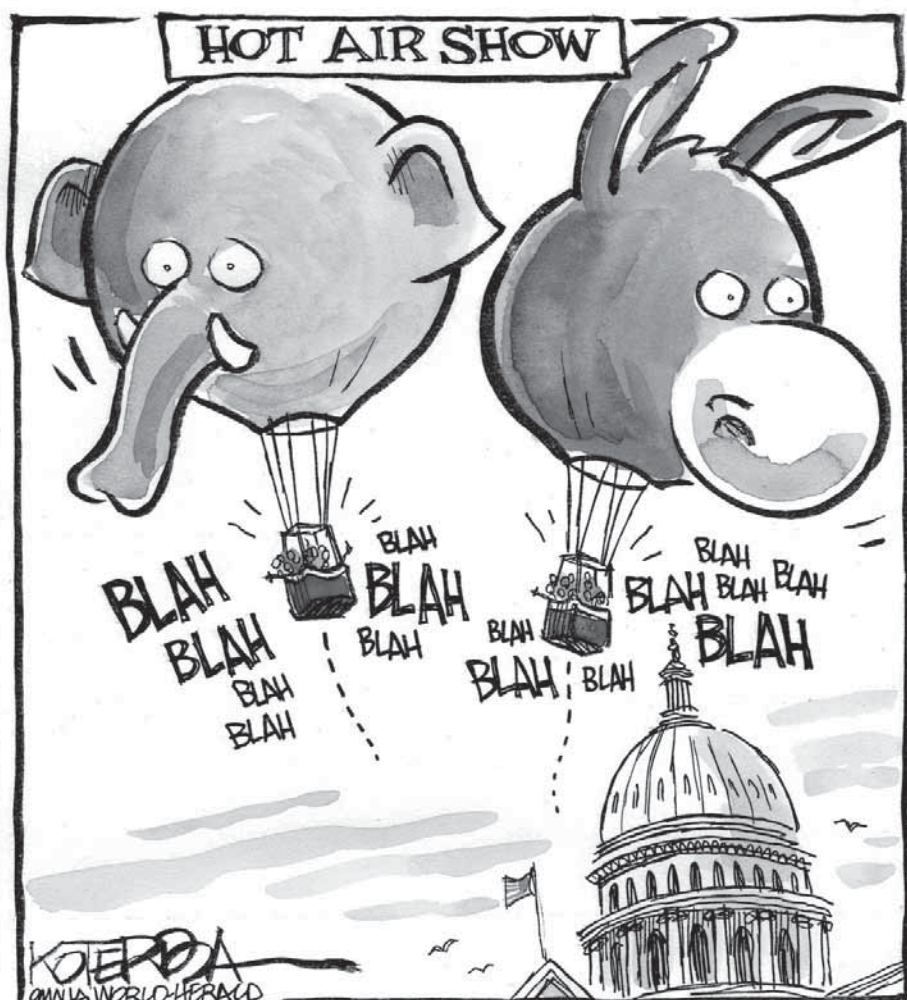
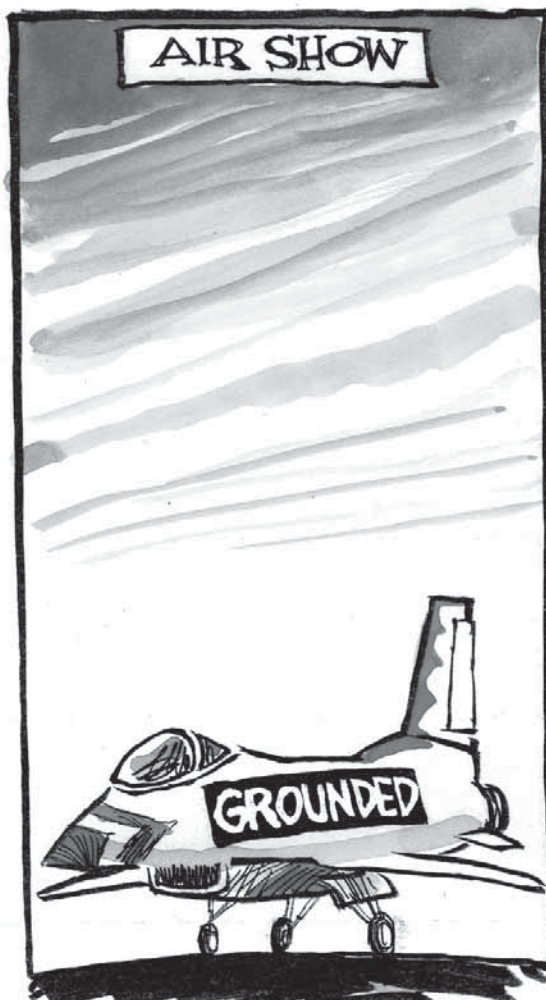
Wagle also has noted that if Kansas doesn't opt in to Medicaid expansion, other states that do will benefit from Kansans' tax dollars.

"Kansas is losing out, and it does affect our health care industry and it does affect the quality of our services," she told the *Lawrence Journal-World*.

For his part, Brownback remains noncommittal, even as more than half a dozen GOP governors recently have announced they are expanding Medicaid in their states.

"We're open on it," Brownback said. "We're very concerned about the long-term costs. I want to listen to the Legislature." He should start by listening to Wagle.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*



You think criminals follow gun laws?

Guns. It is only a single short word, but it can create more conversation than any other right now.

It is the kind of word that can be divisive or uniting, depending on your opinions.

In the light of the killings in Connecticut, lawmakers are scrambling to find new ways to make law-abiding citizens jump through more hoops to own a firearm. Everyone seems to want to be seen as protecting the public from the unseen risk of gun violence.

Some brave souls have actually said out loud that we can't enforce the laws already on the books, so adding more will accomplish little except for some chest thumping and bragging rights.

I guess I have gotten tired of lawmakers ignoring the obvious. I have a sign on my office door that says, "You actually think that criminals will obey gun control laws? You're a special kind of stupid, aren't you?"

Now maybe that is a little harsh, but still true. If someone intends to hurt others, that person will find a weapon. In China, there have been several incidents of people going into schools and slashing the throats of children with kitchen knives. There have been incidents of vehicles used to run over victims.

A while back, we had a visit from Barry Grissom, U.S. attorney for the state of Kansas. He said his office can make sure felons are prosecuted to the fullest extent for possessing a weapon. This is actually working the laws that are already on the books and involves



Sharon Friedlander

• Musings

criminals and not law-abiding citizens. This is almost a radical idea by today's standards. It is heartening to know that there is actually some movement in making criminals pay for their crimes.

Our forefathers wrote our Constitution based on their experiences with an oppressive government taking their freedoms. Let's not forget those lessons. Will my senator or representative be there in the middle of the night when an intruder breaks into my neighbor's house? Will they protect that family from harm? You and I both know the answer to that question.

Do you really think that limiting the number of bullets in a clip will slow down someone intent on doing great harm? Chances are that they have been practicing changing clips and can do it in a few seconds. If they choose to use another weapon, they will know how to use it to do the most damage. They will have a plan; we won't. Rock, arrow, bullet, car, knife — whatever the weapon of choice, they will be prepared.

Why are our national legislators so blind to the obvious?

Why are legislators wasting time writing useless and unenforceable laws when our country is in trouble from uncontrolled spending and wasteful legislation? Could they not accomplish more if they worked on problems that can be solved?

Stop posturing and pandering and get to work! My taxes are being wasted, and I don't like it one bit. I don't expect things to change overnight, but they will never change if we don't get busy trying to get waste under control. I have to live within my income and I expect my government to do the same. No more bridges to nowhere, and no more \$600 hammers. I don't care if you are Republican, Democrat, independent or any other affiliation — remember that first you are an American.

Headline-grabbing legislators want to give the appearance of having done something to stem the violence. Why don't we let our law-enforcement agencies handle that like they are trained to do. Let the courts enforce the laws on the books. This will free up our legislators to come up with a workable budget and get our country back on track.

Kansas legislators have tried to be sensible about new gun legislation. They are on guard against federal laws telling Kansans what they can do. Once again it makes me glad I live in Kansas.

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

Adequate security needed on campuses

To the Editor:

I am writing once again in response to an opinion article printed in the Wednesday, April 4, issue of the *Colby Free Press*. This article came from *The Hutchinson News* and was obtained from the Associated Press.

Apparently, some people still are not up to speed on their American history and completely miss the original purpose of the Second Amendment. Stopping mass violence, or even violence, is not an easy thing. It may even be impossible. Liberals are now criticizing Kansas lawmakers for recent passage of two pro-gun bills. They say that more guns on campus is not a solution.

From accounts of recent mass violence, it is clear that each instance occurred in a place where there was no security. By providing security in places criminals see as targets, we are simply removing that place from their target list. We are not talking about arming teenagers to patrol college campuses. We are talking about training intelligent law-abiding people in the responsible, safe and legal carrying and use of firearms to prevent attacks.



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

The only way "gun control" measures currently proposed will stop these attacks is by universal disarmament. I don't need to be a professor to understand what that means. The plain simple truth is criminals will not comply.

I applaud the state of Kansas for taking reasonable, logical measures to increase the safety of our citizens. Until the federal government steps up and enforces the laws already written, they have no business passing new ones.

It has been illegal for citizens to own fully automatic firearms since the 1960s. It has been illegal for any citizen, dealer or not, to sell or give a firearm to a known felon since

1968. According to our federal government, in 2010, there were 14,409,616 applications to purchase firearms. Of those, 72,659 were denied by the FBI. And of those, only 62 cases were referred for prosecution, resulting in just 13 convictions. I am not a rocket scientist, but by my calculations, until this problem is fixed and enforced, don't bring new laws affecting law-abiding citizens.

Thomas Benson, Colby

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