

Other Viewpoints

Legislators' actions sure are 'suspicious'

The Kansas Legislature recently passed a measure to allow drug testing of welfare and unemployment recipients – and even lawmakers – with reasonable suspicion of drug use.

Qualifying suspicions include, but are not limited to, a questionable demeanor, missed meetings, police records or failing a drug test with a potential employer. If that's the case, there's little time to waste before we start collecting urine samples from members of the Kansas Legislature.

For example, this session legislators considered a tax exemption that would benefit for-profit health clubs, fighting for their lives against non-profit YMCAs and community-sponsored recreation centers; a sustained effort to undo an 80-year-old Kansas law protecting Kansas family-owned farms, removing local control from decisions about out-of-state operations; a bill that would authorize the quarantine of those with HIV; a firearms protection law that makes it a crime for federal agents to venture into Kansas to enforce federal gun laws; and a budget that could cut the state income tax further, breaking a promise to Kansans to sunset a portion of the sales tax, raids other state agency funds and undoubtedly would lead to property tax increases on farmers and households – who will carry the burden thanks to the long line of businesses that will enjoy property, income and sales tax breaks.

There's not much a poor single mother could do to create a more questionable demeanor than the 2013 Legislature.

And in what should not be a surprise to anyone, the one redeeming quality of this bill – a component to provide treatment for those who fail state-required drug testing – has been stricken from the legislation.

Senate Vice President Jeff King, R-Independence, said when he introduced the bill that it wasn't punitive but instead would help drug-addicted Kansans receive the help they need. By striking the one component that could have both helped Kansans and reduced the number of potential drug users on public assistance, the legislation is now purely punitive.

In all, the legislation is expected to save the state \$1.1 million by booting drug users off welfare, but it also is expected to cost nearly the same amount in the first year – followed by \$180,000 in annual savings to Kansans.

Legislators had an opportunity to find some balance on this idea. They could've satisfied those who fear state dollars are being used to feed drug addiction while simultaneously helping drug users become self-sustaining taxpayers. Instead, lawmakers again chose to expand state government with a punitive law – all to save roughly .0000125 percent of the entire state budget.

As of Wednesday, the bill was awaiting the signature of the governor, who has not publicly shared his thoughts on the legislation.

– The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters.

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
friedlander@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

Heather Alwin - Society Editor
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard@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

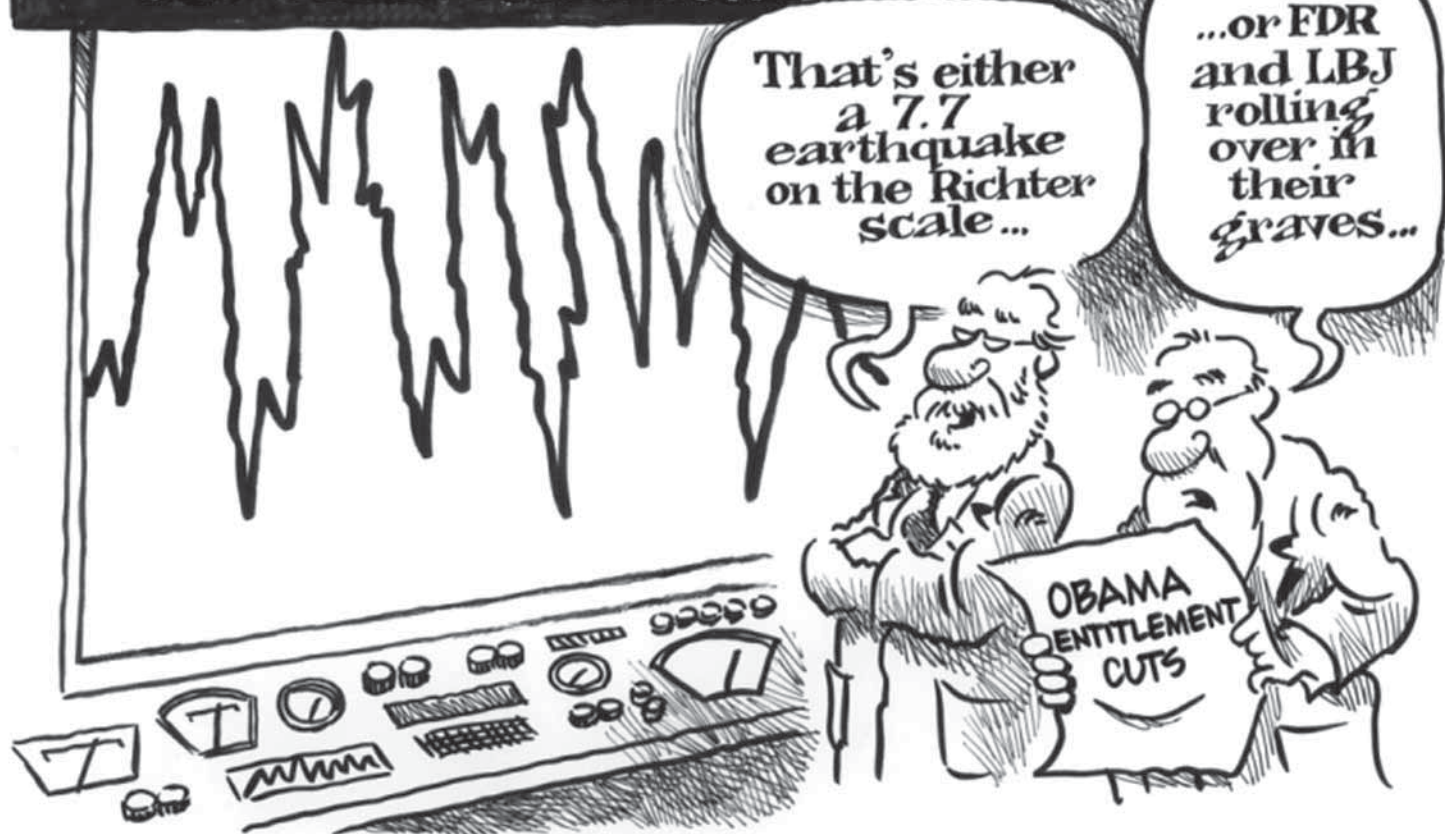
THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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.

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Season ends for starting sports reporter

It's just a few days before I pack up my life here in Colby and move to Greeley, Colo., yet it still feels like business as usual.

I'm still building pages four mornings a week and after deadline, I go through my e-mail and get articles ready for the next paper.

In fact, it was definitely "business as usual" last week as I scrambled to get everything ready for the Spring Sports section. I made the last-minute phone calls and wrote the last-minute e-mails to tie up the loose ends, and thanks to help from many people, especially the coaches, I was able to get the section sent for printing on time.

It's hard to think that on Friday, after we build the paper and I write articles for Monday's paper, I'll be packing up my desk and leaving the Colby Free Press behind.

It has been quite a journey these past two years. In 2011, I moved here right out of college (actually I still had to finish six credits when I began working here before I got my diploma!) and started my career.

I was so nervous about learning the job and was hoping I wouldn't screw up too badly. But in no time at all, I had figured it out and my life became defined by seasons.

During the fall, my job was all about foot-



Kayla Cornett

• The Eternal Pessimist

ball, volleyball, cross country, girls golf and girls tennis; the winter season was filled with lots of wrestling and boys and girls basketball and some college indoor track; the spring brought baseball, softball, boys and girls track, boys golf and boys tennis; and the summer was usually pretty slow, with mainly recreational baseball and softball leagues, the Colby Swim Club and a few boys baseball leagues.

Despite all of the activity from season to season, there was always about a two-week gap between the end of one season and the start of the next, and I'd struggle to fill the sports page each day.

It's been crazy, chaotic and hectic, but I've loved every minute of it. Sure, sometimes I'd be at my wits end or barely be able to trudge through the daily routine, but there has always been at least one perk to my job: I'd get to

leave the office and watch sports.

I'd get to be on the sidelines during the varsity football games, watching the Eagles work hard on the field. I'd get to be on the basketball court, watching the Colby Community College men soar for a dunk. I'd get to hang out behind the fence and watch the Colby boys and girls run around the bases at the city ball fields.

And all the while, I made friends with the coaches, parents and spectators as we enjoyed the games and events.

I will be able to continue this job as a sports writer at the Greeley Tribune, but I'll be hard-pressed to find another community as friendly and supportive as Colby.

My friends and family were surprised when I decided to move from Boulder, Colo., to a small town in Kansas for my first job, but as far as I'm concerned, it was the best move I could have ever made.

Thank you to everyone in Thomas County who made my job a little bit easier and a lot of fun!

Kayla Cornett is the sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. An aspiring novelist in her youth, she has been writing features and news since high school. She is a native Coloradoan.

No need to pair alcohol and races

To the Editor:

I was just reading in your paper about the Thomas County Fairgrounds and the car races, and should the commissioners allow alcohol? My goodness.

What are Jeff and Kassie Carney thinking? Do they have to make the grandstand into a large bar so people can watch the car races?

I don't care if people drink beer, but if they need beer to watch a car go fast, something

doesn't add up.

If the Carneys are not capable of running a business and making a profit without beer sales, maybe they should not be trying to run a business they don't know how to run.

Lyle Gillispie, Colby



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

Budget and tax plan still undecided

It is great to be back in northwest Kansas after a long winter in Topeka. I will be in all my counties during the next three weeks attending different events.

The two biggest issues – the budget and tax plan for next year – have yet to be decided. The state has adopted a two-year budget plan. The conference committees on budget and tax have to reconcile their different plans into one uniform bill. The one constitutional duty of the Legislature is to pass a budget before the session ends, and a key component to the budget is tax legislation.

In the 120th District, I have not yet met, talked to or had an e-mail from anyone who feels the state should do away with its income tax. Most people are concerned about a reduction in services and an increase in the property tax.

Taking state dollars away from the Northwest Kansas Technical College and Colby Community College hurts our northwest Kansas economy, reduces programs available for our students and raises the cost of going to school.

The significant difference between the House and Senate tax plans is over how they treat the state sales tax. The House plan contains a 2 percent growth-in-revenue trigger, so that as the revenues grow above 2 percent from



Ward Cassidy

• This week in Topeka

the previous year, the excess money would be used to continue to buy down income tax rates. The House plan would allow the state sales tax to drop from 6.3 percent to 5.7 percent on July 13, as it was promised under current law.

The Senate plan, however, would leave the sales tax at the current 6.3 percent instead of allowing it to drop by the scheduled 0.6 percent. The Senate plan would use the additional revenue from the sales tax to continue to buy down income-tax rates. The governor favors the Senate plan.

My own belief is that we should slow down the process until we see evidence of economic growth in the state.

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.

Where to write, call

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 136-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

State Rep. Ward Cassidy, (120th District) State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 151-S, Topeka, Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7616 ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

State Rep. Don Hineman, (118th District) State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 50-S, Topeka, Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7636 don.hineman@house.ks.gov

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

