

Other Viewpoints

Two-tier voting latest election folly

Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach is peddling a new legal argument that would be laughable if it weren't so offensive, especially coming from the state office traditionally associated with promoting voting and increasing turnout.

It's that Kansas could create a second class of voters unfit to participate in anything but presidential and congressional elections.

Kobach sketched out his nutty idea in July, as Democrats said they would like to revisit the proof-of-citizenship requirement for voter registration during the Sept. 3 special session Gov. Sam Brownback has called to rewrite the Hard 50 sentencing law. Taking up the voting law seems unlikely, given the strong support for it in the Republican Legislature and the need to keep the \$35,000-a-day session brief.

But Democrats, including Wichita state Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudeau and state Rep. Jim Ward, have two concerns.

They suspect that, despite Kobach's assurances, a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning Arizona's proof-of-citizenship law means the Kansas law is unconstitutional, too. The 7-2 decision, written by Justice Antonin Scalia, said federal law "precludes Arizona from requiring a 'federal-form' applicant to submit information beyond that required by the form itself."

The Democrats also are unhappy that because of the proof-of-citizenship requirement, which went into effect Jan. 1, the voter registrations of nearly 14,000 Kansans are "in suspense." The state says these new voters are in limbo because they haven't provided the documents necessary to prove citizenship. But that doesn't square with news reports that some of those "in suspense" already had presented proof or had voted.

Whether the roadblock is missing documentation or bureaucratic error, the state is standing in the way of these people's right to vote — all in the name of solving a voter-fraud problem that has amounted to a handful of cases a year all too weak to lead to convictions.

It isn't as if this suspension of voting rights is theoretical until next year's primary and general elections, either. Local elections loom around the state.

So how does the state's chief elections officer respond to the imminent threat to voting rights posed by the proof-of-citizenship law? By saying his staff is "assessing" whether Kansas will accept the federal voter-registration form (which only requires someone to sign a sworn statement saying he is a citizen) to vote in federal elections and require a form with the state's higher standard of proof of citizenship to vote in races for state and local offices.

"That is a realistic option for a state to take," Kobach told *The Eagle*.

No, that is ridiculous. Voter registration should extend to all elections.

And if the logic of such a move is appalling lawsuit bait, imagine the logistics. Local election officials would be expected to separate the second-class federal-only voters from the state-sanctioned ones and throw out any illegally cast votes.

We shudder to think how that would play out in Sedgwick County, where Kobach's chosen election commissioner had enough problems counting votes last year.

We know Kobach loves nothing better than a fight over states' rights, but he and his staffers should not be wasting a minute on his latest folly.

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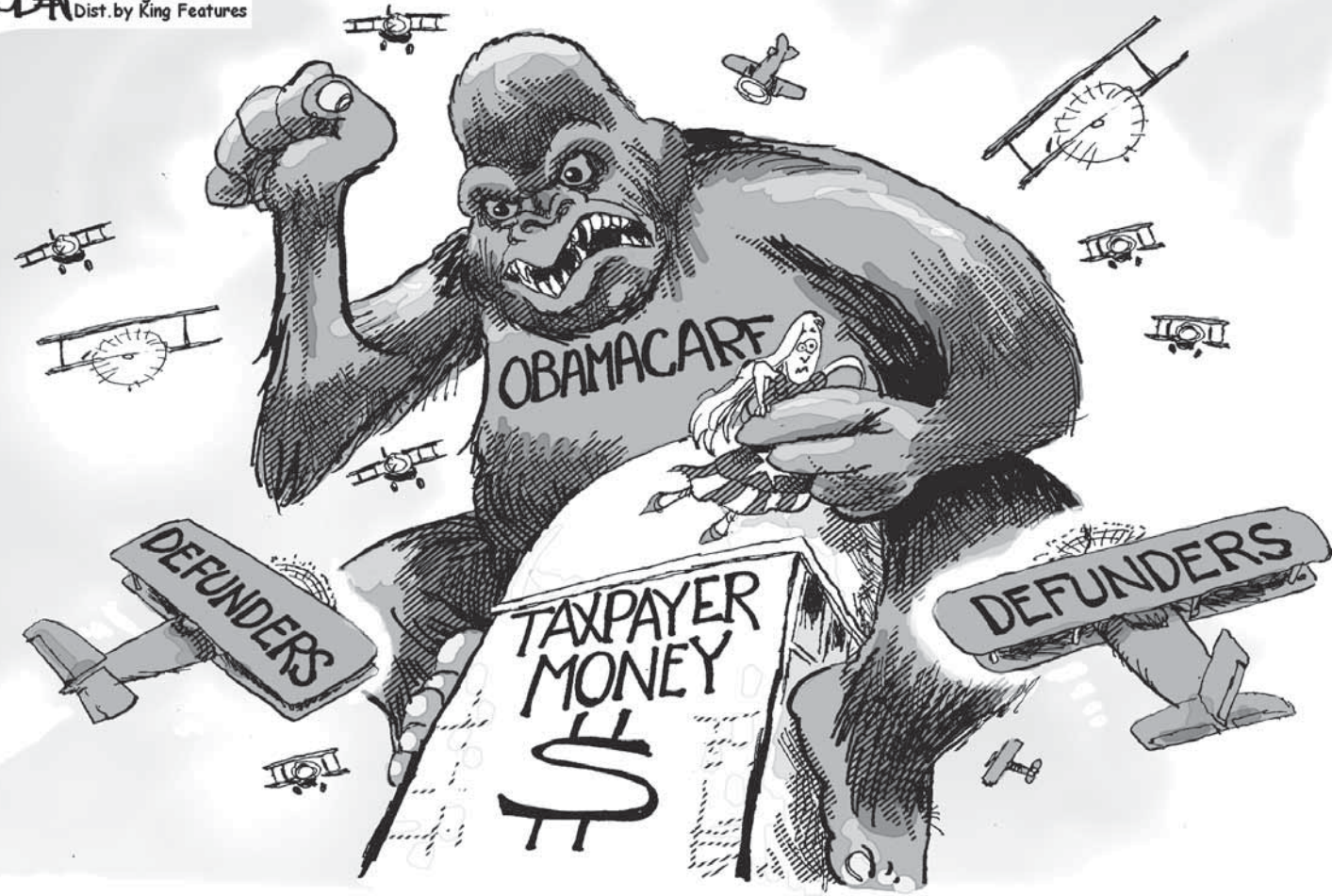
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Who needs to change: schools or kids?

Maybe I am just a hard case, but when I read that some brilliant educator decided that school should start later because teens function better later in the day, I laughed out loud. This educator wants schools to alter their days to accommodate teens no matter what the consequences are for the rest of the world.

I'm guessing the whole idea makes teens everywhere think the world should revolve around them. Not that they didn't already think that, but now they are going to have proof that they do rule.

Can you imagine what our ancestors would think of that idea? I mean, didn't they walk a mile to school in the snow, uphill both ways — and it did before dawn, right? They probably stayed all day and ate whatever their moms packed in their bandana lunch packages. I bet they even studied to make sure their grades met with the approval of their parents and teachers.

My now-grown son just laughed when I told him about this idea. He said, "Mom, you would just have kicked our rears and said get up and get going. If we needed to, we would just get up earlier."

Imagine the chaos when these same teens graduate and go out into the work force. I can just see them in an interview asking, "You want me here at WHAT time?" To say that



Sharon Friedlander

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they are going to be ill-prepared for the real world is a massive understatement.

Our nation has begun to experience the brain drain caused by a few more brilliant ideas that have crippled our schools. We now don't teach for the academic value, but so the tests will show where we stand. It must not matter at all that we are lagging behind so many other nations in science and math. Where will our scientists come from? How will research be accomplished?

It is mind boggling to me that we continue to hamstring our educational system, then complain that our kids know nothing to help them survive in a competitive world after graduation. We can no longer discipline our children without the threat of arrest, and neither can the schools. We mustn't make our children conform to rules and regulations because it might scar them for life.

We are turning out a nation of ill-behaved,

ignorant young adults through no fault of their own. They are pampered and not expected to excel by the system. Ordinary has replaced exceptional.

Now, let's talk about the other side of the coin. I am heartened when I hear parents having intelligent conversations with their children about their futures. I see kids here striving to make the top of the lists. They would be exceptions in most areas, but not here. Kids here are still expected to study, work hard, respect their elders and be participating members of the community.

If you have any doubts about this, then you should have gone to the Thomas County Free Fair and spent the time touring the barns and exhibit halls. You should have listened to the conversations the teen competitors were having with the judges and their fellow teens. As you would walk around, you would have heard something really old-fashioned going on — manners on parade.

Are all of our kids this way? No, but far more are good kids with goals and a work ethic that should be shared with the rest of the country.

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

Science must grow for America's future

"The future belongs to those countries that make friends with science" This famous quote from India's first Prime Minister Nehru recognizes science is central to improving the human condition and eliminating poverty. But for the past 25 years, American education policy has promoted "less science, not more." Below are the steps the United States needs to take immediately if we are to stop our slide toward science stupidity and second world status.

- The amount of science coursework in public school education must expand from five to 20 percent of the school day. Other subjects do not need to be cut. Our school day and year are expanding; the educational "pie" is getting bigger.

- Expanding course time on science is irrelevant unless we increase the number of very-well-educated science teachers. Our current pool is not adequate for our current anemic curriculum. We need five times more science teachers than we produce today. And we must attract the best into teaching.

- That will only occur when we allow professional science teachers to conduct their own internal testing. Teaching-to-the-test has distorted science coursework away from the creative investigations that made our earlier science education world class.

- Secondary teachers must be trained in depth in the unique discipline they teach: biology, chemistry, physics or earth science. Kansas is one of only 12 states with specialized teachers. Other states hire shallow one-size-fits-all "science teachers" who have but a few courses in each field. Those 38 states must move to in-depth training immediately. You can't teach what you don't know. Secondary teachers must understand their science at a level deeper than they teach, so they can get the science correct and so they can carry our advanced students deeper.

- Secondary teacher training in sciences must move out of schools of education and



John Richard Schrock

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into university science departments. Education schools shortchange science content and add ever-changing education methodologies. Science departments have a solid curriculum. Ed schools do not.

- Requirements for being a science teacher should be no less rigorous than for science students entering research or professional fields. If a science department is not willing to value and supervise their student teachers with the same concern as their professional and research students, that university should not produce science teachers.

- Science is reality-based. The "no online science courses or labs accepted" policy of a growing number of doctoral science programs must extend to science teacher preparation. The ability to operate the CSI-type molecular laboratory equipment or conduct dissection is not developed by cyber-simulations. This is evident to anyone with commonsense.

- We do not train medical doctors through part time programs-of-convenience nor can we educate science teachers in their "off hours." Getting a quality education is a full-time job.

- Ongoing professional development is critical in our rapidly-developing sciences. Today, most bonafide professional development for science teachers has been subverted by online workshops of little value. Science teacher updating must occur in university labs.

- We must begin to place science teaching specialists in the lowest elementary grades, similar to the United Kingdom. Most creative scientists are "hooked" on science by the age

of 10 through hands-on exploration with cow eye-balls and other exciting experiences.

- Expanding the science curriculum fourfold is for every future citizen's science literacy. Every child must study animals and plants so that study of ecology is not shallow environmentalism. Every child may not become a physician but every one of them will become a patient. Our high health care costs and unreal jury decisions constitute "ignorance tax" we cannot continue to afford.

- But we must go beyond the "science for all Americans" attitude of only training for literacy and provide advanced sciences for the 20 percent of secondary students who are ready and eager to pursue advanced science beyond literacy.

- And America has no science future if we do not immediately convert to the metric system, not only teaching direct metric measurement in schools, but also ceasing the use of non-metric is society at large — today. Anyone who has lived overseas knows all of us can adapt to metric within a week. If we continue to keep our students speaking a foreign language in measurement, we will forever be dependent on foreign engineers, foreign physicists, and foreign chemists.

The need to increase science in the American classroom was first voiced by the late Dr. John Moore of UC-Riverside twenty years ago. Instead, we have allowed educationists to continue to move us to "less science, not more." Should our 25-years of "less science" continue, our ability to shore up our science infrastructure with foreign-trained scientists will not continue.

The future belongs to countries that make friends with science. If we continue our current route, America will not have a future.

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

