

Other Viewpoints

Governor's pick erodes confidence

Caleb Stegall may well turn out to be a fine appellate judge for Kansas. He is a smart and energetic lawyer, and will go into his Senate confirmation hearing with solid recommendations from the state's legal establishment.

But in nominating Stegall, his general counsel, to the state Court of Appeals, Gov. Sam Brownback advanced suspicions that judicial selection in Kansas has become based less on merit and more on political affiliations.

The conservative-dominated Legislature this year gave the governor a coveted prize – the ability to unilaterally select judges for the state appeals court, subject to a Senate confirmation vote. For decades, statewide judicial candidates have been screened by a nonpartisan commission consisting of members selected by the Kansas Bar Association and by the governor. The commission selected three finalists and the governor made the final choice.

The separation of the courts from the more political branches of government instilled confidence in an independent judiciary. Brownback eroded that confidence Tuesday, insulting sitting judges in the process.

"If confirmed, Caleb will be one of the most, if not the most, qualified person to go on the Kansas Court of Appeals over the past decade," he said, while announcing his nominee.

Stegall has solid experience as a clerk for a federal appeals judge, as a county prosecutor and as a lawyer for some high-profile clients. Those include former Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline and a team of missionaries which landed in trouble trying to transport Haitian children to the Dominican Republic after the 2010 earthquake.

But other members of the appellate bench bring a rich trove of legal scholarship and expertise and community service. And unlike Stegall, most of the sitting judges served as city or district judges before moving up.

Brownback disingenuously boasted, "From this day forward the people will have a greater role to play in (the judicial selection) process." Not so. Brownback's process was notable for secrecy; he has refused to name the other applicants for the appeals court seat.

In a couple of weeks, the Kansas Senate will make a show of due diligence with a confirmation hearing for Stegall. It will be interesting, but not suspenseful. Short of a bombshell revelation, Kansas conservatives have their hand-picked judge. Kansas is worse off for the process.

— The Kansas City Star, 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 or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

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@nwkansan.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
sfriedlander@nwkansan.com

NEWS

R.B. Headley - Sports Editor
colby.sports@nwkansan.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansan.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor@nwkansan.com

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

ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansan.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard@nwkansan.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
medmondson@nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansan.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.

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND--EXTREME EDITION



Use that smart phone right

Is there a shift in human focus and concentration, or is it just me?

While waiting in a well-known restaurant in Kansas City, I counted a half a hundred people milling about, engaged in some form of interaction – primarily with themselves.

Yes, there are others with them, but these people are head-down on their phones. I'm certain you have both seen them or been one of them.

Phone usage and etiquette have changed significantly during the past few years. Before Apple launched its iPhone on June 29, 2007, all you could do on a phone was send and receive calls – and painfully text.

Can you ever forget your first text – 1,2,3 or maybe it was a,b,c. In technology terms, that was eons ago.

Cellular phones are smart today. Most of the time they are smarter than their users, especially in my case. They are as much app driven as talk and text.

Consider all the possibilities: e-mail and the Internet, personal calendars, social media, search engines, news and markets, camera, music, movies, games, PayPal and who could live without Amazon (where eager consumers can buy anything while reading just about every book ever written), and if you think about it – your phone or tablet has become your end all, be all communication device.

I'm waiting for the next great apps to come down the pike – like the cab, chauffeur, house, maid, cook – you know a phone that will literally take care of me and pamper me while I'm busy communicating. Whoa Bessie, I'm getting ahead of myself. There are plenty of other technological marvels just around the corner like voice recognition that may just be the latest, greatest breakthrough.



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

Many of us are not masters of our own phones. We use the programs we need and rarely explore new ones, unless badgered to do so.

Most people who know me realize I am still mired firmly in the Dark Ages of smart phone technology. Still, I'm trying to move ahead using what I refer to as baby apps. I sought out a young, computer wizard friend the other day to help me with the fundamentals of smart phone usage. Here are some of the best how-to-do-its we came up with:

1) How to use it mechanically – not just to turn it on and off. Your phone can fill the hours with joy, mirth and dividends once you master its technology.

2) How to use it mannerly. You know, when and how loud are key to your perceived image.

3) How to enhance your communications. Texting is the new black? Data transmission exceeds voice transmission – by a lot. When e-mailing how are you perceived? How do they read it? Is it, "C U L8r" or "See you later?" Is it "LMK" or "Let me know?" You tell me. I don't abbreviate. Sister Benigna Consolata wouldn't approve.

4) How to use it to allocate your time. Use your stopwatch feature to measure the total amount of time you spend on your phone. It's easy to hit start-stop-memory each time you pick up your phone. Your total will shock you

– multiply the total by 365.

5) When you're by yourself – be aware of the time. Minutes become hours and days.

6) When you're by yourself, but others are within hearing distance, speak at half-volume, and keep it brief.

7) In an informal gathering, ask permission. Use your judgment as to what to ignore. Be respectful of the time and attention paid to people you're with.

8) In a business meeting – never.

9) In a restaurant. Beyond never. It's rude.

10) In church. Don't even think about it.

On a flight to California a couple months ago I thought I'd stepped into a bad movie when the following scene played itself out before and after we landed. First the milling of the masses up and down the aisles as overhead luggage was stowed. Then the passengers were buckled and the flight attendants told everyone to power down. Plane landed and every passenger was on his or her phone. Exit, and they walked off like lemmings marching to the sea.

In reality, people are walking into walls, tripping, bumping into one another, and crashing their cars while looking at their smart phones.

Like it or not, the smart phone is here to stay. It's economical to use and applications are increasing daily.

Our challenge is to make the best use of it we can.

Good luck and, May the smart be with you.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Jobs crisis needs common-sense fix

On any given day, Congress debates cutting entitlement programs versus strengthening them.

Programs such as food stamps and supplemental nutrition for women, infants and children are part of the debate. Free lunch programs feed as many as 60 percent of children in some impoverished counties.

Thousands of Americans rely on Supplemental Security Insurance to provide assistance based on financial need. This pays monthly amounts of \$710 for an individual or \$1,066 for a couple. Many Americans are surviving on unemployment insurance benefits of about \$330 a week. These are not long-term survival plans. Many more struggle to hang on until age 62 to receive the minimum social security benefit.

Over 120 million people rely on some type of government assistance. Another 50 million have relied on government assistance in the last 10 years or will in the next five years. What has happened to us? Do Americans love living on food stamps, benefits and minimal checks or other forms of government help? The answer is no. Many of the poor are actually working jobs but can't make enough money.

We did this to ourselves. In some cases we pushed our jobs out and in others we simply let them slip through our hands. Mexico, China and India are delighted to have our jobs and money. Americans left behind try to figure out how to buy groceries and gas and pay rent.

Government money will run out. Congress

Other Opinions

• Glenn Mollette
American Issues

will cut back on food stamps and WIC, along with Medicare and Social Security payments. We should oppose these cuts until the jobs trend is reversed. However, the load has become backbreaking for a government that has been broke for a long time.

We can solve these problems:

1. To bring jobs back to the U.S., Congress must ease the tax burden on corporations. We should cut the tax rate from 35 percent to 15 percent for corporations that bring 70 percent of their jobs back home. Corporations that keep jobs overseas should continue to pay the higher rate. Some of the mega corporations have utilized loopholes to pay less tax while most pay the high tax. We must make tax simpler and reasonable for all corporations.

2. Unions must use common sense. The day when unions could hold employers hostage by making exorbitant demands have passed. Employers can simply close the doors and move their operations to Mexico, leaving workers and unions behind.

3. Give a \$10,000 tax credit to people who

cease relying on Supplemental Security Insurance and Social Security disability and get back into the workforce. Although many are unable to do any type of work, more can do some work. Give this credit over three years.

4. Allow students to attend the first two years of community college tuition-free if they maintain an average of 3.0. Student loans would be cut in half. Many 65- to 80-year-old retired professors would enjoy working for adjunct, contract pay and would bring a wealth of knowledge with them.

5. Raise the minimum wage to \$9. Cut the corporate tax on one end so that corporations can provide more pay on the other end.

Approximately 50 million Americans live in poverty while another 50 million are not far from poverty. Many Americans living in poverty are working, but the jobs don't pay enough and they are forced to rely on government assistance.

It does not have to be this way. We don't have to be poor and in debt, America can bounce back. To change the face of America, we must make progressive and aggressive changes. At this stage of our economy we need to change the face of Congress. They've had their chance. Most of them have been in Washington too long and have made it all about them and not about Americans.

Glenn Mollette is an American columnist and the author of "American Issues." Contact him at gmollette@aol.com.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

