



## Free Press Viewpoint

### College is needed, needs us in return

Can you imagine Colby or northwest Kansas without a state-sponsored community college?

Neither can we, which makes it hard to sit back and watch some of the dithering and bickering that's retarded progress in putting Colby Community College on a sound financial footing.

College officials have battled cash-flow problems for years. The college operates "in the black," as required by Kansas law. It spends less than it takes in and always has enough to pay its bills. It's just that, like most any college, it gets its money in big chunks that don't necessarily come when cash is needed.

A big crunch always shows up this time of year, when expenses continue to pile up while the school waits for three big payments – from the state, county taxes and student tuition – in January.

The county usually helps out with an advance on taxes, which it collects in December but distributes in January. This year, the college's Endowment Foundation has offered to help, too.

That makes sense, because the college, with its payroll and students, is an economic engine which drives a lot of prosperity.

But the college has had a worse time with cash flow than usual. Having a lot of turnover in staff and administration has not helped, but sending out student tuition bills late in the semester (at least partly because of an error by a federal agency, which sent out corrupted data on student loans) really added to the cash bind.

Through the fall, too, ill-concealed bickering among some members of the governing Board of Trustees and the foundation did nothing to advance the college's cause. If we, meaning everyone in the college's northwest Kansas territory, are to "save" the college and put it on a sound financial foundation, then it will take all of us working together.

Neither the college nor the region has much room for error. We are losing population here, and with fewer people, there's less money to go around, but also fewer students for the college to recruit from.

The future will require clear thinking, a sound plan and above all, a unified effort. We believe the administration of President Steve Vacik has done much to correct problems it inherited, and that includes bringing in some fresh leadership.

This is not the time to fight over how to get things done. It is the time to get together and work for the common cause. Now, not tomorrow, because tomorrow might be too late.

We – all of us – need the college, the economic activity it generates and the cultural benefits it gives us, and especially the opportunity it provides for our kids.

Let's put our differences aside and get something done.

– Steve Haynes

### 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.

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### Warm weather not always more fun

It's interesting to visit our daughters in Georgia and see the difference in climate and weather conditions.

Of course, the best part of the visit is the grandchildren, but we try to stay with both daughters about the same amount of time. This allows us to visit each and have personal time with each family and still not have the problem of overstaying our welcome.

While the temperatures ranged from 15 to minus 3 degrees in Kansas, we were having 50- to 60-degree weather. However, it wasn't a whole lot more fun, since it was raining down in Georgia while it was cold and snowy in Kansas, and cold, drizzly rain isn't all that much fun.

Several years ago, they had a drought down south, and they were really suffering. The reservoirs were drying up and the vegetation and crops were dying. Of course, during the drought they were getting more moisture than we normally get in a year. But what they grow needs more water than our crops.

The rain this year is normal.

Oldest daughter was fighting mold on her shower curtain and youngest daughter's back



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

yard was a swamp as the cold rain just kept falling.

Now, I occasionally have to worry about mildew, but the bugs in the South are something. My daughters fight a never-ending battle. Both get their homes sprayed several times a year for roaches, termites and a dozen other crawly things.

And their bugs are not little things like our lady bugs and beetles. Some of those bugs are about the size of Volkswagens, which, come to think of it, might be where the VW Beetle got its name.

We don't get a lot of moisture out here in western Kansas compared to the eastern part of the state, but it's lush here compared to our old home in southern Colorado, where we got

very little rain or snow. If the storms hadn't hit the mountains and dumped their loads for us to use for irrigation and household use, we would have blown away.

As it was, the furniture got so dry, the wood on our antique chairs would shrink and crack. Our son had to re-glue every leg on six kitchen chairs we gave him that had been in Colorado for about 10 years. The first time he sat on one, it fell down and he hit the floor like Humpty Dumpty.

I guess if I have to pick wet or dry, I'd pick eastern Kansas, where they have a little more variety of trees but not so much rain that they have to fight off alligators.

I guess no matter where you live, the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. Sometimes, however, that's just where the septic tank drains.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

### Are carols at school constitutional?

What are my constitutional rights in school with respect to Christmas?

It might surprise some to learn that the Constitution does not allow the government to prevent you from doing most things that you do at home also in public – even at school. The constitutionally ill-informed like to refer to the "separation of church and state" as the rationale for a prohibition of religious or seasonal expression in public places. No such language exists in the Constitution. To prevent you from doing these things would be as unconstitutional as mandating that you do.

Actually the language of the First Amendment, from which opponents to religion derive this falsehood, is "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Such was included for the sole purpose of preventing the government from creating a state-approved organization of religion as had happened in Europe for more than a thousand years. Simply, government may not establish a state religion. Instead, government is charged with protecting "the free exercise thereof."

So decorate your school Christmas trees (not diversity trees), distribute your Christmas cards with biblical messages on them (not holiday cards) to your schoolmates, greet your school friends and colleagues with Merry Christmas (not Happy Holidays), sing "Silent Night" and "Joy to the World," in your school choirs and for heaven's sake do not let your teachers or administrators change Christmas Break to Winter Break or "Sparkle Season."

You have a culture and heritage to preserve, so say the courts. You may even have a nativity scene in the classroom or on school grounds, but outside activities are better left to parent organizations.

Some might say that I am giving you the view and practice of 50 years ago. That is so, but amazingly that view remains in place. Whereas the Supreme Court has participated in constitutional distortion in so many other areas, the original view, the "free exercise" of religion, still holds. The court has not ruled on any measure that would silence those who

### Other Opinions

• Harold Pease  
Liberty Under Fire

celebrate Christmas openly and in public places. If it did so it might fairly be accused of creating an organization of the irreligious to destroy religious freedom.

Yes, you might get a letter from the American Civil Liberties Union threatening your "free exercise thereof" of religion, but the Supreme Court has never upheld their view – in fact, the opposite has been established in case after case. Because they have been successful in creating the opposite public impression they can bully and bluster the ignorant into forfeiting this constitutional right.

Should they do more than bluster, which is unlikely given their loss ratio, defending your right to celebrate Christmas in the traditional – even historical – manner is protected by the Constitution and defended by the Alliance Defending Freedom who have recently sent a letter to more than 13,000 school districts nationwide offering their free legal assistance.

Attorneys all over the country volunteer their services to protect this part of the Constitution. Should a student or faculty member feel threatened by their leadership or wish council on this subject they can be reached at (800) 835-5233 or at www.AllianceDefendingFreedom.org. The alliance will be happy to send a letter encouraging them to honor your First Amendment rights.

Alliance literature notes the things that may be done in the public setting. Colleges may decorate campus Christmas trees. Christmas programs may include religious songs. The courts have recognized for many years that Christmas carols have achieved a cultural significance that justifies their being performed in public schools. Moreover, teachers may

constitutionally present Christmas passages from the Bible when treating the event in the historical sense.

The First Amendment does protect the right of individuals to private religious expression on public property – even nativity scenes. Even showing paintings of Jesus Christ in public parks is constitutional.

May the government sponsor religious displays inside government buildings? Of course! How could the Supreme Court rule otherwise? Moses with the Ten Commandments is chiseled in stone on their building. Prayer is held every working morning in both the House and Senate chambers and each dedicate a room for quiet meditation and prayer for our legislators.

So I invite you to push the limits of freedom. How else will it be retrieved? If not you then who? If not now then when? Doing nothing only exacerbates the problem and encourages opponents to bluster and intimidate all the more.

Merry Christmas, my liberty-loving friends.

Dr. Harold Pease has dedicated his career to studying the writings of the Founding Fathers. He has taught history and political science for over 25 years at Taft College. To read more of his weekly articles, go to www.LibertyUnderFire.org.



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