



Other Viewpoints

Concealed carry OKed in Wichita

The Wichita City Council last week shunned its option to seek a four-year exemption from Kansas' enhanced concealed-carry law and voted to allow permit holders to carry their guns in almost all city-owned buildings.

Many municipalities and other government entities, including the Kansas Board of Regents, have opted for the multiyear exemption offered under the law, passed by the 2012 Legislature. It won't be a surprise if many of them finally decide to allow concealed carry due to the cost of installing the security measures and liability concerns.

Those issues prompted Wichita's council members to open all but 16 of 107 city-owned buildings to concealed carry beginning Jan. 1. Some council members questioned whether the city could afford to provide adequate security, which they said was not clearly defined in the law, and expressed concerns about the city's liability if it installed security that could be found less than adequate.

A deputy city attorney told them the only way to be immune from liability was to allow concealed carry.

The law, which went into effect July 1, required most public buildings to allow concealed carry. Local governments can exempt buildings if they are properly posted and adequate security is provided. Government entities had the option of seeking a six-month exemption and until Jan. 1 to develop security plans or decide whether to seek a four-year exemption, which would give them time to pay for and install security measures.

Topeka, Shawnee County, the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority and Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority have filed for, or are considering seeking, four-year exemptions, although some city and county buildings are in compliance because they have the required posting and security measures in place. The Topeka Municipal Court and the Shawnee County Courthouse employ metal detectors and armed guards.

Metal detectors, or other screening devices, and armed guards would appear to meet the law's requirement for "adequate security." Whether lesser measures would pass muster is unknown, but any government that tries to install less likely would be sued.

The cost of installing security will vary depending on the number of buildings a government wants to exempt from concealed carry. But those costs may be deemed too high by some cities with a lot of buildings or a small towns with a corresponding tax base.

It wouldn't be surprising, when the four-year exemptions expire, to find elected officials across the state have come to the conclusion Wichita's council members reached Tuesday. The exemptions aren't worth the cost of installing security and the angst over the liability issue.

- The Topeka Capital-Journal, 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.

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Q. WHAT DO YOU CALL POLITICIANS SHOWING VOTERS HOW TOUGH THEY ARE BY DENYING POOR PEOPLE FOOD?



Inequality need not defeat liberals

One look at the vast inequality that exists in America today, and many progressives may be tempted to throw in the towel and concede defeat.

For several decades now, Reaganomics, the fons et origo of the decline of liberal economic theory and influence, has provided a bulwark against progressives determined to challenge the legacy left by the avatar of the conservative movement. But, to those progressives tempted to sound the death knell for FDR-style liberalism, I urge them to reconsider.

While a cursory glance at U.S. politics may serve to reinforce pre-existing ideas of a hopelessly conservative country, a closer examination paints a more complex and contradictory picture of what Americans expect from their government.

While it's true that Americans by and large support the idea of limited government and low taxes in theory, they don't always support the inevitable consequences of this worldview when it's actually put into practice, especially when it means taking a meat cleaver to a public program they depend on. Liberals and progressives have failed to take full advantage of this curious paradox.

Many liberals have timidly taken half-measures to preserve aspects of social programs instead of vigorously and passionately opposing any measures destined to worsen the already pernicious state of income inequality in this country. In many instances, the impetus behind this timidity is a reluctance to chal-



Andy Heintz

Wildcat Ramblings

lenge the wealthy corporations and individuals that fund their political campaigns. This is why elections should be publicly funded, but that's a topic for another day.

Nonetheless, when ostensibly liberal politicians refuse to give a full-throated defense of progressive policies in the economic sphere, they unintentionally sabotage their chances of making inroads with portions of the American electorate who don't identify as liberals: The white working class and rural America.

To be more specific, when self-described liberals rub shoulders with anti-union companies, help deregulate Wall Street, push corporate-friendly free-trade deals that outsource working-class jobs to other countries and do nothing to protect family farmers, much of their appeal to working class white and rural voters is squandered. After all, progressives are unlikely to ever win over working-class and rural voters with their stances on social issues like abortion, immigration reform, environmental regulations, gun control or gay marriage.

While poor working class white voters who

support Republican candidates could and should take a more nuanced look at their largely inflexible stances on the aforementioned issues, liberals need to concede that they've often been negligent in addressing the needs of this voting bloc.

This negligence doesn't come without a cost. When liberals choose pathological centrism over progressive economic policies they neglect not only white working class voters, but poor voters in general who feel they don't have a voice in either party.

This is a terrible mistake, because contrary to popular myth inside the Beltway, there is bipartisan support outside of Washington for inherently progressive ideas and programs like expanding Social Security, preserving Medicare, raising taxes on the wealthy, cutting military spending, exacting a financial transactions tax on Wall Street, expanding Medicaid and raising the minimum wage. Progressives can win on economic issues if they choose to fight for their principles instead of simply settling for some sort of Grand Bargain opposed by the majority of Americans.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision, or find him at twitter.com/heintz23.

Challenge to senator misleading

To the Editor:

This fall, I attended a typical high school football game on a clear, calm, crisp Friday night in central Kansas. I was there early enough to watch the players warm up, the band practice and school officials trying to stop young kids from playing tag in the end zone.

It was one of those nights when people were drinking luke-warm hot chocolate from the FFA concession stand. The bleachers were packed with men of all ages sharing "glory days" stories and women telling each other that maybe those days weren't all that glorious. There was a constant buzzing and feeling of excitement, noisy and chaotic.

Then it was announced that a high school senior girl would perform our National Anthem, and we should all rise and remove our hats. This young lady sang a cappella, and I am sure that her nervous, crackling voice could have been heard for miles and miles. There was not a sound of any kind being made by anyone or anything. Our song cut through that clear,



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

calm, crisp Kansas night as if everyone was hearing it for the first time.

I thought about that Friday night when I read the newspaper article telling of how Sen. Pat Roberts' Republican challenger, Milton Wolf, had accused the senator of ethics violations. It is true that the 77-year-old Roberts has served in Washington for nearly half a century, but if one has analyzed his career at all, they would realize that being labeled a "Washington Insider" would make him vomit.

One concrete example of the senator's morality would be his involvement in exposing and rectifying the 1992 House Banking Scan-

dal. His action cost him dearly in Washington, but gained him the ethical respect of Kansans.

Mr. Wolf's computer screen saver should picture an old Western Kansas phrase that describes a person who just doesn't understand something or isn't willing to make the effort to understand. "He is still wet behind the ears" alludes to the inexperience of a baby, so recently born as to be still wet.

That Friday night game made me realize that self-government and the freedom to choose can only occur if the government that is in charge is honest. It would be impossible for even a deeply involved citizen to know and understand the details necessary to govern a country as complex as the United States.

So, when the players, fans, and students paused and respectfully honored the country that Friday night, I believe they did it out of love, respect, and duty, but most of all that they did it out of trust. The same trust that is fostered by a deep, deep understanding that Sen. Pat Roberts, honestly, has their backs.

Rick Reed, McPherson

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

