

from our viewpoint...

## Beware overreaction to Aurora shooting

Early Friday morning a masked gunman came through an emergency exit at a theater in Aurora, dropped a tear gas grenade and opened fire. At least 12 people were killed and 59 more injured.

One of the more frustrating parts of a tragedy like this is the tendency for politics to get involved and for people to overreact.

There's the usual media speculation. When you have so much airtime to fill and few facts to fill it with, you often get silly speculation, such as when ABC News saying the suspect in custody had connections to the Tea Party – something for which they had only thin, circumstantial evidence. They have since retracted that comment.

There have numerous stories claiming liberal groups will turn this into an argument to ban guns, or movies, or comic books, or many other things. There have also been plenty of claims that this is some conspiracy to swing things in favor of the United Nations small arms treaty.

There was speculation the gunman might be reenacting a scene from a Batman comic book from 1986, which included a shooting in a theater. At the time that article was posted, no one knew whether or not the gunman had any interest in comic books or Batman in general.

One blogger was outraged that before the movie there had been a trailer shown for the upcoming movie "Gangster Squad," which included a shot of several mafia gunmen shooting in a theater. The blogger complained to Warner Brothers, which has since pulled the trailer, as if the studio could have somehow known this would happen, and as if the trailer somehow contributed to the shooting.

We often bemoan violence in the press, movies, television or video games, as if we are sponges that soak up all the stimuli around us and regurgitate it with no control when squeezed. Many people are often quick to blame these forms of entertainment and information dissemination.

While it's true that we can be influenced by what we see and hear around us, at a certain point we decide to act or not. No talking head, no movie, no TV show, no video game can make you do something. Whatever his motives were, the Aurora gunman made his own decision to act. The Virginia Tech shooter made his own decision to act. The Columbine and Fort Hood and Norway shooters made their own decisions to act.

The blame begins and ends with them. Anyone who tells you different likely has an agenda.

Yes, there are questions that need to be asked. Did the shooter obtain all these weapons legally? Could the theater have better security? Why were there so many young children at a midnight showing of a movie that is not a children's movie?

However, the kinds of things you see posted on the internet are just ridiculous. We need to temper our reactions and wait for the facts.

Above all, we must not give in to fear. Security is being tightened at theaters across the country and that's fine. But we should not let what was likely one lone act of terrorism by a disturbed individual stop us from liberty and the pursuit of happiness. When you start allowing terrorists to dictate your life, that's when they win. —Kevin Bottrell



## Making job creation attractive

When the latest jobs report was issued the first week of July showing 8.2 percent unemployment, it was not a shock. While we may not be in a formal economic recession, the recovery we so desperately need has yet to appear.

While the unemployment rate seems to be leveling around 8 percent – still too high – the rate is staying where it is because so many people have left the workforce. Since 2009, the labor force participation rate has declined steadily to its lowest level in a generation – and about one-in-three able-bodied, non-elderly adults are not working. Among those who are part of the workforce calculation, but still looking for a job, they can expect to spend 40 weeks, on average, finding one. In January 2009, it took half as much time.

In Washington, there is a stark contrast between the solutions to get America moving again. On the one hand, politicians could spend more borrowed money on repeating failed initiatives like the stimulus or and more welfare programs. Or, we could simply improve conditions that affect job creation in the United States.

First, the Bush-Obama tax cuts are set to expire at the end of the year. Businesses of all sizes will be affected when suddenly investors



**tim huelskamp**

• u.s. rep.

have less to invest and consumers have less to spend. I believe all of the Bush-Obama tax cuts should be extended now and fundamental tax reform passed early next year – including reduced rates for businesses and individuals, broadening the base by repealing hundreds of billions in tax subsidies, and enacting other significant reforms.

Second, the House has voted to repeal the President's health care law, and we will continue to work toward another solution that is affordable and provides the access Americans need. Nearly three-in-four small businesses surveyed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce say that that law will negatively impact their abilities to hire. Such a statistic is not surprising; after all, the President's health care law will drive up the costs of offering health insurance and discourage employers from hiring additional workers. Under the law, a business will be required to offer health insurance if it has more than 50 employees; why hire the 51st?

Ultimately, we need to move away from the system that associates an individual's health insurance to his or her employment. Such a system may have worked 70 years ago when a worker may have stayed with the same business for his entire career, but not for the self-employed, the retired or unemployed, or a modern economy where Americans change jobs often. Rather than an employer-based or bureaucrat-centric (as ObamaCare is) system, we need a patient-centered alternative that allows individuals to make their own health decisions.

Third, we need an economic climate that favors investment and job creation here in America. Excessive government deficits and debt as well as regulation make America an unappealing place to do business.

Unless and until we fix the tax code, implement health care reform that encourages competition and lowers costs, scale back over-regulation, and put an end to out-of-control government spending, we can expect more bad news on jobs. Out-of-work Americans can wait no longer for Congress and the President to make job creation an attractive proposition again.

## Silly season not so silly

It was once called the "political silly season," a term used to describe the time when candidates or their supporters would resort to extreme – sometimes laughable – tactics to get attention for their election. The Kansas political silly season has arrived.

The problem? This year, nobody is laughing.

Every election is important, but the stakes for Kansas could not be higher. Right now, well-funded outside special interest groups are busy spending millions of dollars – a record in Kansas politics – to defeat incumbent senators who put their local communities above the agendas of these special interest groups.

It's these outside special interest groups with their Washington-style politics and deficit spending that are driving our state over a financial cliff, creating a \$2.7 billion deficit and hoping that Kansans like us don't notice.

An independent, nonpartisan analysis confirms what we already know about their plan: Our property taxes will rise. Our sales taxes will increase. Our schools will be consolidated or closed because 40 percent of their current budgets could get wiped out.

This is not responsible state government. This is not the legacy of Eisenhower Republican values that our parents and grandparents taught us to believe in.

Some have promised their initiatives will pump adrenaline into the Kansas economy, yet their own projections indicate job gains



### from other pens

• Steve Morris

of a mere 20,000 over the next few years. The Kansas Economic Policy Council has done the math. It will take 550,000 jobs, earning \$50,000 each per year, to replace the revenue loss from their newest tax plan. That would take a growth rate in Kansas five times that of Texas' recent rate – a state often cited as a success story, but a state that has little in common with Kansas and the values we cherish here.

One of these special interest groups, Virginia-headquartered Americans for Prosperity, even resorted to sending out postcards attacking Republican legislators for supporting "Obamacare." However, a look at the voting record will show that every Republican in the Kansas Senate voted against Obamacare by passing the Kansas Health Care Freedom Act and is standing in direct opposition to the President's healthcare plan.

Kansas is a long way from Texas and it's a long way from Virginia. So why are groups from these other states spending record amounts of money this cycle to confuse voters in an attempt to buy our elections?

Right now, the very senators who are under attack are the ones who are working hardest to

ensure a bright future for our state, our children and our grandchildren. We have pushed for responsible tax reform, including property tax relief. We developed the Kansas Works plan to bring thousands of manufacturing jobs back to Kansas from places like China and Mexico. We fought to restore dollars to our local schools after \$18,000 had been cut from every Kansas classroom.

Politics can be a rough business, but don't be fooled by these desperate, deceitful tactics. Kansas elections and our elected officials are not for sale. When Kansans go to the polls on Aug. 7, they can either vote for rubber-stamp majorities, or they can join me in taking a stand for our local communities and protecting their voice – the Kansas voice – in the legislative process.

No matter how much money these outside groups pour into our state, we will always have something more powerful – our vote. On Tuesday, Aug. 7, I hope you will join me in exercising your right to vote – because Kansas values are just too important.

Steve Morris (R-Hugoton) is president of the Kansas Senate.

## where to write

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## The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [star-news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [goodlandads@nwkansas.com](mailto:goodlandads@nwkansas.com)

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day; (call for a price).

Incorporating:

### The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

### The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

### THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

### Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company