

from our viewpoint...

Chick-fil-A within rights to speak out

Who knew a fast food restaurant could make such a splash. Unless you've been living under a rock you've probably heard about Chick-fil-A owner Dan Cathy's announcement that he and his company do not support same-sex marriage, and the furor that the announcement has generated.

Obviously we don't have a Chick-fil-A within a hundred miles of Goodland, rather it is the principle of the arguments we should be interested in.

It seems to us that all Americans should celebrate Cathy's actions. He has an opinion and he said so. Cathy has a right to his opinion and a right to decide his company's policies. Even better, the opinion comes with no tangible repercussions for anyone since the stores are not refusing service to gay customers.

Disagreeing with that opinion is also a right that should be celebrated. If you disagree with Cathy's opinion and policy, say so, as loudly and as often and in whatever form you like — short of violence. By the same token, if you agree with Cathy, say so.

Businesses have a right to decide if they want to associate with Chick-fil-A, and customers have a right to decide whether or not to patronize that business. All of this is what America stands for: the rights of individuals to hold and express opinions.

Unfortunately, several public officials have tossed their hats into the arena in ways that are bordering on un-American. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Philadelphia Councilman James Kenney and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel have all said they don't want Chick-fil-A in their cities.

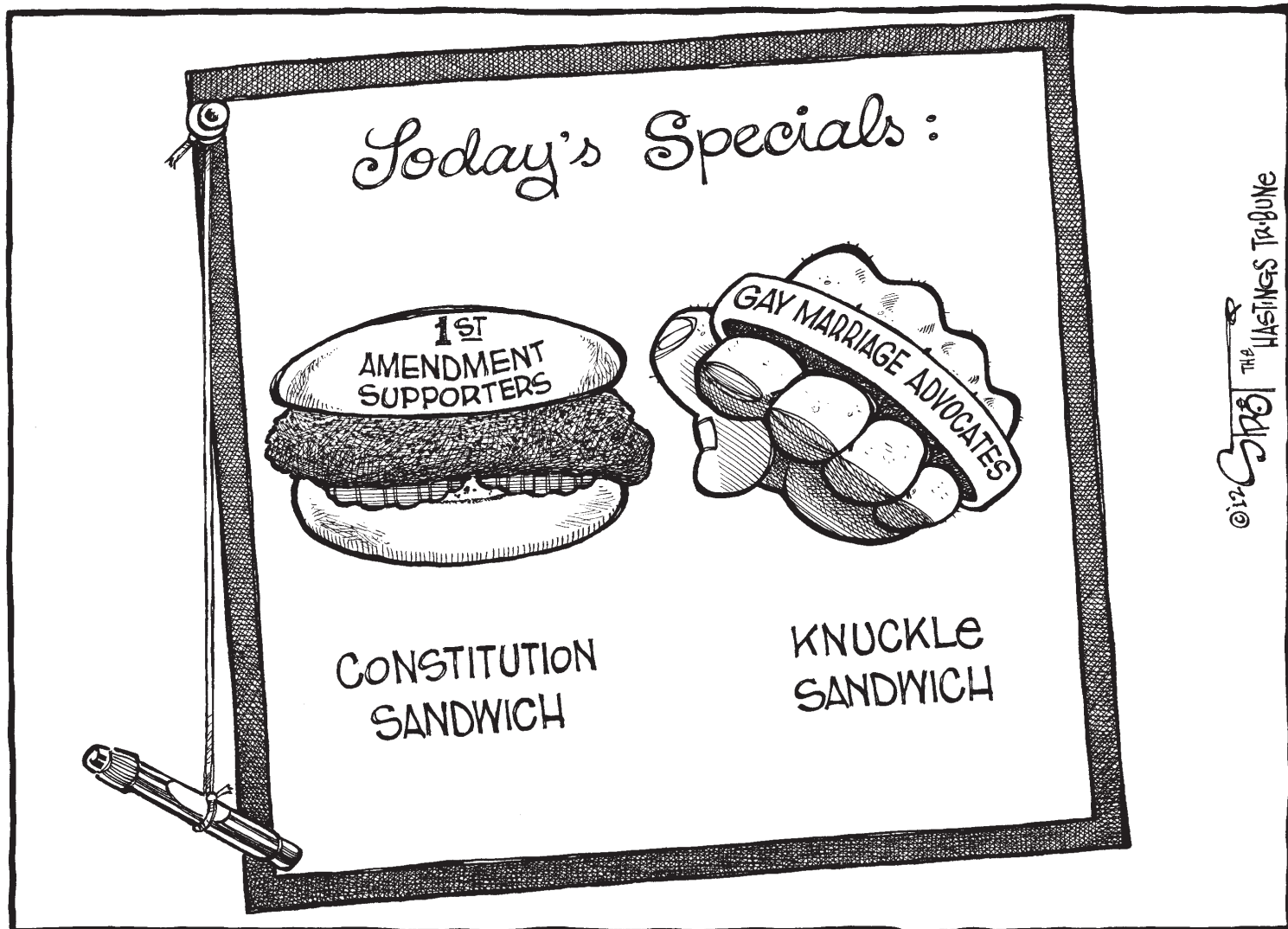
While these officials are within their rights to speak up, the same as any American, they should tread lightly. Government officials should not be seen to infringing on the First Amendment.

In most cases, government's cannot and should not punish people or businesses for their beliefs. If their practices were discriminatory, it might be a different story, but Chick-fil-A stores are not actually discriminating by refusing service, so they have as much of a right to operate anywhere as any other restaurant. They have just picked a political position.

There is a lot of public pressure on Cathy and Chick-fil-A, both to change their decision and to stand by it. The situation is not unlike what happened to *The Forum*, the Fargo, N.D., newspaper that initially refused to print an announcement of a same sex wedding. Same-sex marriage is banned in North Dakota, but the couple — who were from Fargo — were getting married in New York.

There was enormous public pressure on the newspaper to change its stance. It eventually decided to review the policy and reversed it, allowing announcements of same-sex marriage, provided the marriage was performed somewhere where it's legal.

So with all this you might be wondering what is the stance of the *Goodland Star-News*? Well, in a nutshell, our stance is no stance at all. We don't feel it's our place to decide for readers what is objectionable. We merely bring you the news, and let you decide for yourself. That includes announcements of same sex marriages. We don't get many — our company owner could recall receiving only one in the past 10 years — but if we get one, we'll print it. It's not because we either support or do not support same-sex marriage, it's because we take seriously the notion that a newspaper should be unbiased, and bring all information to its readers. —Kevin Bottrell



Hiding bird feeders from deer

I love feeding the birds.

I enjoy watching them get the seed out of my feeders. I'm not so crazy about the mess they make of the yard underneath, but that's just part of the deal.

I started feeding birds when we lived in Colorado. Everyone put up hummingbird feeders each summer, and so did we.

After moving back to Kansas, I gave up on feeding the birds. We just didn't have enough hummingbirds to make it worth my while.

Then when we started going back to Colorado on vacations and had a place to stay that wasn't a motel room, I started putting out hummingbird feeders again.

It's fun to watch these bright little bundles of feathers land on their perches and poke their impossibly long snouts into the feeder for a beakful of sugar water.

With hummingbirds, though, it seems they spend more time defending their territory than eating. It's still fun to watch them buzz around.

Then a year or so ago, I decided to feed the hundreds of other birds that swarm around in the summer. I got a shepherd's crook, a pair of tube feeders and 10 pounds of wild bird seed.

It took a couple of days for the birds to find the food. When they did, they came in droves. My next purchase was a bird book to identify the species.



cynthia haynes

• open season

Now, I have a pair of tube feeders at home in Oberlin, which I have to refill about every other day during the summer, and a set of tube feeders and three hummingbird feeders in Colorado, which I have to fill almost daily when I'm out there.

The hummingbirds must be suffering from the drought as much as the rest of us, because they aren't even fighting over territory much this year. They're just lining up like street people at the soup kitchen. All three feeders are abuzz with birds almost all day long.

The seed feeders have also had their share of birds, but there have been other problems out at the shepherd's crook.

Two years ago, Steve's sister was staying here and she called to say that a doe and her fawns were feasting on the seeds.

Sure enough, when we got out to Colorado, the first day the birds found the feeders and ate about half the seed. The next morning, they were empty.

We refilled and watched. The birds came

again and so did the deer.

She licked at both feeders until they were empty. When we walked out into the yard and shooed her off, she'd move away a short distance, give us a dirty look and come back as soon as we went back inside.

I soon started bringing in the feeders at night.

Last year, it was the same thing. The feeders had to come in each night.

This year, I got some new feeders with rims around the bottom to catch the dropped seeds.

The deer has yet to find my new feeders and seeds. We did see her out eating the neighbors flowers one morning, however.

This year, it's a chipmunk or a golden-mantled ground squirrel or something like that. Whatever, it is, the little devil hops across the yard, shimmying up the narrow pole, hops over onto the rim of the feeder and starts stuffing himself.

I guess I'll have to go back to tube feeders without a seed catcher on the bottom. That will mean more seeds on the ground, but at least, the chipmunk will have an easier time of getting his lunch.

Maybe, I should just give up, and get a book on mammals so I can identify what's out in my yard eating the bird seed.

Why serve on agriculture committees?

While farmers and ranchers continue to fill our plates with food, their plates are filled with an ever-increasing number of issues. Such issues include escalating production costs, tightening use of water, continuing drought in some western Kansas counties, an ongoing search for new markets for agricultural crops and increasing oversight and regulation to mention a few.

And while these are good times for some in production agriculture, they are very trying times for others. Living out on the land in the rural areas of our state, farmers sometimes experience feelings of isolation — that I'm only one voice, one person, one family and one small enterprise in an age of dwindling farming populations coupled with a continuing exodus to larger, regional urban centers.

That said, membership and leadership roles in farm and commodity organizations are more critical today than ever before. There is strength in like-minded people. There is strength in numbers. There is also credibility when farmers and ranchers tell their own story with a common thread and a common purpose.

Even though spokespersons for this vital industry continue to advocate on behalf of agriculture, farmers and ranchers still speak best. There is no substitute for farmers and ranchers telling the agricultural story.

You begin at sun up and work until sunset during spring planting season. You put in 16-hour days during harvest. You bundle up and head into a fierce snowstorm to help a heifer calve. You must demonstrate the same courage and conviction when telling your story.



Insight this week

• john schlageck

Make time. Take time. Those outside our profession aren't going to be the ones who defend us and tell our side of the story. If our story is to be told, we must make sure the job is done. It is up to you. It is up to me.

That leads me to the following question, have you ever asked yourself, "Why should I serve?"

Each day people ponder and anguish over this question. These same people wring their hands and spend sleepless nights trying to decide. One of the strongest reasons to serving hinges on the personal satisfaction an individual derives from giving of him or herself. John Ruskin once said, "The highest reward for men's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it."

Before you decide to serve on a board or committee, evaluate the organization's position. If you believe in the ultimate goal but disagree on how it's being implemented, it should be a challenge to serve and redirect the methods used to achieve this goal.

Some people hesitate to serve because they

are unsure how the board or organization operates. No one enjoys appearing foolish or uninformed, yet each group has its unique procedures. Everyone must serve as a novice while learning working procedures.

Never feel embarrassed because you do not know all the answers. Remember, you will not be alone when asking questions.

Perhaps you are uncomfortable about serving and the thought overwhelms you. In that case, don't bite off more than you can chew.

First participate on a small scale until you become comfortable and confident. Begin by serving on a committee. Next expand your sights and serve on a local organization. Continue stepping up your involvement to include county, district, state and national organizations.

Once you have committed your time and effort to serving, be dependable, prompt, prepared and contribute to that committee, organization or board.

"Leadership is that intangible quality in an individual which makes men do better than themselves; which makes men dream greater dreams and perform braver deeds." This quotation embodies the spirit of people working together for the betterment of their industries and communities. It comes from one of Sam Rayburn's, Bonham, TX., addresses to Congress. Rayburn served as speaker of the House under eight different American presidents.

where to write

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