

from our viewpoint...

## Personal problems a public concern?

Everyone loves a good sex scandal. No one admits it, in fact people love to lament about sex scandal coverage even though those are often the most popular news stories. Forget whether or not the country is headed to certain economic doom, let's read about how the county's top spymaster David Petraeus is being unfaithful to his wife.

Is this good? Of course not. However, we need to take a serious look at how we treat public officials who have personal problems. In this case, should we overlook a man's infidelity just because he has a long and distinguished career?

That's a tough question. Adultery has been the downfall of plenty of public officials over the years such as John Edwards, Eliot Spitzer and Tiger Woods. Many end up on the receiving end of a lot of abuse in the press because they advocated values they couldn't live up to.

There is definitely an argument to be made that a person's personal life is none of our business. There is also an argument to be made that public officials surrender that sort of privacy when they get into the public spotlight. Though perhaps we expect too much of our public officials. They are just people like us after all, exactly as capable of making mistakes.

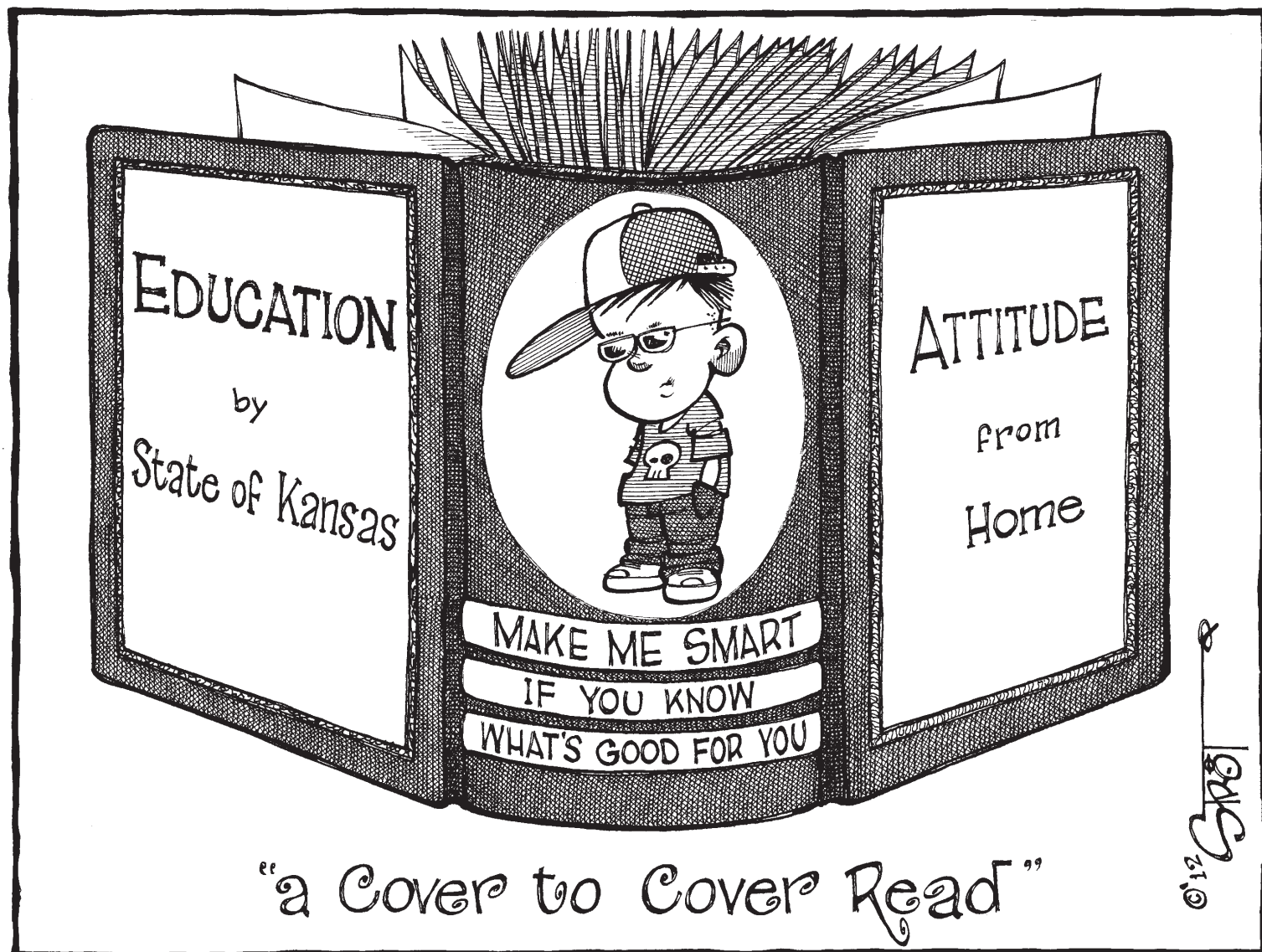
We shouldn't hound these officials and invade their privacy at every turn, but we should hold them accountable if their actions affect their jobs. We're not necessarily talking about the court of law here, but rather the court of public opinion.

Since there has been plenty of double-standard action on this issue over the years, we need to take a case-by-case approach from now on. The standard should be, did said personal issue interfere with or affect that person's professional conduct. In other words, did they allow their personal problems to become work problems.

All the details are not yet out in the open and may never be, so we don't know yet if case involving Petraeus and Gen. John Allen did affect their work. While the volume of e-mails between them and a Tampa, Fla., socialite triggered an FBI investigation, Petraeus says he never passed classified information. He says his resignation was more about honor than legal wrongdoing. If that's truly the case, then his resignation is up to him. We, the public, shouldn't demand it.

However, if it comes out that the affair and events surrounding it did lead to security breaches or other legally questionable actions, then the public has every right to demand action be taken.

The investigation is ongoing and remains murky, but one thing is clear, it is unlikely to be the last time a country will face the question of what to do with public officials with less-than-perfect personal lives. —Kevin Bottrell



## Elections have consequences

The election is over and the ballots have been counted with the winners declared in each race. Our congratulations to the winners, and we appreciate the large turnout of voters who exercised their right to determine who governs as our elected representatives.

The local races matter to those living in Sherman County more than the state or national results, but in one way or another they all have an effect.

We appreciate all those who were willing to run for office whether they won or lost. It is always a tough thing to have a winner and a loser in a contested race. However, it is the election process that allows voters to take stock of those who are their elected representatives and make changes.

The Associated Press reported the races for the U.S. House of Representatives were 30 percent less competitive this election than four years ago. That means the incumbents found it easier to win re-election. The AP says most of that was because of redistricting after the 2010 Census.

In Kansas neither the Dems or Republicans were happy with the lines drawn by the trio of federal judges, and in their wisdom they drew lines without any care of who would be affected. For western Kansas the heavy handed results were the loss of a good representative and a reduction of the number of rural legislators.

The area has a good voice in Ward Cassidy who will do his best, and the re-election of Ralph Ostmeyer in his expanded senate district. It will be incumbent on those living in western Kansas to keep looking for ways to get the interests of the region heard in Topeka.

We were pleased with most of the election results, and especially at the national level where President Barack Obama was able to win re-election winning both the Electoral College by a wide margin and winning the popular vote with a majority.

Both Dems and Republicans have been



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talking about what the national results mean and trying to take credit and establish how the election favored their issues or policies. The balance of power in Washington, D.C., did not change as the Republicans kept control of the House (with a bit smaller majority - it takes 219 and they have 233); the Democrats kept control of the Senate (with an expanded 55-45 margin and two independents working with the Dems); and kept the White House with Obama's second term.

Immediately attention turned to the "fiscal cliff" the two parties have set up over the past 16 months with a deadline of Dec. 31, to avoid the dramatic across the board spending cuts and the end of the Bush tax cuts resulting in large tax increases on all those who work and pay income taxes.

President Obama is working this week to find support for his plans to deal with the impending cloud of doom, and will be sitting down with the House and Senate leaders to find a solution that can pass Congress to be signed by him before the end of the year.

There are some signs the effects of the election are translating into more wiggle room on both sides to face this issue. Both sides want to avoid the doom, but there are suggestions that if an agreement is not reached the country will face the fiscal cliff and leave it to the new Congress to pick up the pieces.

We hope an agreement can be reached in the next five weeks, but feel all is not lost if the worst might happen and all the efforts are in vain. Falling off the cliff could be a way to really shake up things in Washington and force both parties in the new Congress to reach out on

a bipartisan basis with all pledges swept away and take the steps needed to put the country on a balanced road to financial stability.

A needed step we feel is a revision of the Senate rules dealing with the filibuster process. There has been some effort in the past year to develop a way to simplify the filibuster system that allows the minority party to slow down and in many cases stop any action without 60 senators to override the filibuster.

The Republicans made it clear four years ago they were going to oppose President Obama at every step, and in the past two years they have had the votes to stop everything. We do not want to see the filibuster eliminated, but the majority of Americans who voted for the 55 Democrats in the Senate want to see a more evenhanded system. It might be a reduction from 60 to 58 or 57 senators - it was not too many years ago the rule took 66 senators. The most important change would be in not requiring the 60 votes to start debate on a bill, and not requiring 60 votes on every amendment offered to the main bill. Those actions could be on a majority basis leaving the larger majority in place to pass the bill in its final form.

This action may be seen as being partisan, and that would be correct as it would be a little used procedure to change the Senate rules on the opening day of the session. Without an agreement on changes in the filibuster rules the Democrats have the majority votes to make the changes under the Constitutional provision allowing each house to set their own rules.

We would prefer both parties work to revise the rules in a cooperative fashion, but barring such an agreement we feel the changes should be made. We feel that is a consequence of the election.

Time is running out on this Congress, and we will be awaiting the crack of doom or possibly see a beautiful double rainbow appear over Washington. We will not hold our breath for the rainbows.

## Get a good night's sleep

To the Editor:

Dear Sleepless in Goodland, Congratulations on your first official position as Sherman county commissioner. Sir, you ran for office and were elected. President Obama ran for office and was re-elected. There doesn't seem to be the need for your loss of sleep, or for the millions of others you allude to either. Our democracy seems to be alive and well.

Our democracy has survived in spite of the attempt to suppress the vote through unnecessary voter ID requirements and the cynical attempts to use millions of dark dollars to buy votes. A very healthy democracy was on display with citizens all over America standing in long lines for hours to exercise their right to vote.

Now I couldn't help but notice the word "depend" in the title of your recent column in the *Goodland Star-News* entitled "America is past the tipping point." It confuses me why you would go to such great lengths to espouse the same 47 percent argument that cost (Gov. Mitt) Romney the election. Are you, like he, casting aspersions on recipients of Social Security or disabled veterans?

Americans still vote with their pocketbooks. The new Affordable Health Care Act is a pocket-book issue. By the way, it asks that you pay your own way, that everyone be responsible for their own health care. Isn't that a conservative principle? So, no, government is not paying for your health care. You are.

A woman's right to choose is a pocketbook issue. Certainly government staying out of the



**from our readers**

• to the editor

bedroom and not legislating a woman's reproductive rights is less government, not more. Surely you can agree on less government.

The auto industry bailout, however you may personally feel about it, must have seemed like a pocketbook issue to the Ohio and Detroit auto workers. So, people did vote for pocketbook issues. The demographics may have changed, the faces of Americans may have changed, but the electorate still remains the same hard-working Americans of yesteryear. They're not all white, but that makes them no less American.

You speak of "dictators and tyrants the world over" not being worried about interference from the "Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave." Ask Osama Ben Laden about that. Oh, but I guess you can't, can you? He's dead. Seal Team 6, on the president's order, did indeed interfere with his twisted designs, and the twisted designs of a slew of other Al Qaeda mini-tyrants.

If you do care about America, as I am sure you do, do you really think that the loose and irresponsible use of language advances your cause with ordinary, decent folks? I believe in freedom of speech as much as you do, but playing fast and loose with the truth to falsely label an opponent doesn't seem all that American,

does it? By the way, neither Karl Marx nor Mao Tse Tung were freely elected to office in a democratic society.

I should think that Republicans would take pride in fulfilling Abraham Lincoln's great and historic accomplishment, not only freeing the slaves but guaranteeing their right to vote and hold office. How can you not think that America's first black president would not make Lincoln proud?

Jefferson, too, because of his saying, for the world to hear, that in this country, all men are created equal.

The fact that a majority of the country elected and re-elected a black president is an affirmation of our American values and a trumpet call to the world that in the United States of America, everyone has a chance to succeed.

Yet, it isn't the historical significance of the first black president or empty idealism that won his re-election. He was re-elected for his vision of a fiscally balanced approach of revenue and debt reduction and his unwavering belief in the American people.

You, sir, have been duly elected to office. I pray that you will take your position seriously, abandon your doomsday rhetoric, reject old and worn arguments and strive to bring people together rather than drive them apart.

Please don't forget, God loves us all, and patriots come in all sizes, shapes, and colors.

Get a good night's sleep. God Bless America.

Judith E. Green Colby

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