

from our viewpoint...

Don't treat gun owners like criminals

Earlier this week, the *Journal News*, a newspaper in New York, put together a map of registered handgun owners, including their names and addresses and put it out to the public. It shows a red dot with the location of every handgun owner across two counties. Click on that dot and it shows you their name and address.

The map has obviously drawn a lot of comments, both in support and criticizing the decision.

Did the *Journal News* violate the law? No. Everything that was used was public information from handgun permits. The county clerks told the paper that there was information that could not be released such as type of handguns each person possessed or the number of guns owned.

What the paper did, however, was violate good taste and step all over people's right not to be persecuted for lawful activities. That's not spelled out right in the Constitution, but it's at the core of who we are: that if you follow the law, you can live your life free of harassment.

Over the years, similar things have been done with sex offender registries. Like the cursory information from the handgun permits, such information about sex offenders is also public information. But that registry is there for criminal activity. People on that registry are on there because they have done something wrong. The gun ownership map is the exact opposite. People are on that map because they followed the law.

We understand that everyone is upset over the Newtown massacre, but we have to think through our reactions. You cannot trample on the rights of law abiding citizens just because one person goes off to the deep end. It would be like singling out anyone who's ever rented a Ryder truck just because the Oklahoma City bombers used a Ryder truck.

If you have a concern about a neighbor, it should be your responsibility to look up public records on them. It is not for newspapers to "out" every gun owner in their area as if because one gun owner does something wrong, they all have.

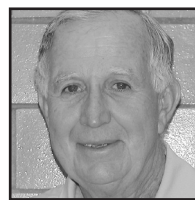
Whatever you think of gun ownership and gun owners, we should all be able to agree that gun owners are not criminals simply by virtue of being gun owners, and they should not be portrayed as such. —Kevin Bottrell



Capitol improvements worth the money

On Jan. 14 the newly elected Legislature will gather in the State Capitol for the start of the 2013 session. It will be the first time in six years that all legislators will have an office space in the Capitol Building. Because I am now the Education Budget chair I will have my own office. I will be in Topeka Jan. 2 through 5 getting training on running a committee and setting up my office.

If you have an opportunity to travel to Topeka this session to see the Kansas Legislature in action, or if you would like to see the Kansas taxpayers \$340 million investment in the capitol renovations, I would enjoy showing you around. Although I disagree with much of the expense associated with the renovations, the fresh look, additional space, and furnishings in the capitol are impressive to behold. The inside



ward cassidy

• state rep.

is now completely finished and the outside is scheduled to be finished next December. If you could give me a few days notice prior to your arrival it would help me plan my schedule to try to have a little more time to spend with you.

There will be many issues discussed during the 2013 session, but it appears the headline issues will be taxes, government spending (the budget), and education finance. I would sincerely appreciate your input and will post my contact information as soon as I have ev-

erything updated.

Kansas Revenue Update: tax only revenues in November came in \$2.5 million above estimates that had been revised by the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group earlier this month. The good news is the amount of individual income taxes collected was \$3.5 million higher than projected for November which puts the total to \$55 million more than was collected last year. A question we are all asking is what is going to happen when income tax goes away?

Sales tax collections fell short in November by \$29 million, but they were above last November. Sales tax is \$27 million ahead of what was brought in July-November in 2011.

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters and letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: <star.news@nwkansan.com>.

Time to thank those road crews

It's weeks like last week that ought to make use appreciate the guys who keep the roads open and safe for travel, day or night, rain or snow: the state highway crews, troopers and deputies, firemen and all the others who keep us moving and sometimes save us from ourselves.

Most of the time, we take them for granted. The only time we come in contact with a trooper might be when we're going a bit too fast. And highway crews, there the guys with the orange cones and stop signs who hold us back, make us late for that appointment in the next town.

We haven't have much winter yet, but that's when these people really shine. State crews went to 12-hour shifts as the storm approached, keeping the plows moving day and night until the roads were clear.

Say what you will, but I have a lot of respect for people who can work that way, 12 hours on, 12 off, in the worst weather of the year, plowing icy roads in a howling storm where sometimes you can't see the road at all.

But you know there are people out there who depend on you, the ones stuck in the ditch, the ones hurt in icy spinouts, the ones who might be stuck if you don't keep plowing.

Troopers and tow-truck drivers, deputies and



cynthia haynes

• open season

firemen all have to get out in the storm to check the people stuck in the ditch, direct traffic, hook up chains, all the time never knowing when the next driver might not stop in time, might go skidding out of control. It's no wonder the close the roads when things get bad.

This isn't just work; it's stress. Not that working out on the road is much easier in the summer. The sun is hot, safety rules make the work drag on and people don't slow down much just because you're out there in orange.

Flagging may look like the easiest job, but it's maybe the hardest. You're on your feet in the sun all day, with wind, dust, rain and traffic. And stress. Who knows if the woman barreling down on you is awake, or on the phone, or yelling at her kids, or talking on the phone? Who knows if she sees the flag? Who knows if she's even going to stop?

Yeah, a lot of times it may not look like the

crew is getting much done. Sure, there're all those jokes about road crews; you know, "What's orange and sleeps three?"

The people who think these things up have never driven a plow alone at night in a blizzard, or shoveled hot asphalt patch on a summer day, or stood and flagged traffic, safely, for hours on end.

They have nice office jobs, live in California maybe. It's OK. A lot of guys on the road crews have a sense of humor.

But next time you see a bunch of road workers—but only if it's safe to stop—why you might just want to stop and say thanks. Tell 'em how much you appreciate what they do, day and night, winter and summer. Same for the trooper in your town or the deputy who lives down the block, your neighbor the volunteer fireman, the tow-truck guy who never seems to have a think to do all day.

Not many people bother, you know. Most just drive on buy or shake their fist at the delay. (How do they think roads get fixed, anyway?)

Heck, stop and talk to the guys, they might just show you some of those new shovels the state bought. You know, the ones that stand up by themselves so the crew can get some work done.

Silence is golden



Insight this week

• john schlageck

Today, information bombards us like a meteor shower. It's everywhere.

Each day our eyes see thousands of images on television and computer screens. Our ears hear thousands of words. Many people read thousands of words on the printed page.

People text and talk. They Facebook and walk. They Twitter and tweet. They blog and beep. They Bluetooth—I didn't know that was even a word until a few years ago. One thing I do know, it shouldn't be a verb.

Folks who can't speak or write our English language are making up their own version daily, but that's a whole 'nother story.

Does anyone listen anymore?

Listening and reading. Wise men and women throughout history have told us we ought to be doing more of this. Give your eyes a rest from the video world every now and then.

Guess what?

Every day, I scan about a half dozen newspapers online. I even pick up a copy of the *Kansas City Star* and hold the "real thing" in my mitts nearly every Sunday.

And books, both in paper, hardback and my Nook, I can't begin to think of how many I've read during the last 50 years. I read every day, and sometimes I have two or three books going at the same time.

One of my favorite authors, Leo Tolstoy ("War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina") used to choose a theme and offer a wise thought for each day of the year. He coupled this with quotes from some of the greatest philosophers of all times.

Here are a few of the thoughts on which Tolstoy reflected. Most have to do with listening.

- After a long conversation, stop and try to remember what you have just discussed. Don't be surprised if many things, sometimes all things you discuss, are meaningless, empty and trivial.
- A stupid person should keep silent. But if he knew this, he would not be a stupid person. — Saadi.
- If you want to be a clever person, you have to learn how to ask cleverly, how to listen attentively, how to respond quietly and how to stop talking when there is nothing more to say.
- People whose only motivation is to say

something original utter many stupid things. — Voltaire.

- If you have time to think before you start talking, think.
- Will what I have to say harm anyone? Is it necessary to speak?

Nothing can support idleness better than empty chatter. People would do better to keep silent rather than speak the boring, empty things they routinely say to entertain themselves.

- First think, then speak. Stop when told, "enough." — Saadi.
- Those people speak most who do not have much to say.
- People are taught to speak, but their major concern should be how to keep silent.
- I have spent all my life amongst wise people, and I have found nothing better than silence in this world. If a word costs one coin, then silence costs two. — Talmud.
- Keep silent. Rest your tongue more often than you do your hands. You will never regret that you have kept silent, but you will often regret that you spoke too much.
- Do not say words you do not feel, lest your soul be blackened with darkness. — The Book of Divine Thoughts.
- Silence is golden. Listen.

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