

Pay no attention to lapel pin nonsense

Where do we come up with these senseless charges? The latest, you probably know by now, indicates if you do not wear an American flag lapel pin you are not patriotic. Sick!

Those who dream up this kind of stuff have way too much time on their hands. And as far as I am concerned, advancing this kind of thinking puts them in the unpatriotic category.

Speaking for myself, I do not wear an American flag lapel pin. If I wear a lapel pin at all, it is blue in color and outlined in silver. It is a United States Air Force pin and it contains the letter "P" denoting me as the parent of a child in the Air Force. My oldest son, Lance, is in his 18th year serving this country.

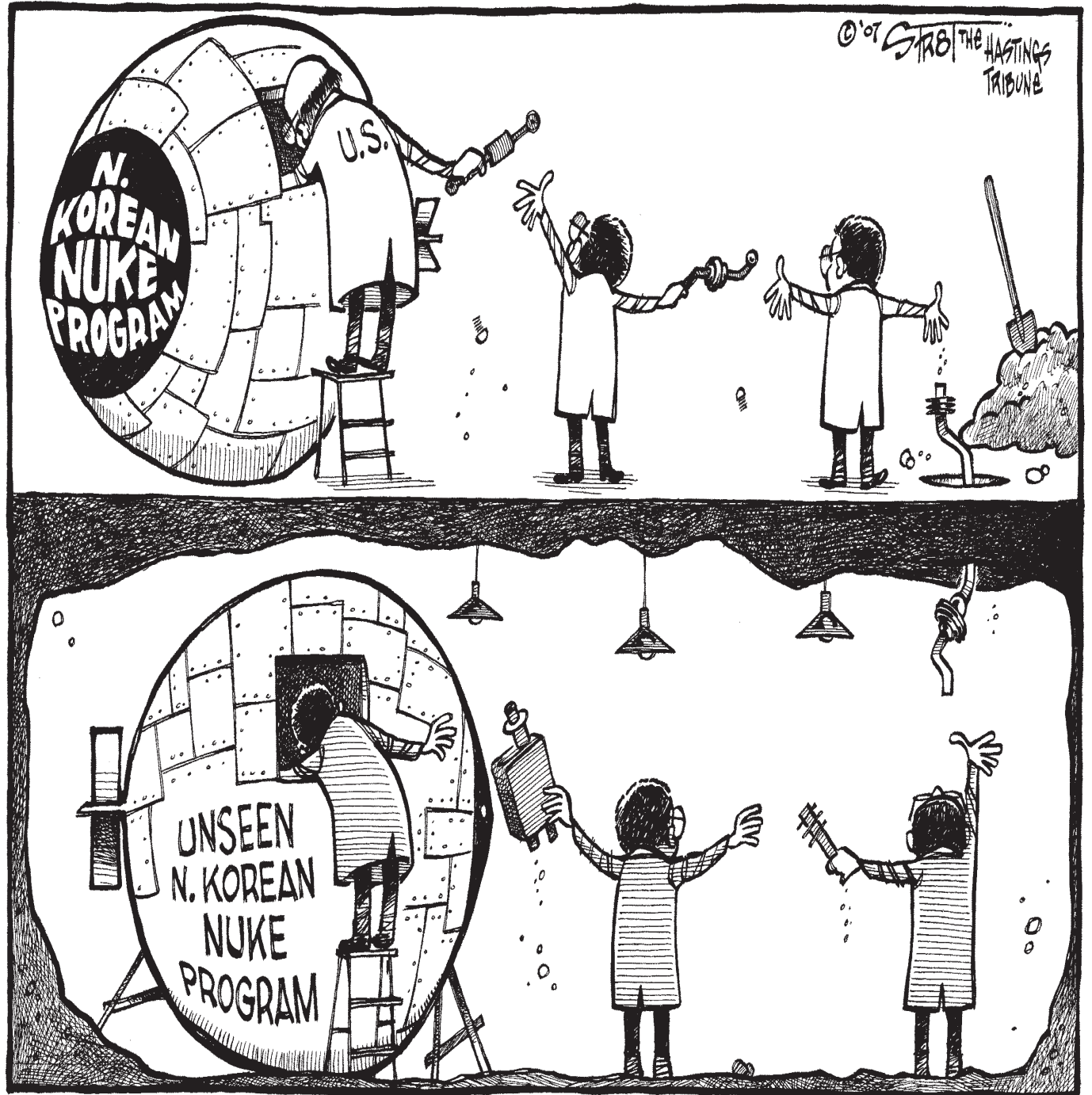
As for me, I wear it too, because I was a member of the United States Air Force from 1955-1963. I served my country on its soil and on foreign soil. How much more patriotic can I get?

Furthermore, I have a Blue Star Flag on my front door. For those not familiar with such a flag, it denotes me as the parent of a child in the military.

What else need I do to convince these, what I call "patriotic cops," that I am patriotic? I simply choose not to wear my patriotism on my lapel.

It will be interesting now to see what else they drum up to toss most of us out of the patriotic camp. Thank God there are more of us than there are them.

— Tom Dreiling



Leave Electoral College alone

The presidential election of 1800 was a real test of our electoral system. Both Aaron Burr and Thomas Jefferson received 73 electoral votes. The election was thrown into the House of Representatives where Jefferson was finally awarded the presidency after several inconclusive votes.

In the election of 1876, Samuel Tilden and Rutherford Hayes each lacked a majority of the Electoral College with the votes of three southern states in doubt. A special commission had to be formed to settle the issue. When it ruled, Hayes was declared the winner by one electoral vote.

In the election of 2000, Al Gore received 51,003,894 votes to George Bush's 50,459,211. But as you may remember the electoral vote of Florida was in doubt. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Florida's electoral vote should be awarded to George Bush, giving him 271 electoral votes to Al Gore's 266.

The presidential election of 1960 was also very close and John F. Kennedy's election was in doubt for a time. But in each case the people accepted the results and united behind the new leader. Citizens need to participate in elections, be involved in the process and take their vote seriously. But they also need to accept the outcome of the election and support the winner. The choice of the people has a legitimate claim to authority that allows them to lead.

Some feel that our Electoral College needs to be replaced and the results awarded to the winner of the popular vote. That's a very tempting idea, but I think it would be unworkable in a close election. If every single vote cast by every single voter could decide the election, then every single challenged vote could change the outcome. With over 100 million votes cast, with thousands challenged every election, an extremely close vote might be impossible to resolve.

I think the Electoral College, despite its flaws, is a safer system. (bkstrevey@hotmail.com.)

Citizen Duties

Bob Strevey



Thirteen years with 'Mr. Great'

Jim and I celebrated our 13th wedding anniversary this week. We agreed to renew the lease and "re-up" for another 13 years. I'm being a little flip on a very serious subject. We are both totally committed to our marriage and that has been our secret. Each of us knows the other will be there — no matter what.

We've already been through a lot together: my mother's death; daughter's marriages; Jim's mother's death; grandchildren's births; job changes; house remodeling; a son's incarceration; my brother and nephew's deaths; Jim's semi-retirement.

It is all part of that "for better or worse" clause.

And, there is no one I'd rather face "the rest of our lives" with.

Our little one-year-old granddaughter, Ani, is growing up. She says the usual baby words but the latest addition to her vocabulary is "who-dat."

When I call her mother, I can hear little

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



Ani in the background saying, "Who-dat? Who-dat?"

We need to see her soon so she knows who-dat is. It's Grandma and Pa-Pa.

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After watching the news this morning I wonder what it takes to shock the American public.

Over the weekend an off-duty law enforcement officer went on what the news media is calling a rampage and killed six people. It was the lead story, but generated no more coverage than coverage of "shock-jock" Don Imus' bid to get back on the radio.

It was in the 1960s when life in the U.S.

stopped to learn the details of the deaths of a family of four in southwest Kansas. Nothing like that had ever happened before. People were stunned.

Have we become so immune to senseless killings that it barely ranks a "blip" on our life's radar? My theory: We all suffer from "bad news overload." Television has taken us to the front lines of war, behind the scenes at a terrorist bombing in Oklahoma and right into the middle of the carnage following a hurricane that hit Louisiana.

I think that's why I like small-town newspapers. It's mostly good news. We can read about young people's accomplishments at school or in sports; golden wedding anniversaries; births; even promotions. It's not often we have to report bad news. There are always the obituaries and accident reports. If bad news happens we have to report it.

We can, however, do it without sensationalizing it. We'll leave that sort of thing to the coffee shop gossip mongers.

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Let us hope for a veto override

There are few things I think are as important as health care and health insurance. As an individual and as a family, we know all too well the damning effects of poor health on a family's economic status. I applaud Tom Dreiling's editorial regarding SCHIP, or for the state of Kansas, a children's insurance plan known as Health Wave. This program is designed for families whose income makes them ineligible for Medicaid but without enough income to enroll in private insurance. Funding for this program initially came about through federal government action in 1997. I also applaud Congressman Jerry Moran for knowing his constituents and voting to support a program important to Kansas families.

Poor health does not only affect the family, but the economic status of entire communities. Missed workdays and school days impact us all. As a family we were blessed with good health insurance. Yes, we paid a high premium, but the government matched the amount and we were often blessed with doctors and hospitals willing to accept our insurance

Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



as complete payment. No family should have to decide when to take a child to the doctor based on, can we pay the bill?

On this subject, Congressman Moran knows his district and their needs, but do we know our community as well? Do we know the economic health of our children? A reflection of a community's economic status is the number of free or reduced lunches in the schools.

Over 41 percent of the youth in our schools in Norton County qualify for reduced or free lunches.* In addition to this, 14.8 percent of children under the age of 18 in Norton County live at or below the federal poverty line and 10.9 percent of our children in Norton County have no health insurance.* Not only does this reflect the health status of our youngsters,

it reflects the stress felt by families and in turn communities.

As Mr. Dreiling alluded to in his editorial, much of the Congressional and the Country's concern regarding this program was over the status of illegal immigrants and their access to this service. As he said, illegal immigrants would not qualify for the program, thus much of their health care will come through emergency services costing us even more.

A vote will come up again to override the veto, let us hope this will happen and the thousands of uninsured children across the country will be the beneficiaries.

Eventually we will have to address the issue of children of illegal immigrants and their health care. I would wonder, however if we live by our faith, then color, nationality and residence would not determine the welfare of a child.

"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God." Luke 18:16 RSV

*http://www.dhe.state.ks.us/kic/profile/profile.aspx?selectCounty=68

Remember: Friday is 'Thumbs Up...' day

Get involved, write a Letter to the Editor