

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Listening tour shows issues of concern

To The Colby Free Press:

I recently completed my ninth annual Big First Listening Tour, holding town hall meetings in each of the 69 counties in the First Congressional District.

I appreciated meeting with all those in Thomas County who took time out of their day to share their ideas and concerns with me. As your representative, it's key for me to understand what issues Kansans want their congressman to focus on.

My efforts in Washington, D.C. remain much the same today, as they were when I was first elected. To see that we have a little prosperity in the Kansas communities we call home.

However, we have our work cut out for us. While our economy has showed signs of improvement, the costs of doing business and raising a family, from fuel prices to health care costs, continue to grow.

I will continue my efforts to ease these burdens for the people of Kansas.

If there were any issues that we did not get to discuss of if you were unable to attend, you can always contact me through my website at: www.house.gov/moranks01/

It is a tremendous privilege to represent Kansas in Congress. Please let me know how I can better serve you in the future.

I pledge to work for you, and with you, to make good things happen for Kansas.

Congressman Jerry Moran
First District Kansas
(Letter #71)

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail pjschief@nwkans.com or pdecker@nwkans.com.

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Animals have their own tale

With all the heart-wrenching stories resulting from Hurricane Katrina, it saddens me even more when I hear about the animals left behind.

While I believe people should always come first in a crisis, referring to Hurricane Katrina, it is still difficult to think about having to leave a pet behind.

Although some animal lovers might take losing a pet in stride — for countless others — it has got to be horrible.

Maybe I sound “shallow” or that I am placing priorities in the wrong order — maybe call me too emotional, but being a pet owner myself and having children who nurtured pets all their lives — I cannot help but feel sorrow.

Whenever tragedy strikes, i.e., fire, tornado, flood, hurricane, or other disaster, split decisions must be made. Fortunately, I have never had to make this kind of decision and I pray I never will have to.

People come first, but that doesn't mean the devastation wouldn't haunt me for weeks, months or even my lifetime, depending on the severity of the crisis and what my pets might have endured.

In the event there wouldn't be enough time to get a pet, I would hope they could get out themselves — somehow.

Ever since I can remember, my family has always had pets around. We had dogs, hamsters, guinea pigs and turtles — along with even a couple of red foxes.

My brother worked for the Henson Robinson Zoo in Springfield, Ill. many years ago and during remodeling, he brought a few exotic animals home from time to time.



Patty Decker • Deep Thoughts

In fact, this same brother, owned a desert tortoise named Tex. Logan had bought the turtle at a roadside place near Troy at the age of 10 or thereabouts. He kept the turtle in a big plastic pool and every day, Tex would go out for exercise in the hot, humid summer days of Illinois. During the winter, the turtle hibernated. This cycle went on for years until one day my brother decided Tex deserved better and so he and the turtle visited the St. Louis Zoo. Apparently, the zoo people told Logan they were thrilled to have a desert tortoise and would make sure Tex was getting lots of fresh air and would be with other tortoise buddies.

Happily, Logan gave the zoo his turtle. Then about a year later, after returning from Viet Nam, he went back to the zoo to visit Tex. I have no idea how Logan would know which one of the many tortoises was Tex, but he did. The bad part was that the zoo had given Tex a home in a dark, damp pit located beneath the sunny tortoise environment above.

Unhappy with the arrangement, my brother went to the caretakers and demanded an explanation. When he was told there were just too many desert tortoises around, Logan insisted on taking his tortoise back. Consequently, Tex came back home for the next five

years or so until a better home was found elsewhere. In fact, Tex ended up at the zoo in Springfield.

I suppose the point I was trying to make is how much my parents taught us to appreciate all living things and how I have tried to pass that message on to my own children.

Looking back, I have lost a lot of little critters to old age or other ailments, but each one holds a special place in heart.

Throughout the years, I know my animals have meant so much to me as I am sure they did to those in the south. Pets have been by my side when I was happy or sad, sick or healthy. Knowing that I couldn't do anything in their time of need — well, it's something I don't really want to think about.

I certainly wouldn't advocate for leaving people behind — it's just that I feel a lot of compassion for those in the south who had to give up a pet.

Yet there were a lot of people evacuated and, with animals, because some rescuers were able to take both.

This hurricane has shattered the world of so many people and certainly pets were only one aspect. In the words of James Herriott, “All creatures great and small, the Lord God made them all.”

Everything from the point when Hurricane Katrina hit has changed these people's lives forever and, like most of us, I too pray for a quick recovery in the south.

Decker is editor of the Free Press. She can be reached by email: pdecker@nwkans.com.

Response to Katrina overwhelming

In the two weeks since Hurricane Katrina so devastatingly struck the southern United States, I have been contacted by many Kansans asking how to participate in the disaster relief effort. The heartfelt response of Kansans has been overwhelming and yet representative of the compassion and selflessness that I have seen in the many men and women I have had the pleasure of meeting over the years that I have represented our state in Washington.

I know I extend the sincere thanks of the residents of the Gulf Coast, the evacuees, and the relief workers when I say thank you for contributing and for keeping those affected by this disaster in mind.

I hope to list here some of the outlets that Kansans can use to find out how they can be of assistance during these difficult times. I am pleased to announce that the Senate has passed two supplemental emergency aid packages totaling \$62.3 billion to continue the critical rescue and relief efforts for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

This reflects the Congress' and the president's commitment to the people devastated by the extreme disaster that struck the Gulf Coast.

Over 65,000 active duty and National Guard personnel, including 200 from the Kansas Guard, are in the Gulf Region conducting search, rescue and voluntary evacuation operations. They are restoring flooded roads, building bridges and clearing millions of gal-

Pat Roberts • U.S. Senator

lons of contaminated flood water as well as providing critical medical care, water and food.

Many of the federal agencies have set up special web-sites and hotline phone numbers that will be helpful during this time of rebuilding.

While I know there has been criticism about the local, state and federal responses in the first few days of the catastrophe, there are many developments that have since occurred to improve the situation. Let me share with you some of the federal resources now available:

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the main agency coordinating disaster assistance and relief. The organization's website, www.fema.gov, provides information on donating a wide variety of items, volunteering, finding loved ones, and applying for aid. Please do not hesitate to call my office (202) 224-4774 for more information.

The Department of Labor recently created the website <http://www.jobsearch.org/katrinajobs> to connect workers impacted by the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina

with employers who want to hire them. Katrina Recovery Job Connections can also be accessed through America's Job Bank at <http://www.ajb.org>

The Department of Education has set up <http://www.ed.gov/katrina>, which provides information for providing school supplies to displaced students. Regarding the many public health and health-related services being provided and organized by the Department of Health and Human Services, including missing persons information, please visit <http://www.hhs.gov/katrina>.

The Department of Defense website, <http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/2005/katrina/> can be accessed by military families attempting to locate loved ones, seeking counseling and making general inquiries.

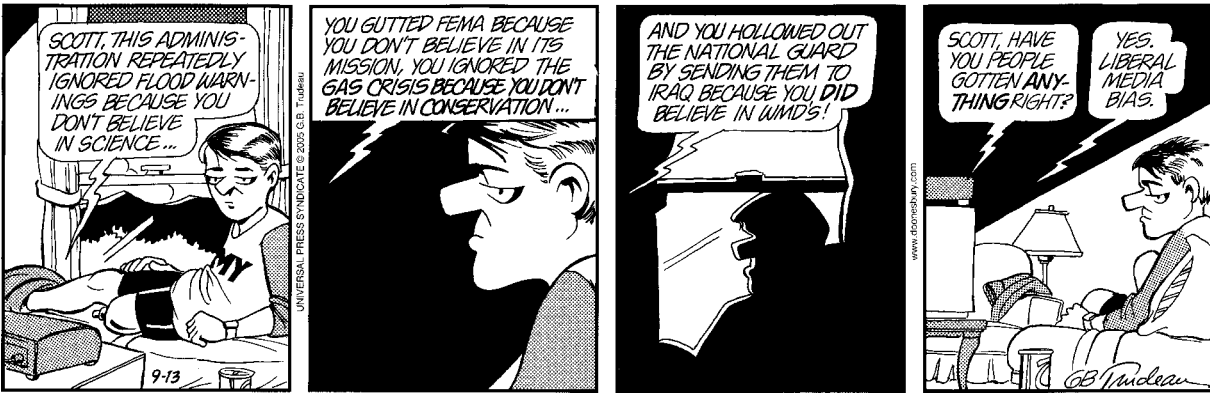
This website may also be used by members of the Armed Forces overseas looking for information on their families in the Gulf Coast region.

Lastly, the state of Kansas has set up a website as well: http://www.ksready.gov/hurricane_Katrina.htm. I commend all Kansans that have volunteered and donated to this national disaster.

My thoughts and prayers are with the people in the Gulf Coast as we persevere through this difficult time.

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