

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint

Jumping the gun

Perhaps we should have expected it. For someone who is new to the job and comes with no experience, Kansas Education Commissioner Bob Corkins hasn't wasted any time in making some wacky statements.

On Oct. 26, Corkins told legislators they should not use an education cost study ordered by the Kansas Supreme Court as a guide for how to fund schools.

The study isn't even complete and Corkins already is attempting to discredit it. Corkins seems to believe that the Legislature can thumb its nose at the court, and the court has clearly shown in the past that he is wrong. It appears to us that Corkins' actions are less about doing his job of providing a quality education for our youth, and more about partisan politics.

We think Corkins is off base and out of line.

Instead of working against the study, Corkins should be making every possible resource available to ensure that the study is accurate and thorough. Kansas spends nearly \$3 billion each year on education, and the court said it would implement an increase of \$568 million for the 2006-07 school year if the Legislature doesn't come up with a separate valid cost-study for public schools.

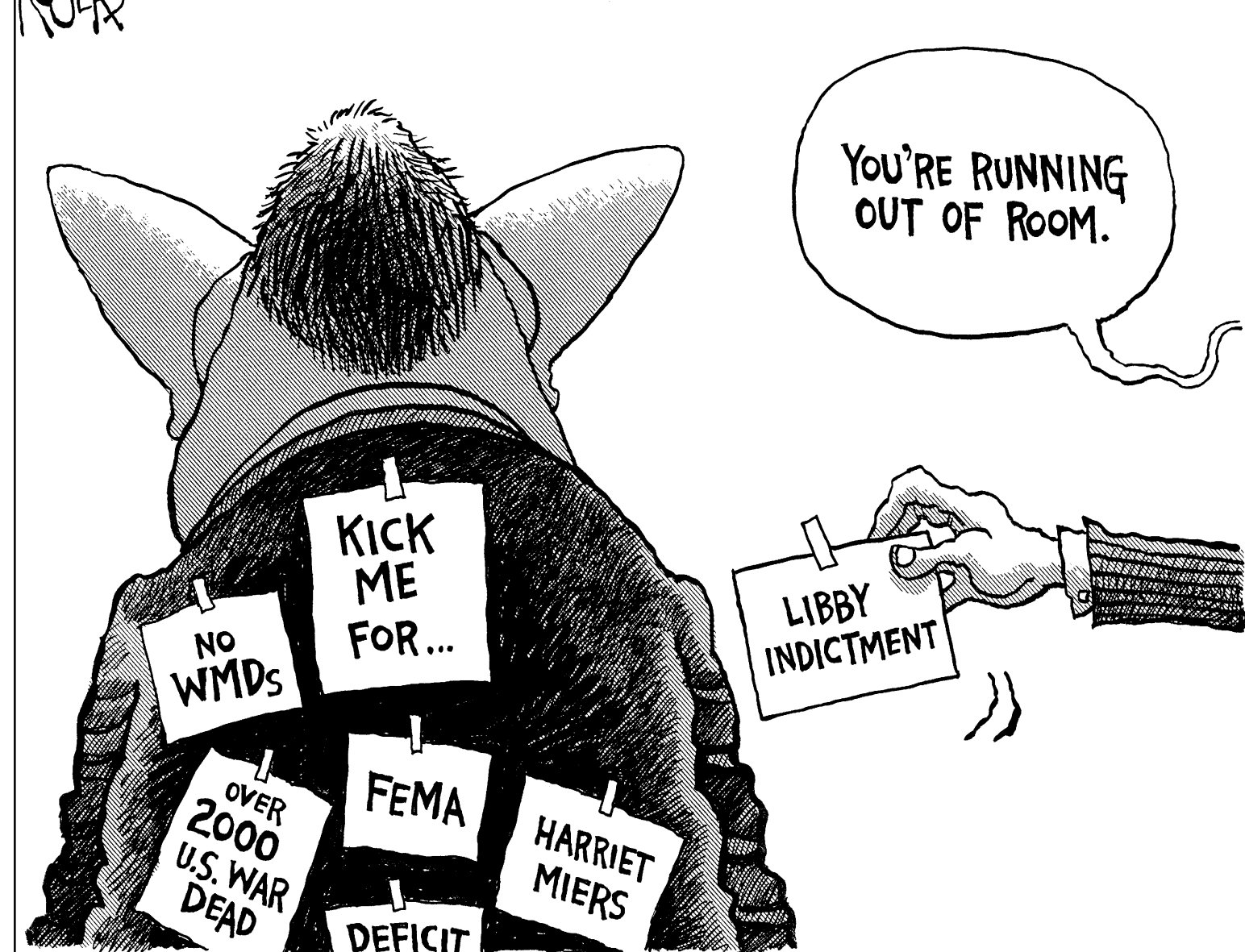
There was little accomplished in the last two legislative sessions because of similar political posturing. Instead of picking sides before we hear the evidence, legislators should take a look at the study — which is expected to be completed by Jan. 9 — and then go from there.

But conclusions shouldn't be made before then.

Let's stop playing games and start worrying about our kids.

From The Pittsburg Morning Sun

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About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered

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 jvannostrand@nwks.com or pdecker@nwks.com.

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e-mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
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New son-in-law helps with new culture

Our daughter, Tracy, recently got married and, like most newlyweds, she and her husband, David, are learning how to live together.

What makes life for them even more complicated and sometimes comical is that Tracy grew up in small town, rural Colby, America, and conversely, David was born and raised in large, metropolitan, Berlin, Germany.

David speaks English and, of course, is fluent in German. Tracy, after one year of intense schooling six hours a day, is now speaking German and, of course, is fluent in English.

The two of them met in Canada about four years ago while Tracy was living in Seattle. In the beginning, they had a long-distance relationship, but as time went on they decided they didn't want to live apart. So when Tracy graduated from the Seattle Art Institute, she told us she was packing up and heading for Germany. Gosh, that was tough and yet I know it was the right decision for her and David.

It's been fun to hear about the differences in cultures and how they both are adapting.

One thing that David told Randy and I when he came to Colby about two years ago was that he loves America. Generally speaking, he said Americans have positive attitudes as opposed to Germans, who he believes are rude and negative by nature.

While staying in Colby, we learned how much David loves American hamburgers. As a flight attendant with Germany's Lufthanza airline, David travels all over the world, but when he comes to America, he just has to have his hamburger quota.

In fact, David likes to grade his food in restaurants. In Colby, for example, he graded most of our restaurants in the A- to B- range. Nice to know we are honor roll recipients.

Speaking of food, Tracy was saying that David loves to cook and they love "Thai" food. It just seems odd to hear her say, "Mmmmmmm" referring to Coco milk, baby eggplants, sesame sauce, fresh thai basil and coriander, which are some ingredients for Thai recipes. I don't even



Patty Decker • Deep Thoughts

know what coriander is.

Asparagus was another thing that she told me people in Germany go crazy over. What I learned from her is that when white asparagus is in season (maybe in the spring), people actually throw "spargel" parties and German restaurants incorporate this fresh asparagus into everything — even wine stores post a list of the "best to drink with asparagus."

Six times in one month, she and David ate asparagus, ham and potatoes and even traveled 45 miles south of Berlin to Beelitz, also known as "spargel country" to get the best white asparagus around.

In addition to working for the airline, David also helps a friend out on Saturdays by selling sausages at a market.

As for Tracy, she too has a couple of jobs with one of them fun, but stressful because of the language barrier. She is working at an upscale French bakery, is involved with a market-research company called Infratel and as a freelance photographer taking pictures at weddings, family gatherings and shooting for some advertising companies.

Since her degree is in photography, she is glad to be keeping her skills up even though its only once in awhile.

She hasn't been at the bakery very long and although the lady who interviewed her and trained her said her German was good and nothing she should worry about as a hindrance, still Tracy said there are days.

Some poor guy, she told me, asked for a napkin and she said she asked him if he was sitting

outside and gave him nothing. At first, she thought he said the table was dirty. Seeing her struggle, one of Tracy's other customers seated at the bar handed the other customer a "servietten" or napkin. She said it was a humbling experience.

I also enjoy David's writing and conversations. Here is one example of his writing while traveling and it was cute. He is talking about taking a trip and his experience at a spa during his time off. He wrote:

The trip in a old, very old truck with a crazy driving driver took an hour and half...passing walking cows, little villages, dust and dirt, and a lot of mud because of the night rain. The farm is a little chill out place with different houses which look like little temples. In the middle of that place was a pool with gold fishes, little rabbits in cozy cages, ducks, chickens, it was so peaceful.

Cultural changes have been tough for Tracy, but she loves her husband and her second home. She did make a quick list of things she likes and things she misses.

She said:
—I like fresh bread from the bakery every-day;

—I like all of the old buildings and beautiful parks;

—I like the way I can get lost anywhere in the city and find a subway station 10 feet away;

—and, I still really like the guy who drug me here, so I will survive.

As for misses:

—I miss washing machines that don't take two hours;

—I miss safe driving conditions;

—I miss the voices of English-speaking actors (they dub everything);

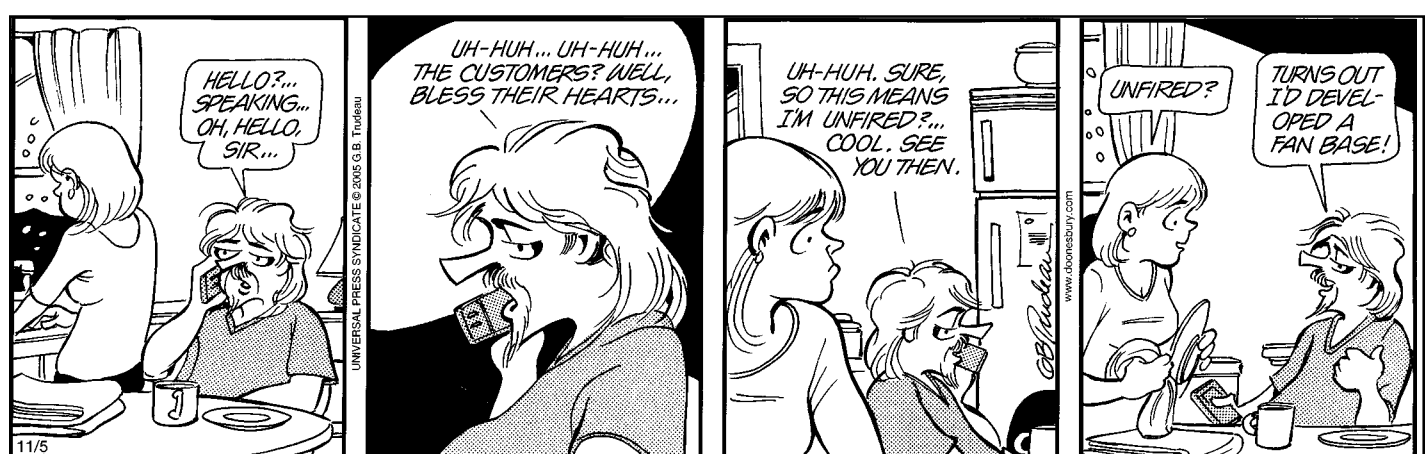
—but most of all, I miss you guys!

One last thing, for those who remember Tracy, her and David's wedding picture is on page 5 in today's edition.

Decker is the editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau



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