

# Opinion



## A Kansas Viewpoint

### The cost of special education

From the Parsons Sun

There are few things more heartbreaking than to see a developmentally disabled child sitting on the outside looking in. Whether the handicap is mental, physical or both, none of them are disabled because they chose to be. None of them want to be made fun of, shunned or find themselves friendless.

And as with other children, they take delight in learning new things and conquering new skills.

Nearly 30 years ago Congress passed a mandate that schools provide special education programs to help disabled children learn to the best of their abilities. Since that time these children have been able to attain previously unrecognized levels of accomplishment.

The downside is that special education is expensive. In recognizing that, Congress agreed to fund 40 percent of the cost above that of a traditional education. That was nearly 30 years ago. To date, Congress still only picks up the tab for about 18 percent of the cost.

Sen. Pat Roberts is calling on Congress to live up to its promise and provide full funding for this "granddaddy of all unfunded mandates," freeing up local money for districts to spend on local priorities. Bless him.

Mainstreaming special needs students into society can help them lead remarkably productive lives. In fact, that's the whole reason behind the congressional mandate in the first place.

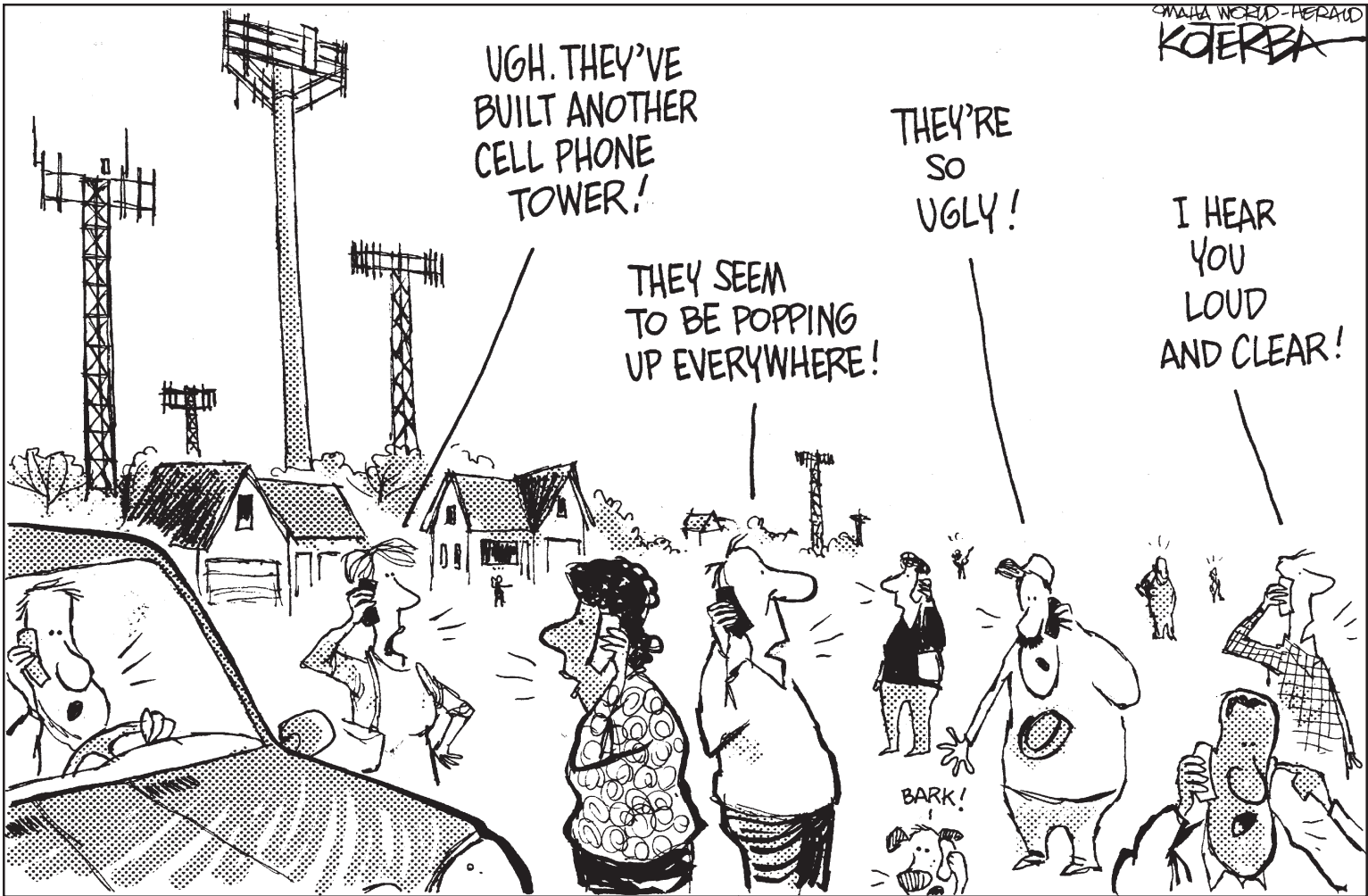
Additionally, mainstreamed students later perform far above the level they would have otherwise. In fact, most are able to become productive citizens on some level, living more independently and contributing to the economy in a healthy manner.

Roberts is backing a bi-partisan bill that will increase federal funding by more than \$2 billion each year for five years, at which time Congress should be able to meet the obligation of its own mandate. Congressional members with moral principles will join him with their support.

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@nwkansas.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansas.com) or [pdecker@nwkansas.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansas.com).

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### A voice of reason



**John Van Nostrand**

#### • Line in the Dust

Ag Day.

At the same time, naive people wanted to build big fancy houses in the country but didn't like the farmer neighbor so they would sue to make him quit farming, even though, some times, the farmer was there first.

And one of the Kennedys, I can't remember which one, was touring the state implying corporate hog farms are similar to Osama bin Laden. Some Iowa counties, including the one I was living in, had approved a moratorium on new construction of large-number livestock facilities.

Like the snow shovels that were out in force that day, Loos' words were the best tool to get to the bottom of things. Loos said rural America is under attack. Loos explained how there has been a push to eliminate the American farm. Some ways were more complex than others.

Although an Illinois dairy farmer won many nuisance cases against his complaining neighbors, he had to file bankruptcy because of the mounting attorney fees.

Loos commented on how many Disney animal-character movies had the animal win in the end, implying animal rights are priority. A big

growth in the insurance industry is for pet care policies. Loos was wondering if we are putting animals higher on the scale than people.

Loos wants rural people, especially those in farming, to fight back.

During his tour of the country, Loos said he once saw a high school FFA chapter hold a hamburger fundraiser event beside an animal-rights protest. The FFA chapter made some bucks and friends that day, considering there were people right beside them opposed to what they represent.

Animal rights are picking their battles. Loos said there has never been a push by animal rights activists to end driving because of the tens of thousands of deaths of animals by vehicles.

Probably my favorite thing Loos said was specifically in regard to large-scale, corporate farming.

People opposed to large scale corporate farming want America to purchase its food from the typical family farm. I don't have a problem with that. But there is so much more produced by large-scale, corporations from the clothes we wear to the furniture we sit on. So why shouldn't those people want everything we use from small-scale, independent producers?

I haven't heard those protesters demand people buy tailor-made clothes and handmade furniture. So why put all the energy into food?

I applaud Colby Community College for having Trent Loos. He is the voice of rural America.

*Van Nostrand is publisher of the Free Press.*

### Plenty on the table for legislators



**Jim Morrison**

#### • Capitol Review

zor wire are only a few of the precautions being taken to protect us against a possible attack on the facility.

However, officials at the facility believe greater authority is necessary for their guards in the post Sept. 11 world. House Bill 2703 allows armed guards at Wolf Creek to carry larger caliber automatic weapons and grants them needed legal protection if they are ever forced to use them. Current law places Wolf Creek under the same classification as other property in Kansas and therefore does not allow lethal force to protect that property.

Lethal force is only allowed if their own life is in danger. This bill would narrowly define the instances in which lethal force could be used by the guards, but will also ensure that a greater loss of life is avoided by preventing an attack on the reactor.

Paying Veterans on Veterans Day  
House Federal and State Affairs committee this week heard testimony from a young man who thinks that it's wrong his father, a veteran, has to work on Veterans Day. Tanner Burenheide, 12, thinks that Veterans not only deserve the day off, but would like to see them get paid for it as well.

#### Age of Marital Consent

The age that someone may marry in Kansas is 12 for girls and 14 for boys. Granted, marriage for children that young requires judicial or parental consent, but technically a pre-teen girl and an adolescent boy could marry in Kansas. House Bill 2541 would bring Kansas in line with 40 other states by raising the minimum age of marriage to 16 and require parental or judicial consent for those 17 or 18 desiring to marry. The House Federal and State Affairs committee has referred the bill to the full House and recommended its passage.

#### M & E

The Machinery and Equipment tax exemption has moved out of committee and is being scheduled for debate. Concerns from local units of government were eased with the addition of the "Siegfried Slider" amendment, authored by Rep. Arlen Siegfried (R-Olathe), allowing for a sliding scale of reimbursement to local taxing authorities who may lose revenue under this exemption. Action on the bill is expected this week.

#### Sales Tax Holiday

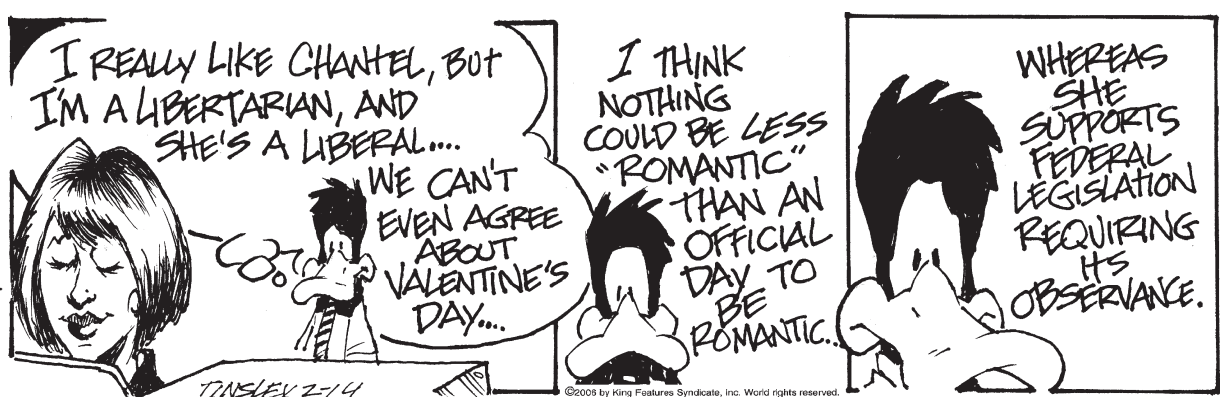
If House Bill 2601 is passed, the "back to school sale" advertised by many retailers would mean even more in Kansas. Introduced by Representative Virgil Peck (R-Tyro), the bill would provide a sales tax holiday for back to school shoppers. The length and the date of the proposed holiday are still being debated but would likely be in late July or early August and include a Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

#### Nuclear Plant Security

Security at Wolf Creek Nuclear Power Plant is tight. Armed guards, vehicle barriers and ra-

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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