

# Opinion



## A Kansas Viewpoint

### The time has come

**The Topeka Capital-Journal**  
“I’m from the government and I’m here to help.”  
The old joke lists that statement as one of the great lies. It seems to fit the new Medicare prescription plan.  
It seems to have caused more confusion and frustration than assistance. It even caused some seniors to be denied medications needed to keep them alive, or at least more comfortable, at the first of the year.  
The state of Kansas has put up \$3.5 million to make sure those seniors got their medications, in the hope of eventually being reimbursed by the Medicare program.  
In Kansas, 40 different private programs are offered under the program, leaving each participant to figure out which program is best for them.  
That’s why legislation proposed by U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., is a hopeful sign that some sanity might be imposed on the program.  
His bill would move the deadline for enrolling in the program without penalty to Dec. 31 from the present May 15 deadline. That at least would give seniors a little more time to get help in figuring out which variation of the program would fit their needs best, or whether the program is a good deal for them at all.  
It also would allow the federal government to negotiate for better drug prices for participants in the program and would provide \$200 million for programs to help seniors understand it.  
Those are all good, small steps, but what would be even better would be to start all over and design a program that works, yet is easier to understand.  
In a news conference last week in Topeka, Moran wasn’t optimistic about his particular bill being adopted by Congress, but said he was optimistic that some reform package will be adopted.  
The time has come for the people from the government to become truly helpful.

**About those letters . . .**  
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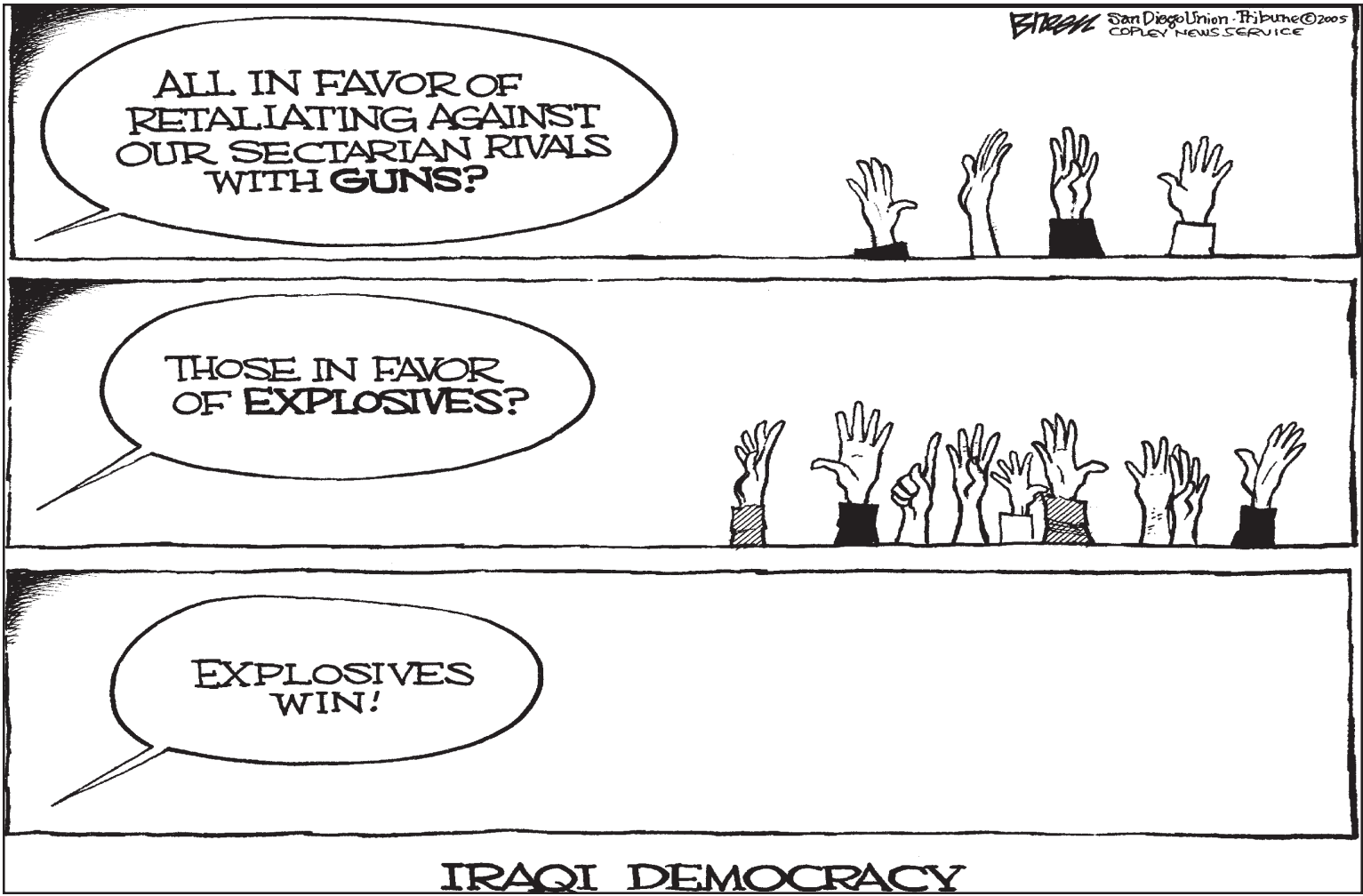
**COLBY FREE PRESS**  
155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.  
Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.  
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.  
PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

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### Performers like these are rare

Last weekend, I was off the grid for 24 hours, and had a little catch-up to do when it came to the news. And when I heard about the deaths of Darren McGavin and Don Knotts, and Dennis Weaver early in the week, it made me a little sad. The three pretty much pop culture icons. The tree were household names in their own right. Darren McGavin played “the old man” in “A Christmas Story,” and of course, who could forget intrepid reporter Carl Kolchak in “Kolchak, the Nightstalker?” That series inspired Chris Carter to create “The X-Files,” and even a short-lived reimagining of the original series last fall. Sadly, only six of the nine episodes were shown because audiences were more willing to buy into “American Idol” than the adventure and mystery of Kolchak. Don Knotts — Who can forget “The Ghost and Mr. Chicken?” Knotts played a cowardly reporter who spent a night in an allegedly haunted house. (I’m seeing a theme develop here.) There was also “The Incredible Mr. Limpet,” a slew of Disney productions like “The Apple Dumpling Gang” and “Gus” (a personal favorite, even now). Notably, he was a co-star of McGavin in Disney’s “No Deposit, No Return.” He was also in “The Andy Griffith Show” and “Three’s Company.” I even interviewed Dennis Weaver once. My first impression was my gosh, he’s tall. That was immediately followed by the fact he was truly one of the kindest, most gracious people I have ever met. Don’t get me wrong — I’ve interviewed my fair share of people who are well-known, noto-



**Tisha Cox**  
● Off The Beaten Path

rious or famous in their own right. But in that interview, I learned sometimes the briefest encounters seem to have the deepest, lasting impact. Of course, Weaver was famous for his role in “Gunsmoke” and also helping catapult a little-known movie director by the name of Steven Spielberg get his big break. I first became familiar with Weaver from reruns of “Gentle Ben” and his Disney works. Performers like these three don’t come along very often — their charm, ability to make people laugh and longevity made them special. And right up to the end, the three were still performing. Knotts and Weaver were still active until last year, and McGavin’s last credited role was in a 1999 episode of “The X-Files.” (There was an uncredited Easter egg appearance in the “Nightstalker” pilot last fall, as a reporter standing at a desk.) “Alternative” energy. . . An article from CNN.com touted this headline last week: “Scientists extract gasoline from cattle dung.” According to the article, Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology ag engineering professor Sakae Shibusawa made the announcement they had managed to get gasoline from

cattle manure. They extracted 0.042 ounces of gas from every 3.5 ounces of manure by “applying high pressure and heat.” The process they used was adding metal catalysts to the manure, put it into a container and applying heat and pressure. The article goes on to say the research team hopes to improve the process so “it can be used commercially within five years.” I can imagine what the oil companies will do. Either scoff or scream like little girls if that research actually becomes commercially viable. Then they’ll snap up the patents and seal them away so no one can profit but them. To think, a non-renewable resource could suddenly become renewable. When you do the math, according to the CNN article, Japan produces roughly 1.1 billion pounds of manure a year. If Japan has enough cows to produce that much manure, I wonder how many cattle there are in the United States, and how much waste they produce by just being cows? I know it wouldn’t completely end the need for foreign oil, but it would ease it considerably. And I would love to see the looks on the faces of Middle Eastern leaders, and the oil company head honchos when at a press conference sometime in the next decade an American president announces we don’t need them because we have cattle to produce our gasoline for us. . . Wishful thinking, but wouldn’t it be great? \*\*\*\*\* Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. [tc Cox@nwkansas.com](mailto:tc Cox@nwkansas.com).

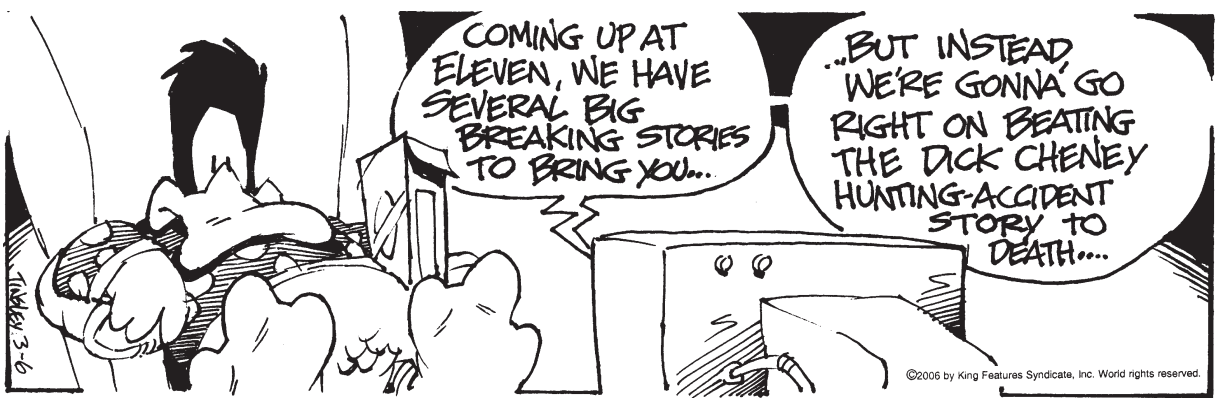
### Prison reform is not sectarian or political

**By Ken Poland**  
I don’t care where you stand, liberal; conservative; right; left; fundamental; evangelical; progressive; or whatever other niche or compartment you wish to identify yourself in, prison practices in the military and civilian institutions of the United States need to be cleaned up. I just read an article talking about pregnant women in prison. It points out over half of the states allow women to be in ankle cuffs or have a leg and arm chained to the bed, during delivery. Supposedly, they are a flight risk! All you women who have experienced that little chore of delivery know that you are just liable to jump right out of that bed, knock the corrections officer out of the way, and sprint down the hallway and out the door, just as soon as you get that little sucker popped out. Right? By the way, chaining a woman to the bed is just as disrespectful as the phrase, “popping that little sucker out!” I believe giving birth to a human baby is a sacred and intimate act that should be

witnessed only by God, the mother and possibly the father, and the professional assistants. It certainly should not allow the intrusion of a corrections officer or the press! This article claimed the mother died from complications that most likely could have been avoided had they not had to work around those constraints. I haven’t found statistics showing how wide spread this problem or practice is, but if it happened only once, that was one too many. We claim to be a Christian nation. I agree that we are definitely influenced by Christian morals and ethics, but we certainly don’t do justice to the Gospel that Jesus taught and demonstrated. Are we afraid to discuss these issues in our churches? Is the sin of homosexuality, pornography or abortion more detestable to God than the complacency of society on issues such as prison abuse? Mental and physical abuse in the nation’s prison system is a fact. Physical and mental abuse of political or military prisoners

does not protect or secure our freedom. Such abuse, in fact, mocks our claim of superiority as a Christian nation. We sully the reputation of our loving God in a hateful world. Hmmm Can we sully the reputation of God? Or, are we really only bringing judgment, by God and the world, upon ourselves? Prison reform is not a sectarian or political issue. It is a human issue. Race, religion, political affiliation, wealth or whatever should not allow inhuman treatment of any person, regardless of the heinousness of their crime. What did Jesus say about “an eye for an eye” and “a tooth for a tooth?” Somehow, I think we need to go back into the Old Testament and look at our interpretation and application of those principles. Go to your Bibles and read the entire fifth Chapter of Matthew. Go back now and reread verses 38 through 48. We find Luke’s account in the sixth chapter of Luke addressing this same thing. Read, especially, verses 46 through 49.

**Mallard Fillmore**  
● Bruce Tinsley



**Doonesbury**  
● Gary Trudeau

