

# Opinion

## Public financing - the only reform

**By Jim Hightower**  
Here's my wise adage for the day: Never mistake motion for progress.  
For example, if your car gets stuck in mud and you gun the engine, your tires might be spinning at 60 miles an hour, but the car's going nowhere. The same applies to our Congress critters, who're furiously gunning their political engines and spinning their tires, claiming that - By Gollies - they're making progress on lobbying reform.  
Stung by the still-spreading scandals of supersleaze lobbyist Jack Abramoff, leaders of both parties are trying to outdo each other on reform - no more lobbyist-paid dinners or golf trips, they cry! Prohibit lobbying by spouses of lawmakers, they holler!  
But none of this will get them anywhere. That's because they're still stuck in the deep, slick mud of campaign contributions delivered to them by corporate lobbyists. This money is the slickmud that has corrupted our political process - yet, neither party's "reform" packages touch that muck.  
Even as they're shouting "reform," they're quietly taking checks from the very lobbyists they claim to be reforming. Rep. David Obey, a true reformer, cuts through this hypocrisy: "You can talk all you want about nibbling at the margins about ethics... but unless we deal with the nexus between politics and money, damned little is actually going to change."  
The good news is that real change is possible. Two other true reformers - Rep. John Tierney of Massachusetts, and Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona - have introduced H.R. 3099, the "Clean Money/Clean Elections" bill.  
Modeled on what seven states and several cities have already done, this bill provides public financing of congressional elections, eliminating the need for lawmakers to curry favor with special-interest lobbyists.  
We can go through the motions of reform, or we can get in gear and make real progress. To learn how to help, call Tierney's office: (978) 531-1669.

### 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 offensive or libelous.

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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## Priorities were quickly changed

Some things are more important than carpet.  
About a month ago, my wife Jennifer agreed to host a portion of a progressive dinner in support of missionaries through the Wesleyan Church. We knew we were also to be in Kansas City to meet friends that same weekend, but were confident we would be back in time to prepare for our part.

Sure enough, we left Kansas City that Sunday morning to be back in time to prepare for the dinner. But making dozens of salads was not the biggest concern while we were counting down the minutes until show time.

The bathroom was.  
It's not a problem hiding dirty clothes in the laundry room and throwing fast-food wrappers and drink cups in the garbage to prepare for company. Cleaning up a bathroom after a backed up toilet was a problem.

Not 30 minutes after being home were Jennifer and I throwing down all of our beat up and used towels and rags on the bathroom floor to soak up the mess. What intensified the problem was we had carpet in that bathroom.

We purchased the house that way and promised we would eventually have the carpet replaced with tile. But you just can't put bathroom tile down in the same amount of time as a television commercial break.

(Why people put carpet in bathrooms, or kitchens, is beyond me. Congress should consider legislation banning carpets in bathrooms. It makes a water mess a million times bigger.)

We knew we would have a stream of about 60 people in the house starting in 60 seconds. We had about 60 towels and the kids' burp rags from their infancy days on the bathroom floor. There was no time to soak up the water, put down stain re-



### John Van Nostrand

#### • Line in the Dust

mover if needed and hope the carpet dried in time.

Jenn and I quickly decided to let the bathroom floor go because we knew something more important was going to happen.

So what felt like a funeral procession, we slowly closed the door of the bathroom and would tell the guests to use the master bath, if needed.

The evening went extremely well. People, who had never been to our house before, asked if we did all the interior work. We politely told them we purchased the house as is, with the exception of some interior room painting Jennifer did on some weekends.

While listening to people talk about house decor, I could see the closed bathroom door over their shoulder. Fortunately, the towels were doing their part as there was no water seeping from underneath the door.

And yes, a few did ask for the bathroom. After the depressed feeling of knowing what happened in one bathroom passed, we showed them the other bathroom.

As the evening progressed, the more I heard Amanda Wyatt talk about her missionary work,

the more I forgot about the bathroom. Hearing Amanda explain how native women dress and are treated and hearing how the native people think of the United States was more moving to me than the water at the end of the hall.

When the last people walked out the door, I slowly opened the bathroom door. I was hoping the towels soaked up all the water. But I was wrong.

The bathroom looked like New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. It was a swamp. I was afraid to lift up the towels to see what had happened to the carpet.

I didn't have time to pick up towels any way. We had to go to the church to finish the evening. Everybody who was involved in the dinner were to meet the Wyatts and have dessert.

What was spoken at the church almost made me feel guilty for worrying about silly old bathroom carpet. Lester Wyatt was talking about what they needed to live on and to do their mission work.

The clincher for me was he didn't know what they would do with virtually all of their possessions since they won't be needed. Maybe all of that is normal procedures for missionaries.

Jesus asks us to drop all of our things and do his work. That is what the Wyatts and many others are doing. That means I should forget about the bathroom.

Like I said, there are more important things than carpet.

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We welcomed John Altman to the *Free Press* staff this week. He is our new advertising sales representative. He joins Advertising Director Crystal Rucker and advertising representative Jasmine Crotinger.

## Finding the balance

### From The Garden City Telegram

Topeka minister Fred Phelps and his clan of hate mongers are gearing up for a legal battle.

Members of Phelps' Westboro Baptist Church, known for their "God Hates Fags" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers" signs, had planned to picket at a recent funeral of a Missouri soldier.

The twisted logic of Phelps and his followers holds that God is killing American soldiers as punishment for the nation's tolerance of homosexuality.

A small group from Westboro Baptist Church picketed at the Jan. 21 memorial service in Gar-

den City for Army Spc. Clint Upchurch. As has become customary, the motorcycle group Patriot Guard and other supporters of the soldier's family blocked protesters.

Westboro Baptist Church member Shirley Phelps-Roper has argued that "in front of or about" means directly in front, and said her group would be at a "respectful distance," either across or down the street. The Phelpses have vowed to sue if challenged.

Kansas lawmakers are considering a funeral picketing bill banning protests within 300 feet of a funeral one hour before, during and two hours after the service, with some public prop-

erty exceptions. The Senate unanimously approved the bill, sending it to the House.

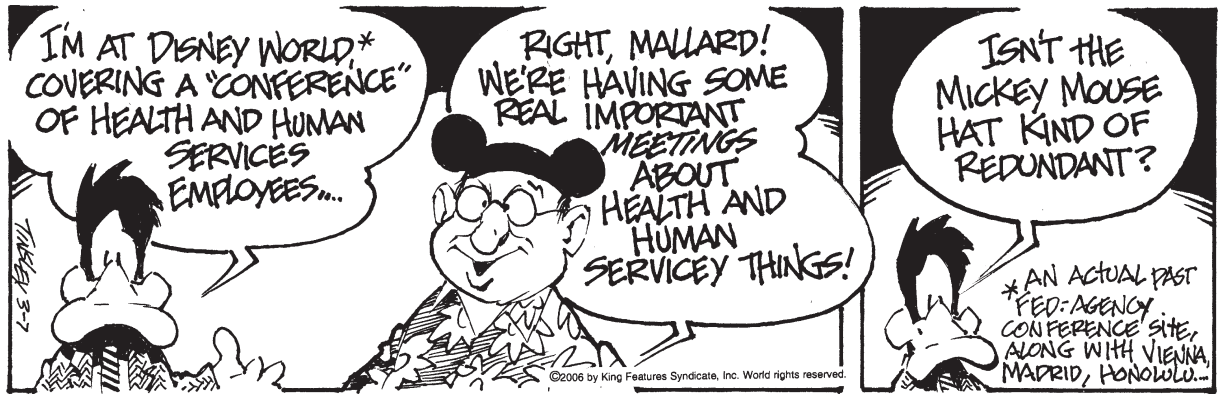
Worth noting is that the Phelpses' anti-gay crusade has done nothing to effect the kind of change they'd like. It has, however, pitted family privacy against free speech in an issue for courts to consider.

Kansans want lawmakers to do what they can to enable families to bury their dead in peace, even if such laws could spur a court challenge.

For that reason, legislation that strikes a balance between the right to grieve in private and the right of free speech — a fundamental right of all Americans — must be the goal.

## Mallard Fillmore

### • Bruce Tinsley



## Doonesbury

### • Gary Trudeau

