

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint



Wait, wait and wait some more

The drama continues. Colby Community College President Dr. Mikey Ary left in October. Dozens of people applied for the position earlier this year and the top two finalists met the public last week. The candidates revealed a little more about themselves during a question-and-answer session. (Why those sessions were held in the middle of the afternoon during the workday rather than the evening is an editorial for another day.)

We wish the college board of trustees would reveal a little more about what is happening. Trustees were expected to make a decision during a meeting Monday, but that turned into a three-hour special session behind closed doors with no decision made.

What happened?
How much more time is needed?
Saying a little something about it is better than nothing at all.

Granted, the college appears to be operating smoothly under the direction of interim President "Skip" Sharp. But the faculty and staff at the college would like to know who the next president is and when. So does the public.

We're waiting.

— John Van Nostrand, publisher

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.

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- 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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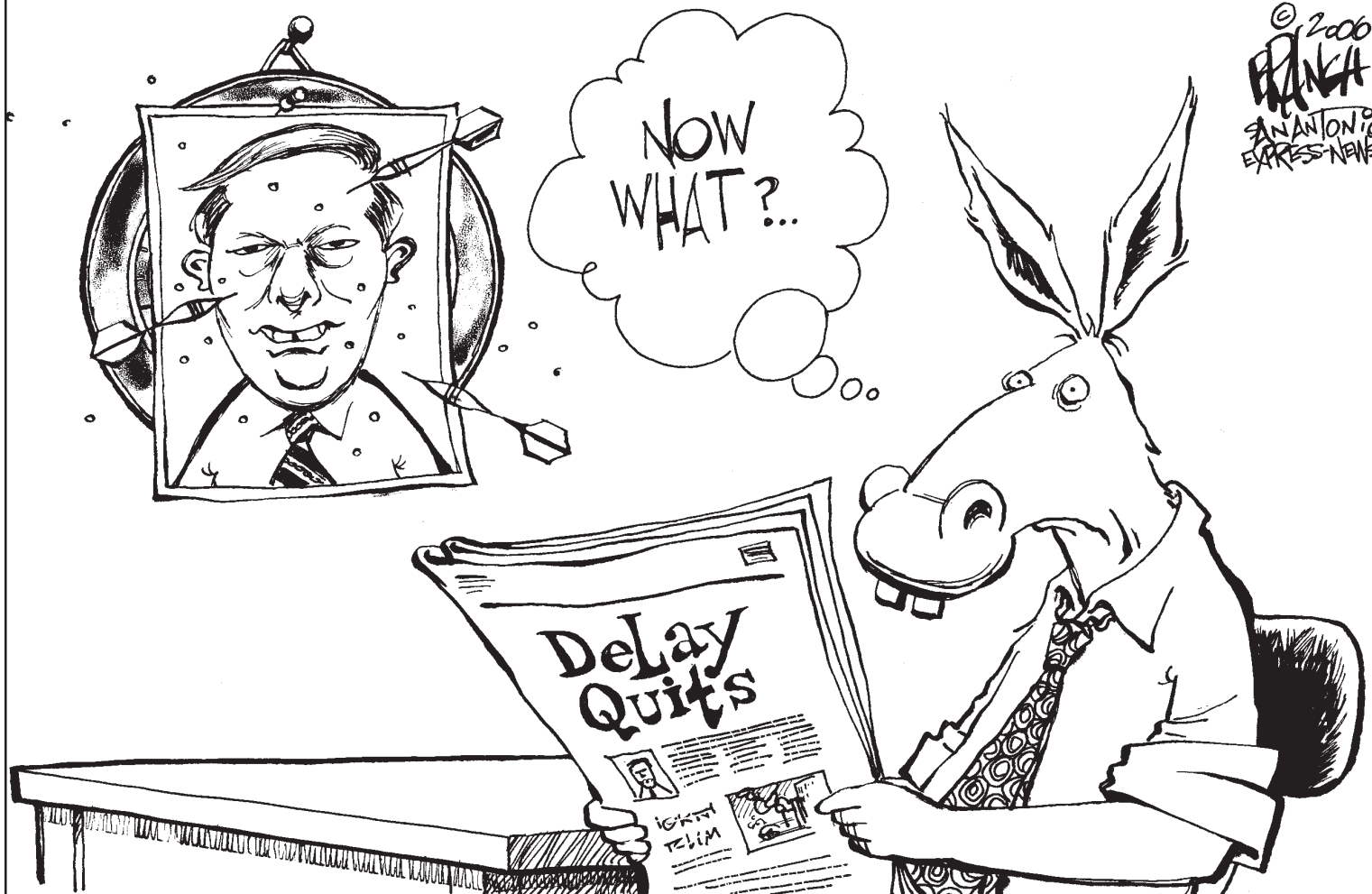
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The problem is bigger than the billboard

"And now he's into something that her heart cannot forgive She's saying to herself, 'No, this is not the way to live' He'll never listen to her 'cause his mind is like a sieve"
— from the 1987 Husker Du song "She's a Woman and Now He's a Man."



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

Kansas legislators are contemplating a bill forcing billboards advertising adult entertainment businesses along highways to go elsewhere. The motives behind the legislation is honorable, but the problem is, it's not the billboards.

Those billboards and businesses have been along the nation's highways for years. The problem is, even if those billboards are censored, relocated or removed, the images related to those businesses are already forever etched in the minds of the viewers. Statistically, men capture and retain those images much more than women.

Towns near those signs are afraid the thousands of people who drive by may have a troubled first impression of the town.

Near where I lived in Iowa, about two years ago a multi-millionaire adult entertainment business owner from Ohio purchased a vacant restaurant on Interstate 80. Within months he had the place remodeled into his newest venture. During the construction people feared the stigma that would be attached to the town knowing what is on the only interstate exit.

The business never opened. A mysterious fire in September 2004, that authorities determined arson, totaled the building days before it was expected to open. The suspect has yet to be caught. A friend of mine told me last month the pile of burned debris is still there as the county and property owner debate how and when it will

be cleaned up. Those who did not want the business to open were thankful for the flames, but still realized there are better ways to fight those businesses other than arson.

About 100 miles east, another tiny town had a similar problem. A large group of people from the area opposed to the adult store purchased the billboard next to the store and displayed a Christian-based message symbolizing their opinion. Now that got some attention.

Billboards for sex businesses are not the problem. What is inside the business is.

Sexual images have an impact on men very few other things can compare to. Some scientists speculate a man's brain activity looking at sexual images is similar to a marijuana high. Just as the drug user needs a bigger hit next time, the viewer needs more to view to reach that same feeling.

Porn is a multi-billion dollar business and it can be protected by the First Amendment. So trying to get rid of it is going to be close to impossible. Men need to realize there are some things they need to protect.

Men need to learn how to avoid the sources

of those images not only for themselves, but for the honor and protection of their wife, marriage and children. If a man is single, he still needs to maintain a level of respect and dignity toward women.

Men, and their wives, need to be realistic about how men should behave in social settings. Men, and their wives, just can't expect they won't be interacting with women, let alone attractive ones. It could be the new woman at work. It could be a waitress at the family's favorite restaurant. Heck, it could even be a long-time neighbor or a friend of the wife. (What intensifies that problem is if a woman is tempting the man.)

The eyes are an extension of the brain. It's interesting how one works with the other. If the eyes don't see something, the brain can't capture the image and forever record it. Men need to learn how to bounce their eyes.

Their wife must be honored, cherished and not have any competition from any other women. Some men who are recovering from sex addiction have utilized an accountability partner.

That way, the man has a reliable source to share the struggles and success with. Sure, a man can tell his wife those things, but the wife's hurt over the issue may be stronger than her willingness to help which may hurt the man's progress and damage the marriage. Men who tell their wife must do so with great care.

Men need to keep their eyes on the road — the road to a happy, healthy marriage with their wife and a healthy perception of women.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Rural development should be priority

By Thomas D. Rowley
As Will Rogers liked to say, "You've got to go out on a limb sometimes because that's where the fruit is." So out I climb: I predict the next Farm Bill will actually help rural America.

Okay, that's hyperbole to a degree. Farm Bills are designed to help rural America and mostly have, however, has gone to a narrow slice of rural people: growers of subsidized crops. The last Farm Bill spent 82 percent of funds on farmers and 0.7 percent on non-farm rural development efforts.

What's more, growers of five crops (corn, cotton, wheat, rice and soybeans), which together account for only 30 percent of U.S. agricultural revenue, got 92 percent of the payments. The top 10 percent of producers grab some 70 percent of the funds.

Supporters of this and previous Farm Bills claim, of course, that raising farm incomes—even so few farm incomes—improves the overall rural economy. They are wrong. First, most farmers depend on the rural economy surrounding them, (most of which is not tied to farming), not the other way around.

Second, crop payments don't even do much for areas that are heavily farm dependent. Sometimes, payments hurt them. According to research by the Kansas City Federal Reserve's Center for the Study of Rural America, counties getting the most payments see no growth in jobs, businesses or population. In fact, from 1992 to 2002, 21 percent of such counties lost jobs; 60 percent lost population. Payments, says the

study, don't create new engines of economic growth; they create dependency on even more payments.

Of course, none of this is new. What is new is that the U.S. Department of Agriculture seems finally to be getting the message. As evidence of that, the 2006 Agricultural Outlook Forum- USDA's annual flagship event, held last month—went where none had gone before. It focused on the importance of rural, rather than farm, prosperity. It finally got the horse before the cart.

Why? A convergence of factors.

First, Ag Secretary Mike Johanns told in his opening speech of hearing again and again on USDA's Farm Bill listening tour last year of the need and appreciation for the department's rural development efforts. "After hearing such compelling stories about the importance of rural development," he said, "I came back to Washington eager to examine the state of our rural economy." And, apparently, to put things in proper order.

Second, a system that subsidizes 30 percent of farmers and leaves the other 70 percent to fend for themselves, creates an uneven and politically unstable playing field. Why, for example, should specialty crops—equal in value to program crops—get no payments?

Third, the statistics on the rural economy and the research on the counter-productive performance of farm payments cited above are simply inarguable.

Fourth and most important, there's a new sheriff in town—the World Trade Organization. If the

United States intends to honor its trade agreements (and avoid sanctions), farm production subsidies as we know them will have to go. When they do, billions in crop payments will be freed up and up for grabs. USDA knows that. My guess is that the department would rather keep that money in house and use it for rural development than turn it over to the Treasury for deficit reduction.

Regardless of the causes, the shift in focus is encouraging. As Charles Fluharty, Director of the Rural Policy Research Institute, put it, "The 2006 Forum was a watershed moment in USDA history and could become a landmark event for U.S. rural policy. For the first time ever, these issues were central. I am hopeful this represents a new USDA perspective and commitment taking hold."

Whether that new perspective and commitment results in a change of policy now rests with the congressional ag committees as they formulate the next Farm Bill.

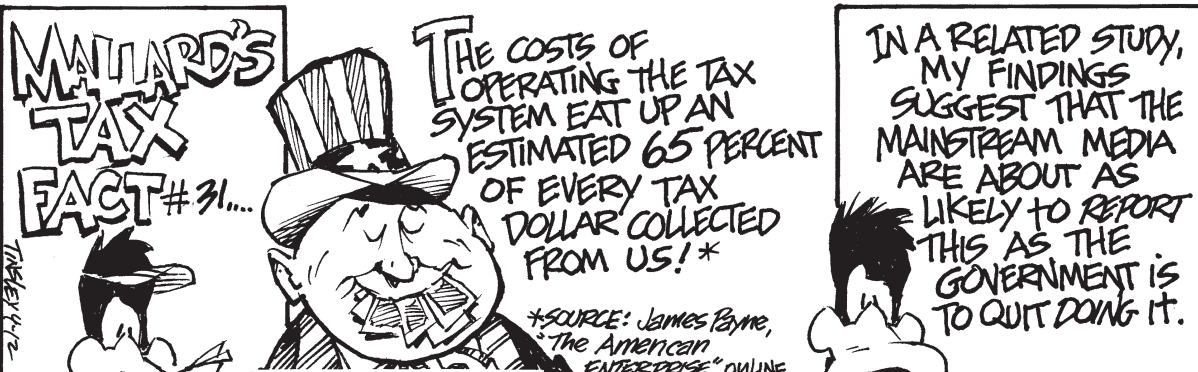
In his speech, Johanns said, "What we as policymakers owe are policies that recognize the changing face of rural America—it has changed—and provide support that is equitable, predictable and beyond challenge."

He was listening. Is Congress?

Thomas D. Rowley is a Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Fellow The Rural Policy Research Institute provides objective analysis and facilitates public dialogue concerning the impacts of public policy on rural people and places.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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