

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint



Some taxes must always be paid

Congratulations to the Kansas Legislature for not using sales taxes as a proverbial carrot.

During the legislative session, legislators reviewed a proposal for Kansas to have a sales-tax holiday. If approved, a couple of days would have been picked to waive all sales taxes on select items purchased for students to prepare for school. Some weekend in August is the typical time to have such an event.

The practice is done in other states as a way to increase business and attract shoppers from border states. Sales-tax free shopping days are an insult to the purpose of taxes. Taxes are to be used to fund services to citizens who pay the taxes, not be used as an incentive to buy a new pair of socks.

Kansas, like many other states, are wrestling with budgets. States are unsure how much income they will have and even more unsettled on how every cent will be spent.

If states are concerned about income from taxes, why in the heck would a state agree to stop collection of its income for a couple of days? To complement that, cities and counties waive their taxes at the same time.

Sure, the cumulative amount of taxes waived for a couple of days across the state would be minuscule over an entire year's budget, but it can still put the state in a bad situation.

Consider the states that laid off employees because of a lack of income. How frustrating would it be for a laid-off state worker to go shopping on a sales-tax free day, knowing the amount not paid funded the job he used to have?

Also, states should let the stores provide the shopping incentives. It's common for stores to offer 10, 20 or more percent off, especially during back to school sales. Here in Thomas County, the shopper would save 6.55 percent.

The state of Kansas saved itself a whole lot more.

— 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.

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@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.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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Junior college was a major decision

Saturday, a few hundred Colby Community College graduates will walk across the stage, receive their diploma and walk off into their future. For some, they will transfer to a four-year school to earn a bachelor's degree in something. For others, it is the great unknown or the real world with jobs.



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

I know how those students feel, and I hope they have the same feelings toward Colby Community College as I have toward my alma mater. I graduated from Northeastern Junior College in Sterling, Colo., very similar to Colby.

What happened during my two years at Northeastern was life changing. Really. I grew up in Sterling and my older brother and sister both graduated from Northeastern. That was fine and all, but I wanted more. Probably like some kids who grew up in Colby, the college was not much of a new adventure when you got there because you heard so much about it either through siblings or talk on the street.

I was the same way with Northeastern. I wanted to go out of state to one of those big, four-year universities. I wanted to experience dorm life. I wanted to come home just a few times a year. I wanted to be the one who painted my chest in school colors, like those students you see during college football games on television.

But it never happened. I was accepted at a couple of those big schools, but the more research about financing I did, the more frustrated and afraid I got. I had to pony up X amount, even before I sat in a classroom. I couldn't find X.

My enthusiasm for going away to school faded. Rather than painting my chest in black and gold and then running onto the football field after the big win, I was painted blue in depression. So I settled for Northeastern.

I already knew one of the college's teachers because of his connection with the high school I attended. He was very encouraging for me to attend Northeastern. Knowing my interest in newspapers, he said I had a good chance of eventually being editor of the student biweekly paper.

I tried to make the best of Northeastern. Still wanting to know what dorm life was like, I made attempts to meet people who were not from Sterling. Again, like Colby, it is common for Sterling High graduates to attend Northeastern. In my classes, I was able to meet some out-of-towners who lived in the dorms.

The student paper was also a thrill. It was another avenue to meet other non-Sterling students and to pursue my interest. The editor at the time I started was more into horses and rodeo than deadlines and bylines. After she talked with the paper's advisor, she offered me the editor position late in my first year. For the last couple of months of my freshman year, I was in charge. Cool.

After finishing editions late in the night, several staff members and I would either share a pizza in the office or coffee at the 24-hour restaurant out by the interstate. I was enjoying this. In just a matter of six months, my attitude on

attending a junior college were changing. My enjoyment of Northeastern continued my sophomore year, with the exception of biology which I still have nightmares of. After Christmas break, a few of my teachers asked what I wanted to do after NJC. I told them I was starting to get tired of school and I wanted to experience the real world. I was already getting a taste of reality sharing an apartment with a friend I worked with at a grocery store.

Those teachers encouraged me to apply to small, weekly newspapers. They thought the experience and enthusiasm I had at NJC would make me a good candidate. By now, I was covering weekend high school sports for Sterling's daily paper. I spent my spring break to write a resume and collect samples of my best work. I found a few help wanted ads and put the big envelopes in the mail.

Sure enough, a small, weekly newspaper gave me a call. I had accepted the job before I graduated from Northeastern. After the graduation ceremony, rather than telling others I was off to Colorado State or Northern Colorado, I was anticipating my first job.

I've been fortunate to last as long as I have in this field with just an associate's degree. I am proud of it too. I could not have done all I have the past 13 years without the advice and support of those teachers at Northeastern Junior College.

In just a matter of 20 months, attending Northeastern went from being my last choice to the best choice.

I hope those students Saturday have similar feelings about Colby Community College. *John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press*

Quick to the meds and quick to label

All of you compassionate conservative fundamentalists should be celebrating the exoneration of your Hollywood style reporter, Rush Limbaugh. With his millions of dollars you tucked into his waistband, he beat the rap.

Is he guilty of fraud and of abusing legitimate drug therapies for pain? I don't know. Is there enough evidence to suggest that he likely was? Yes there is. We will never really know, will we. A deal was cut and neither side won or lost. I have never been a big fan of deal cutting and plea bargaining, although I'm well aware of the practicality of the practice, in some cases. The prosecution side of the Limbaugh case knew very well that he had access to several more millions of dollars for defense or delay in the case.

Most street run druggies don't have millions for their defense. Limbaugh was very "liberal" with his opinion that the druggies didn't deserve court appointed or public defenders. Just lock them up and throw away the key. Prescription drug addicts, like all addicts, were pictured as despicably weak and leaches on society.

Truth be known, far too many of us are quick to go for prescription meds, rather than change our eating habits or lifestyle. I don't have a single prescription med but I eat aspirins like candy and drink far too much coffee. I've cut back on the coffee, from gallons to eight or 10 cups per day.

Ken Poland

• Ken's World

But, I'm not going to follow sensible advice that says for me to get off my feet to relieve the aches and pains in my joints. Are we druggies? You judge yourself.

Am I being a bit vitriolic? Yes! I dislike labels and the twisted meanings of the words used to identify political and religious affiliations. But, if you can't beat 'em, then join 'em. The far right conservative talk show hosts and columnists do a pretty good job of slicing and broiling any one they consider liberal leftists. Rush Limbaugh and Ann Coulter are prime examples. The likes of so called liberal Democrats, such as myself, couldn't possibly be Christians and are worthy only of righteous scorn by our modern day Pharisees and Publicans.

Unrelated to the above, but a tough wad for you to chew on.

My wife just informed me there have been no Sunday afternoon religious services at the Long Term Care Centers for the past two Sundays (April 30 and May 7). Look in your *Colby Free*

Press, published each Friday, and count the number of religious organizations listed. We can't even come up with a team, doesn't have to be ordained minister, to provide 30 minutes per week of corporate worship service for our friends and family, who can no longer provide their own. If it was your turn, where were you? If you or your church is actively involved in other times at the Centers, I commend you for that. But, it is important to be involved in ecumenical praise and worship that is inclusive of any who don't happen to have an active local support group from their own faith.

We have time and resources to attack the social evils of sexual orientation, abortion, etc. But, we don't have time nor resources to provide compassionate love and care for our physically and mentally dependent neighbors. One of our local Care Centers is struggling to overcome deficiencies. Does that ever cross your minds as being an opportunity for "mission" that the local church could or should be involved in?

If you want to, you could even get radical and get personally active by renewing acquaintance with old friends and family members confined in the Care Center.

Ken Poland is a Gem resident who contributes to the Colby Free Press.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

