

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint

If it's not an investigation ...

From The Wichita Eagle

The inquiry into one Kansas Supreme Court justice's school-finance chat with two state senators gets stranger by the week. Recently, we learned that Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and her chief of staff could be called to testify before the special House panel looking into whether the conversation influenced the Legislature's action on K-12 schools, which culminated in passage of a three-year, \$466 million plan in answer to a Supreme Court order in the schools lawsuit.

Now, the brouhaha has crossed state lines, with news that Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning will be special assistant to Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline to help the House committee with legal questions. Kline sought someone outside his office because he already represents the state in the school-finance case. The special panel's chairman, Rep. Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson, has endorsed the idea, suggesting Bruning might offer legal advice and even question witnesses. (Could Nebraska's attorney general end up quizzing Kansas' governor?)

Meanwhile, there is understandable discomfort with the idea of House members investigating Senate members — a rare situation, if not unprecedented.

In his statement, Kline touted Bruning's "extensive experience in public malfeasance cases," but went on to assure that neither Sebelius nor lawmakers "are under any cloud of investigation, nor should they be, regarding a violation of judicial ethics or violation of Kansas law. Speculation regarding same is unproductive and harmful."

If this isn't a cloud of investigation, what is it? And if all the House probe will produce is a report, what purpose will that serve, other than to influence the fall election?

With every development, this looks like an awfully big fuss to make over a few-minute lunch conversation, however inappropriate it was. Keep in mind that the jurist involved, Justice Lawton Nuss, has recused himself from the school-finance case and expressed remorse for his actions in an official response to another inquiry. And could a Legislature so unwilling to be influenced by its own school funding studies and by Supreme Court orders be so easily influenced by the informal remarks of one of seven Supreme Court justices?

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 or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

Where to write, call

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
- 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
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher

jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

tcx@nwkansas.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter

ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

crystalr@nwkansas.com

Jasmine Crotinger - Advertising Sales

jasminec@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager

lea@nwkansas.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building

japplegate@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

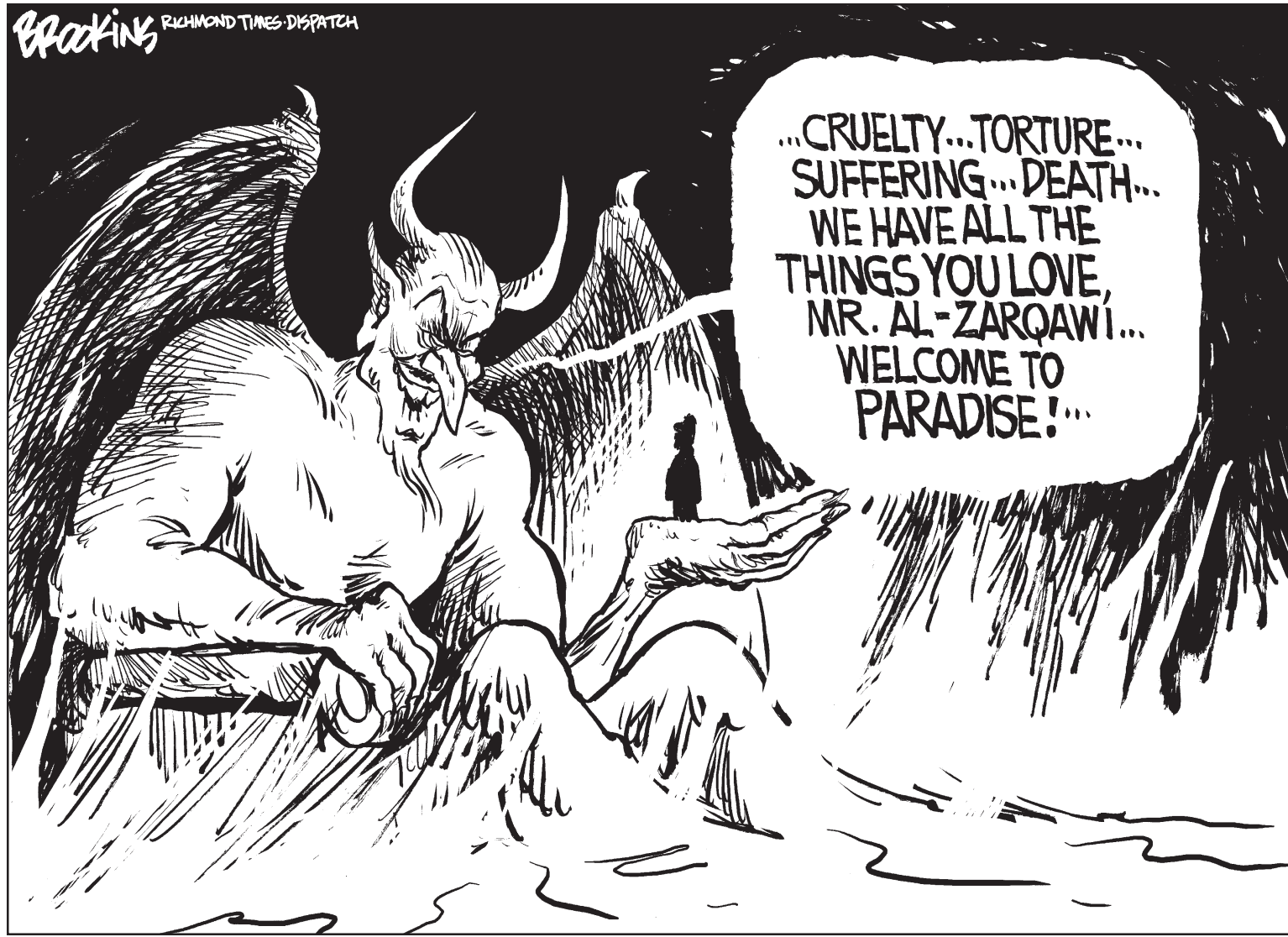
Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

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.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



Century celebration has ancient legacy

I know one place I would love to go this summer. It's always been a desire to go to Mesa Verde National Park, near Durango, Colo., and never more so than this year.

The park's 100th anniversary is being celebrated this year with many special activities and the opening of two ruins to public access for the first time in more than 70 years.

The national park was established June 29, 1906. The ruins were found by two cowboys.

The first site, in what is now known as Mesa Verde ("green table" in Spanish), was discovered by rancher Richard Wetherill and his brother-in-law Charlie Mason in December 1888.

While looking for stray cattle, they happened across the ruin and into the history pages.

Within a couple of days, they had discovered Spruce Tree and Square Tower Houses. Spruce Tree and Square Tower are ruins inside the park named by Wetherill and Mason.

Over the next 20 years or so, the Wetherills excavated and cataloged the sites they found.

I've read some of the accounts, and depending which side of the fence someone is on, Richard Wetherill did a good job, or he was nothing more than a grave robber.

Why all the hoopla, one may ask.

For one, the cliff dwellings hold an aura of mystery and beg so many questions when one first sees them. The first time I saw a picture, I wanted to know how did that get built? Who built it? Why? What happened to the people who built it?

Several waves of inhabitants built the struc-



Tisha Cox

● Off The Beaten Path

tures inside and surrounding the national park. The first were the Basketmaker Anasazi, who built pit houses on top of the mesas in the American Southwest.

The second wave were the Pueblo Anasazi (also known as Ancestral Puebloan), who started building in the cliff alcoves, leaving behind spectacular ruins.

The park has experienced 100 years of ups and downs, from the discoveries, vandalism, rebuilding and forest fires in 2002.

I know the park ecosystem is still recovering from the fires, but the disaster had one upside. Previously undiscovered archaeological sites were uncovered, and have potential to reveal even more about the Anasazi.

Back to the mystique. I can only imagine the shock Wetherill and Mason experienced when they first glimpsed Cliff Palace. Nothing in their experience could have prepared them for it, and they named it for the only thing that, in their experience was similar — a palace.

Today, archaeologists believe Cliff Palace is the largest cliff dwelling in North America. Considering a bigger ruin hasn't been found, they're probably right.

But for all the science, there is also speculation, and freedom to let the imagination run wild.

The park has plenty of open space, and opportunity to get up close and personal with the ruins.

The park offers ranger-lead hikes to several of the ruins, and free tours of ruins such as Spruce Tree House. Self-guided access is also available.

In celebration of the centennial year, the park is featuring free mesa-top hikes that show off the geology, biology and archaeology of the Mesa Verde area. Plus the centennial Web site claims the hikes offer access to sites off the beaten path.

Nobody really knows what happened to the people who built the cliff dwellings. The conventional wisdom is they were driven out by drought and conflict and joined the bands that became the Hopi and Ute.

The disappearance is still a mystery, but the legacy the cliff dwellers left behind is compelling, and a treasure any American can be proud of.

I hope to make it to Mesa Verde this year, and hope others choose to make the trip.

Information on the park's centennial is available at <http://www.mesaverde2006.org>.

Parts of this column came from www.cliffdwellingsmuseum.com.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcx@nwkansas.com.

If we don't pay attention

Ken Poland

● Ken's World

you just a little with their own wrath before God gets hold of you.

Is it just possible that those "turncoats" in the Republican party have discovered bi-partisan is only possible if the minority groups cave in and support the majority group. The only time you generally see voluntary bi-partisan legislation is when you have three distinct political divisions and none of them have a majority of the whole. That means, in today's culture, either the extreme liberals or the extreme conservatives have to compromise somewhere with the moderates, even within their own party.

It is rare to find an extreme conservative running under the banner of the Democratic party and equally rare to find an extreme liberal trying to live in the Republican tent. Both major parties, however, have moderates among their ranks. And, sometimes, those moderates just have to defect and join the other party. Even the Bible says to do all things in moderation. Oh, I'm pulling from context and meddling again, aren't I?

I must say, I do not like "liberal" and "conservative" labeling. Today's popular definitions are too narrowly defining and only the radical extremists are worthy of those labels.

United we stand — divided we fall! If we don't hang together, we will be separately hung!

Are we truly a united people in a free society? Or, are we a fractious bunch of incorrigible mortals hurtling down the slippery slope to anarchy and on our way to subjection under a dictatorial dichotomy or coalition of militant sectarian rule? Corruption and secrecy in government encourages the same in society.

That sounds uncomfortably like the situation in the Middle East, where we are fighting a, seemingly, losing battle. Are we ever going to wake up to the fact you can't win hearts with military or economic dominance? Outside forces cannot install democracy (freedom) without the hearts of the people.

In Kansas we have a majority party that is being divided by sectarian conservative radicals who demonize any of their own kin who dare to stray from the book, not necessarily the Good Book (Bible) but the book of fundamental conservative Republicanism. (For some, that's the same book.)

Why do I call them radical sectarians? Because, they are promoting their agenda with a claim to superior knowledge and interpretation of the Holy Word of God. They don't consider themselves as being sectarian. They are not a sect! They have the only true religion and theology. Anyone who doesn't agree with them are the sectarians. If you do not agree with them, you are wrong. WRONG with capital letters. Furthermore, you are, by their decree, subject to the eternal wrath of God. And, they will condition

Mallard Fillmore

● Bruce Tinsley

