

Opinion

Your turn

Playing politics with lives

Rev. Gene Tromble Goodland

I understand that Senator Sam Brownback plans to introduce legislation that would give the federal government power to forbid states like Oregon to permit the citizens of their state to die with dignity. I believe that Brownback is on the wrong side of this issue to let persons die with dignity.

My mother, ill with Parkinson's disease, died a horrible death. Parkinson's disease had made her body stiff and rigid. She suffered months of excruciating pain before she finally died. When the nurses would turn her pain wracked body on the hospital bed, mother would shriek and cry out with unbearable pain.

In Kansas, mother's sons and daughters could not do anything to help her die with dignity. We just had to watch her mother suffer months of terrible pain. If we had lived in the state of Oregon we could have helped our mother die with dignity.

Why is Senator Brownback planning to introduce legislation to deny citizens the right to die with dignity? Is he playing politics with the lives of our citizens, with an attempt to get the vote of the radical right?

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. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. 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. 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

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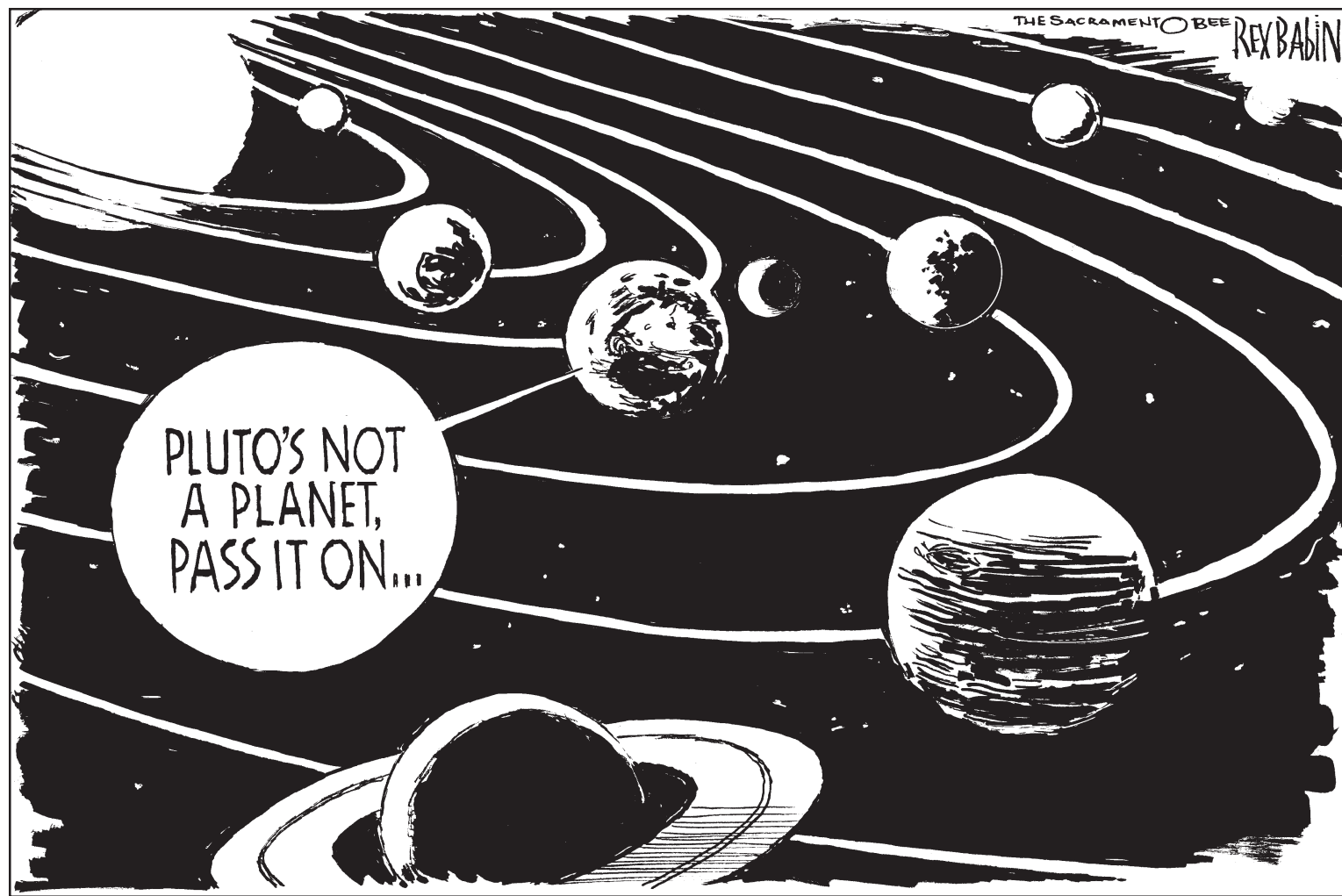
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Teaching kids

"I've got a blue-and-red Adidas bag and a humongous binder. I'm trying my best not to look like a minor niner. I went out for the football team to prove that I'm a man; I guess I shouldn't tell them that I like Duran Duran. This is me in grade nine, baby, this is me in grade nine. This is me in grade nine, baby, this is me in grade nine."

— from the 1992 Barenaked Ladies song "Grade 9"



John Van Nostrand

Line in the Dust

I remember a few years ago standing in the lobby of a Dixon, Ill., hotel waiting for the clerk to finish my check in. On the wall, above the counter, was a television.

A Chicago station was reporting a high school hazing incident that turned bad. So bad it was headed to court.

On the counter was the Chicago Tribune - with the same story on its front page.

School starts in Colby this week. For about the next nine months students will learn reading, writing and what the average annual rainfall is in Sweden.

What may be more tempting to learn for some students will be the features and mistakes of fellow students.

Because of those incidents in Chicago, and even before then, many schools across the coun-

try were cracking down on hazing, or initiation, as it was called in my high school years ago. Seniors would welcome freshmen to high school by having them perform a variety of silly stunts.

Over the years, certain people across the country pushed the envelope and silly turned into humiliating and stunts turned into criminal activity. It was putting schools at risk, let alone innocent 15-year-olds.

Even though it is obvious to see a high school senior put a Burger King crown on a freshman's head and then demand to hear the Oscar Mayer song, that same sort of mentality may be taking more of a subtle, intellectual approach.

If the bully can't get physical with the person any more, he has to get into the heads of his victims.

But what is in the head of a bully?

I've always thought the psychology of the school bully would make a fascinating college term-paper.

The bully typically gives a strong, tough, unforgiving image, but could be acting that way to hide his massive fear of failure or showing how his parents may have treated him during his younger years.

Or the bully's parents may think their child has always done no wrong and their entire world revolves around their child. The child learns his parents ways and thinks everyone should give him the attention in all situations.

Last year, Colby's public school created an system for grade school students in bully situations. Students, who either were victim of or witness to a bully situation, could write down the pertinent information about the incident and leave it in a "bully box" for school staff or administration.

It's a good approach. If we can teach kids at a young age the value of respect and friendship among peers, it's one less thing parents can worry about once their children reach high school. And we will also know what is in the heads of our students.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Casinos need to be controlled

By William A. Collins

Love to gamble,

'Till I drop:

Sometimes don't know,

How to stop.

For an awful lot of citizens, gambling, like a credit card, is "fun." Witness the steady stream of buses plying the highways to Foxwoods and Mohegan, and the flocks of planes winging off to Las Vegas. From New York City, there even remains a daily surge of coaches to Atlantic City. And locally there's the lottery.

Soon there will be more. Foxwoods is building yet another huge addition a la Vegas, in conjunction, it hopes, with MGM Mirage. Before long, the gambling flights will be coming into Bradley, not going out.

But this proposed partnership presents a dilemma for state policymakers. The bigger and glitzier the complex, the more profit for the state. That's pretty tempting. On the other hand, Connecticut's gambling genius up to now has been the relatively low-key atmosphere of its facilities. The two tribes are surely making a killing, and just as surely are not hiding their light under a bushel — but to their credit, they are discreet.

That would likely change with MGM's people. They are not exactly a discreet bunch,

and probably would not even come here if discretion were required. What a pity if they stayed away. The General Assembly should make it plain to MGM moguls that they are not welcome and should peddle their glitz elsewhere. Lawmakers should also counsel the Pequots that they are off base with this new image making, and had better straight away return to their original soft-sell game plan.

Surely, neither casino has anything to grouse about. They're the two largest in the world, play host to huge entertainment performances, and even harbor a top basketball team. How much more do they want? There are only a few hundred remaining Indians to share the profits, including all those long lost great-great grand-nephews who have materialized in recent years. It would be unbecoming to let unvarnished greed replace their heretofore measured response to unmeasured wealth.

A more appropriate focus just now would be a deeper study of gambling addiction. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is plenty of it around, but the governor and lawmakers don't want to hear about it. They just want their money. They've even postponed research called for in the original casino legislation.

And as much as the casinos ignore customers sickened by their business, the state itself is even

more perverse. Its lottery specifically targets low-income gamblers and offers shameless emotional appeals right at their corner store. No long bus ride needed. Who cares about a little addiction?

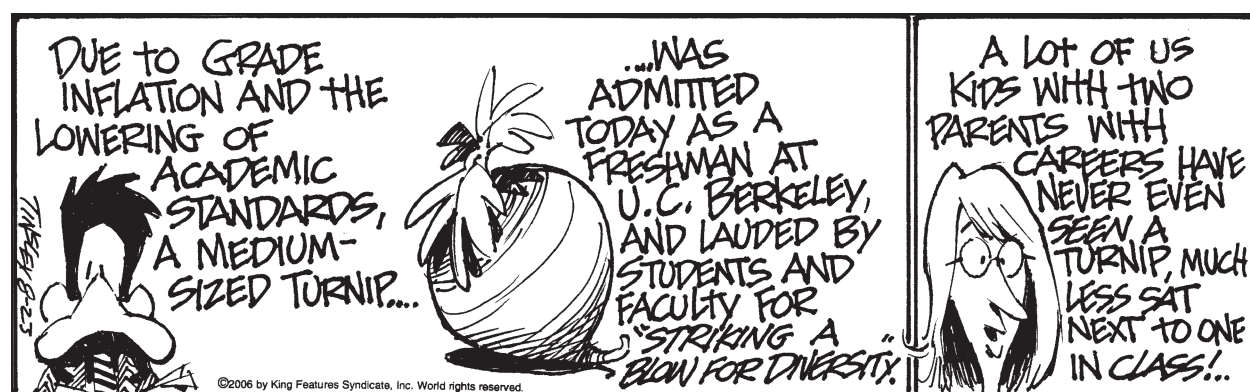
Plus now the casinos report that a third of their customers are Asian, heavily drawn from Boston and New York. Asian gambling addiction is nearly as legendary as Native American alcohol addiction. So do the casinos send counselors to help? No way. They just send buses.

It is time at last for state government to assert its proper regulatory role. The tribes have plenty of cash to conduct studies and to track down and treat addicts. They even could be required to study addiction to the state's shameful lottery scam.

Yes, people will always gamble, but at least now they no longer need to do it through the mob. That's good. The state though, can't escape its moral responsibility of finding and treating its own addicts.

Then the General Assembly could get around to forcing the banks to find and treat their credit card addicts.

Columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Conn. Distributed by MinutemanMedia.org.



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce

Tinsley