

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### Sebelius it is

Call her Governor. So far, no one has laid a glove on Kathleen Sebelius. Like two or three other popular Democrats in the last century, she appears to be headed for an easy victory in November. It's not that you can't beat an incumbent governor; it's happened. But to succeed, someone has to try. None of the Republican candidates gained much traction in the primary. Robin Jennison of Healy, a former speaker of the House, is presentable enough and worked the state, but had no issues. The fact that he had spent his off years lobbying for the caisson interests did not endear him to many Kansans. Ken Canfield of Overland Park appeared to be a nice guy and a good thinker. An expert on fathering with no political experience, he failed to project much leadership. The Republican victor, Jim Barnett of Emporia, grasped the ring, but not so far the essentials of chasing an incumbent from office. You have to give voters some reason to change. If the incumbent is unpopular, then it's a little easier. You can't just ride the bus from town to town and talk with people. You have to go on the attack. Of course, it's hardly a fair race this year. The governor has millions piled up in her campaign account, more than all three Republicans raise. With the current level of excitement, Sen. Barnett is not liable to raise half as much as she has. Last winter, the GOP candidate did try to stake out a position as a leader on settling the school issue. He proposed his own plan, but since he's not in the leadership, or even in fellowship with them, it went nowhere. Now the governor — who kept a low profile during the school debate and lawsuit — is suddenly claiming credit for "solving" the school issue. One television spot shows her "driving the bus." Everyone agrees it's a reach, but her image is unsullied by the battle and she's ready to take credit for the resolution. Such is politics. And the reality of politics is another four years of Kathleen Sebelius as governor, unless she happens to hitch her star to the Democratic ticket and wind up as somebody's vice president. There are no dim prospects in the governor's future, at least not in the short run. From this perspective, though, it's unlikely anything will change by November. Sebelius it is. — *Steve Haynes is owner of Nor'West Newspapers including the Colby Free Press*

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](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansan.com) or [pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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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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## How are you doing on your resolutions?

For some silly reason I was thinking about New Year's resolutions last night and wondering how many of us made them and are sticking to them. It seems that I made more resolutions when I was younger, but the older I get, the more cynical I am becoming — the glass is half empty vs. full mentality.

Still for those who did make resolutions this year, I hope it's going as expected and for people like me who only thought about it — well, there's always next year. Then again, last year I remember one of those horoscope people providing each of the signs complete with a resolution suggestion. For example, my sign is "Sagittarius" and the resolution for those in my group was simply to think. If that's the resolution, I "think" I am doing that. Isn't that dumb, though.

Think. Initially, when I found this particular set of resolution ideas, I thought they were supposed to be serious, but in some ways, there is a bit of truth to them. Maybe some of you might also want to take a few moments and see how you are doing with your horoscope resolution suggestions. Arius, for instance, were supposed to cut back to three double espressos a day. Those under the Taurus sign were asked to take their mothers out for dinner at least once a month and bring two-for-one coupons. Gemini people's resolution in 2006 was to maintain a three-second vow of silence once a week. Cancer folks needed to stick to a Spartan regimen of five meals a day. Leos needed to avoid using the rear view mirror to check if their hair is okay while driving at speeds over 65 mph. People under the Virgo sign hopefully stopped copy-editing the grocery list. Libras were asked to find a new word for



**Patty Decker**

#### • Deep Thoughts

"cute." Scorpions needed to work on social skills, i.e., not to tell certain relatives that they gained 40 pounds every time they saw them. Capricorns needed to try to remember that work starts at 9 in the morning. Aquarians were asked to make sure fur coats were real before spray painting; and finally Pisces needed to try to remember that work starts at 9 in the morning. After all, with 66 percent of the year behind us, it's probably a good bet that we have either done well with our horoscope predictions or not. Of course, the one regarding Aquarians was a bit odd. In all seriousness, though, I think it's a good idea — now and then — to stop and review our shortcomings and try to make them better — whether it's in January (as a New Year's resolution) or September (when the thought hits us). Enjoy the weekend! It's going to be a good one with Celebration on the High Plains at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. \*\*\*\*\* Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Fridays.

## Your turn

### Thanks for the memories

**Dixie Green Ludell**  
The closing of the Colby Theater brings back memories. When we were children my sister and I attended many Saturday night westerns; Roy Rogers, Tim Holt, Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, etc. This was made possible by J.P. Phillips. Mr. Phillips allowed children that were

on welfare to attend movies free. Because our dad was killed in a car crash we were two of those children. In later years, my sister and I worked at the Colby theaters for Glenn Crabb (J.P.'s son-in-law) popping pop corn. We worked with Ethel and Clyde Longberg who were longtime employees of the theater, Ethel selling tickets and Clyde running the pro-

jector. In those days going to a movie was good clean fun. Mrs. J.P. Phillips as one of the reasons it was a good place to go. She kept us all in line. I have been in theaters since then that I wished Pearl was there to keep order. These are great memories from my childhood and youth.

### The battle is won

**From The Manhattan Mercury**  
It shouldn't have taken a lawsuit to force Schools for Fair Funding to make public how the organization spent money in its lawsuit against the state, but the scoffing of legislators is misplaced. Schools for Fair Funding spent more than \$2.9 million in a lawsuit filed in 1999 that alleged that the state was violating a constitutional provision to provide Kansas schoolchildren a suitable education. Nineteen school districts, including the Manhattan-Ogden School District, picked up the tab, contributing \$3.2 million over the years to subsidize the litigation. And despite what House Speaker Doug Mays or others who objected to the lawsuit from its outset say now, it was money well spent. Yes, \$2.26 million is a lot of money for attorney fees,

and the next highest sum, \$474,000, is an eye-popping amount to invest in lobbyists. Such expenditures should not have been necessary. That they were is the direct result of the unwillingness of the Kansas Legislature — chiefly but not solely conservative Republicans — to do its constitutional duty. Lawmakers brought this lawsuit ... on Kansas taxpayers. It is hypocritical now for those lawmakers to find fault with how Citizens for Fair Funding spent taxpayers' money — money contributed after local school board votes — without acknowledging their own role, as so many seem unwilling to do. Instead, they criticize the Shawnee County District Court judge who issued the initial ruling that public school funding was both inadequate and inequitably distributed — in viola-

tion of the Kansas Constitution. And they denounce as "activists" the justices on the Kansas Supreme Court who — unanimously — upheld the district court judge's ruling and ordered lawmakers to substantially boost funding. Where Schools for Fair Funding erred was in not more willingly opening its records and instead doing so after being sued by the Topeka Capital-Journal. Not only was the group's expenditure of taxpayer money public information, but withholding it suggested it had something to hide. That's unfortunate. The determination — borne of desperation — of a relative handful of school districts led to the commitment of more than \$800 million in new funding to public schools. They fought an important battle, and more important, they won.

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