

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Treasure chest

Tom Vilsack for president.
Mitt Romney for president.
Plain and simple.
Vilsack is former governor of Iowa. Democrat.
Romney is former governor of Massachusetts. Republican.
Both are smart. Sharp.
They will bring new faces onto the national stage. New thinking.
Forget Republicans Rudy Giuliani, former New York mayor, and Sen. John McCain, and Democrats Sen. Hillary Rodhan Clinton and Sen. Barack Obama. Senators rarely win presidential elections.
Giuliani is way too liberal for the party in which he camps, McCain had his chance but was blown out of the pond by George W. Bush in 2004, Hillary Clinton is all over the place and we'll never really know what she's all about, and Obama is just too inexperienced.

The analysts — those people who gum up the machinery — are of the opinion that Romney's religion could be a drawback. He's Mormon. Didn't they try to use that same tactic against President Kennedy, a Catholic?

If we are serious, really serious, about getting the train back up on the track, we shouldn't be so quick stick with conductors and assistant conductors who managed to do very little to keep it going the past few years — both Republicans and Democrats. All they need to do is point the fingers at themselves when they talk about blame.

The problem is — money! Neither Mr. Vilsack nor Mr. Romney has war chests bursting with cash. Millions and millions of dollars will be needed. Unfortunately, the prize goes to the financially endowed. Which makes us wonder if perhaps the presidential derby should become a financial responsibility of all of us — federally funded. No more passing dollars under the table.

Mrs. Clinton, for example, just won re-election to the U.S. Senate. That's a six-year commitment. If she decides to pursue the White House, she'll have to pretty much walk away from the job as a senator and campaign full time. If she wins the nomination but is rejected at the polls, she can go back to her Senate seat. That doesn't seem quite right, but that's how it is and it assures her crowd of employment when they flunk the test. All the candidates should be required to resign, go after the intended seat and then let the chips fall where they may.

There will be many more wannabes organizing committees to assess their chances at an Oval Office run. Reason for this is simply because the playing field will be level. There will be no incumbent president seeking re-election in 2008.

President Vilsack? President Romney? Either sounds good to us. But reality says that isn't going to happen. — *Tom Dreiling, The Norton Telegram*

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. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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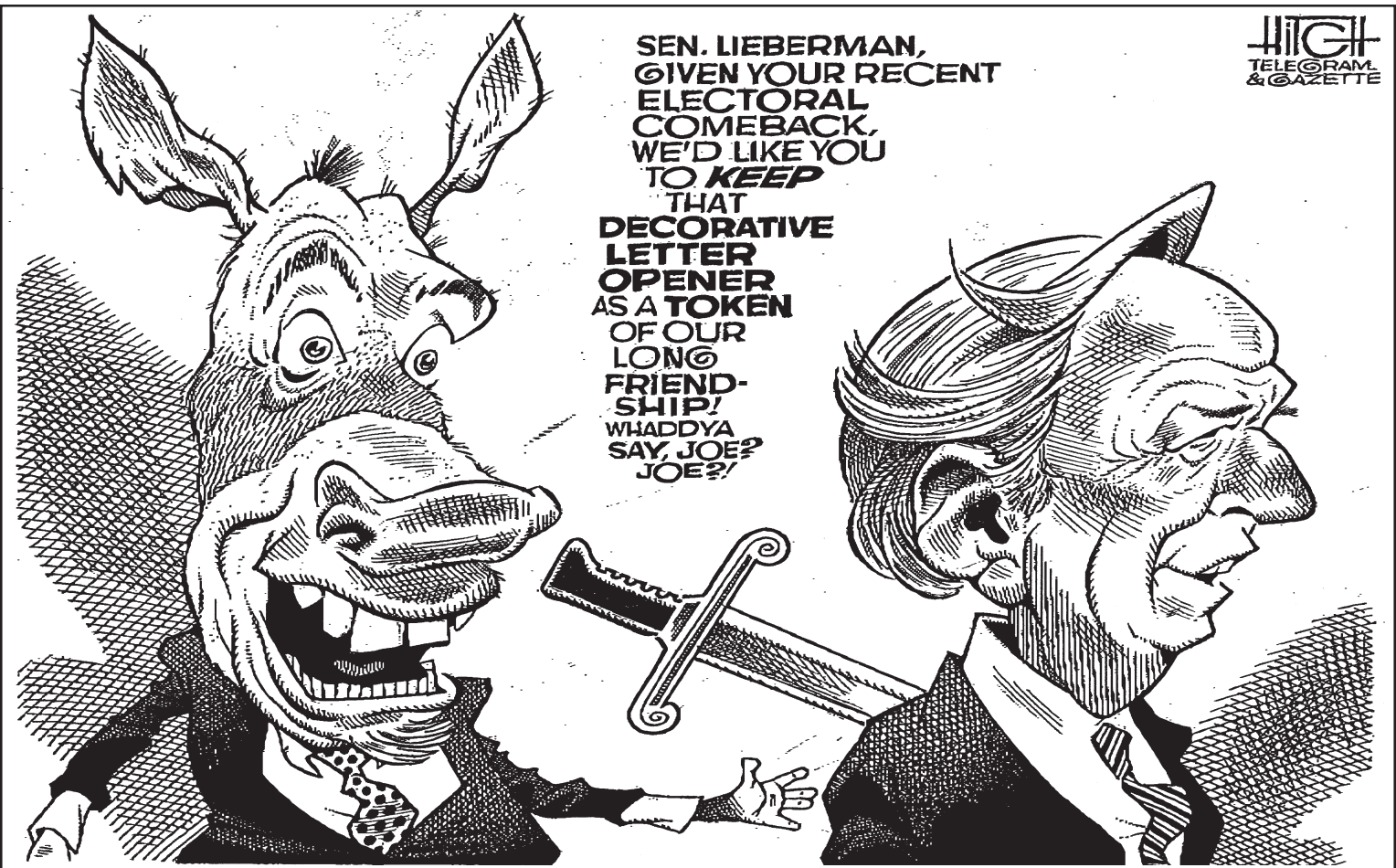
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A little reminder

I still have to pause and think about a horrific moment every time I hear crunch underneath my foot in my own kitchen.

My children, ages 4 and 5, are agile enough to get out a box of cereal in the morning. The cupboard those boxes are in is at floor level. In their haste to pour a bowl, they sometimes let a Cheerio or Froot Loop haphazardly fall to the floor. If I'm not paying attention to what they have done, I'll hear the crunch of that lone cereal bite underneath my slipper.

The sound of the crunch is far from loud, but I feel it in a troubling way.

I'm getting used to the crunch now, but there was a time when my gut tightened and I had a taste in my mouth, like I was chewing on aluminum foil, those mornings.

A few years ago, on a weekend before a Thanksgiving, I was with a group of people from my church and we assisted feeding the homeless and hungry in downtown Des Moines, Iowa. We went to a homeless shelter, packed up a stepvan of food containers and Styrofoam to-go boxes and headed for the parts of the city that people don't talk about. We parked the van on the street corner beside the extremely-low rent apartment buildings. Residents already gathered, knowing food was on the way.

While filling the plates with warm, healthy, donated food, we would try and start some small-talk with the people. They were always friendly, appreciative and liked the occasional company. The leader of our group, from the shelter, who



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

had volunteered years of Saturday nights for this cause, had built relationships with most of the people. He would tell us what to say, how to say it, and what to avoid, just so we would not come across as superior or self-righteous to those we were serving.

It was not all apartment buildings though. We stopped on the edge of downtown Des Moines' industrial park. Our leader would take a stack of the food boxes and trudge off through the waist-high weeds. Some of the recipients lived in forgotten semi-trailers and did not want people they didn't know in their territory.

Some people and blended families we visited lived in houses. Those houses were not pretty by any stretch of the imagination. It was the first time I actually saw people with the stove on to heat the house, because it was cheaper than running the furnace — if the house had a furnace in working condition.

After that house, we climbed back into the van on the way to our next destination. We had a few minutes to talk.

"You know, John, that was not the worst house I've heard of," our leader told me after my comments about the previous people's living conditions.

I was told of one night when the group went to a house. The neighborhood was dark and the house was dark too, as light bulbs and electricity to activate them were rare. The volunteer walked into the house and immediately had an eerie feeling.

Just enough light from the street light that seeped through the trees' branches and eventually through the dirty windows gave the volunteer an impression the walls were moving.

He spoke loud enough to hopefully get the attention of the resident upon his entrance.

He took another step and heard crunch underneath his shoes.

The scatter on the wall appeared to have picked up speed. The man figured out it was not the walls that were moving — but the hundreds of cockroaches on the wall and on the floor. He had stepped on one.

My gut tightened and I had a taste in my mouth, like I was chewing on aluminum foil when I heard the conclusion to that story.

I still can't get that story out of my head. Strange as it may seem, I don't think I want to either. My kids unintentionally letting a piece of cereal fall to the floor will remind me of how grateful I should be for the things I have.

— *John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.*

Your turn

Doctor needs support

Dale Deaver Levant

I find it hard to believe the Colby hospital board has gone so far to destroy Dr. Hildyard who is a very good doctor and is needed by many

people.

There are many people who will never use the hospital in Colby if Dr. Hildyard is no longer here. I am one of them. I need him. So do my children and grandchildren.

Sue Kistler Colby

Patients and supporters of Dr. Victor Hildyard are encouraged to gather at the Thomas County Courthouse for his hearing at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 28, to show that we support him and do not feel he is a threat to the community.

Home-shopping can help kids learn

By Neale S. Godfrey

From toys and clothes to cars and houses, just about everything is up for auction on the Internet these days, and your kids may be eager to join the bidding.

If your child is interested in buying things from online auction sites, you should encourage their bargain-hunting instinct and shop together. This can be a wonderful lesson in money management, and how to be a smart consumer.

Let's say someone is selling a set of American Girl dolls, and your daughter just has to have it. Before the two of you place your bid, do a bit of research. Find out how much a similar set would cost if purchased new from a retail store, or directly from the manufacturer. Next, talk about how much your child wants to spend on the dolls. Don't let the adrenaline of the auction go to your heads; this isn't the only set available in the world, and it certainly won't be the last you'll see on eBay.

When you're looking for a bargain, you have to ask yourself how much you're willing to pay. A bargain isn't a bargain if you walk away feeling like you paid too much! If you don't establish a "ceiling" or maximum amount you're willing to pay, it's easy to get caught up in the

excitement of bidding. Setting a limit early on helps you know when to stop.

The item's condition is another consideration. In the case of the dolls, they might not be "just like new." Even when the seller makes photos available, you can never be sure of what sort of shape a product is in until you see it in person.

The same process can be applied to home shopping television shows, too. Shopping channels on TV work by whipping the viewer into a frenzy. "Call now!" they shout. "Only a few left at this price! You'll never see another bargain like this again!"

Sometimes, there really are bargains to be had. And sometimes, things aren't quite what they seem. Watch a shopping channel for a while with your kids — this always should be a supervised activity — and talk about the experience. What techniques are the sales people using to get viewers excited about the product, or about the deal?

Check out the numbers at the side of the screen. "This is the retail price!" the announcer cries. "This is our LOW price! And this is our Special Low Price, if you act now!"

Write the numbers down and do a bit of re-

search. Is that the real retail price? Can the item be purchased just as easily somewhere else, at an equally low price? Is the show's "Special Low Price" really so special? Your kids can easily find answers to these questions on the Internet.

What about the quality of the item on the screen? Is it a brand you recognize? What's the return policy if it doesn't meet your expectations? Also, consider how additional costs, like shipping and handling, will affect the final price.

Home shopping channels and online auctions are legitimate businesses; they're not run by crooks! But they don't always offer the best deals in the world, either. Keeping your cool in the face of an enticing sales pitch is an important life skill.

Explain to your kids the difference between impulse buying and planned shopping, and how falling for high-pressure sales tactics can wreck a budget. That autographed Cal Ripken jersey might be the best deal you've ever seen, but there may be other things you want or need more. Ultimately, each of us is responsible for spending our own money wisely.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce

Tinsley

