

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

State of the state

By Gov. Kathleen Sebelius

Last week, I was honored to go before the Legislature and the people of Kansas to deliver the annual State of the State address, which provides an opportunity to discuss where our state can go in the coming years.

During the past four years, we’ve made outstanding progress in a number of areas, namely strengthening our schools and expanding our economy.

I believe we must continue that progress, building upon the commitment we’ve made to K-12 schools by focusing on early learning and post-secondary education.

Reaching children early helps them get ready to enter kindergarten, which helps them do better in school and in life.

Additionally, ensuring Kansas students have the opportunity to get education beyond high school — and making sure that education is relevant to the needs of the workplace — will help workers and businesses succeed.

This focus on a skilled workforce will help attract new jobs to Kansas, as will the tax relief I’ve proposed, such as exempting 16,000 small businesses from the franchise tax.

Coupled with our initiatives to promote economic opportunity in rural areas, these efforts will spread prosperity throughout our state.

But that prosperity seems unreachable for the thousands of Kansans without health coverage.

We must address the crisis in our health care system, which is why I’ve called on the Legislature to work with me, the Health Policy Authority, businesses and providers to set a course to universal coverage in our state.

I’ve also called on legislators to work with me and the state’s utilities to set a new course when it comes to energy.

Our security and economy are harmed by our dependence on imported oil, and our current reliance on fossil fuels is causing dangerous changes to our climate. There’s no reason Kansas shouldn’t lead the nation when it comes to wind energy, and we have outstanding opportunities to become a leader in biofuels production and energy efficiency, as well.

We can continue our progress in strengthening our schools and creating jobs, and we can seize new opportunities in health care and energy, only if we work together.

United, there’s nothing we can’t achieve, and I look forward to working with you and with the representatives you’ve sent to Topeka to create a brighter future for all of us.

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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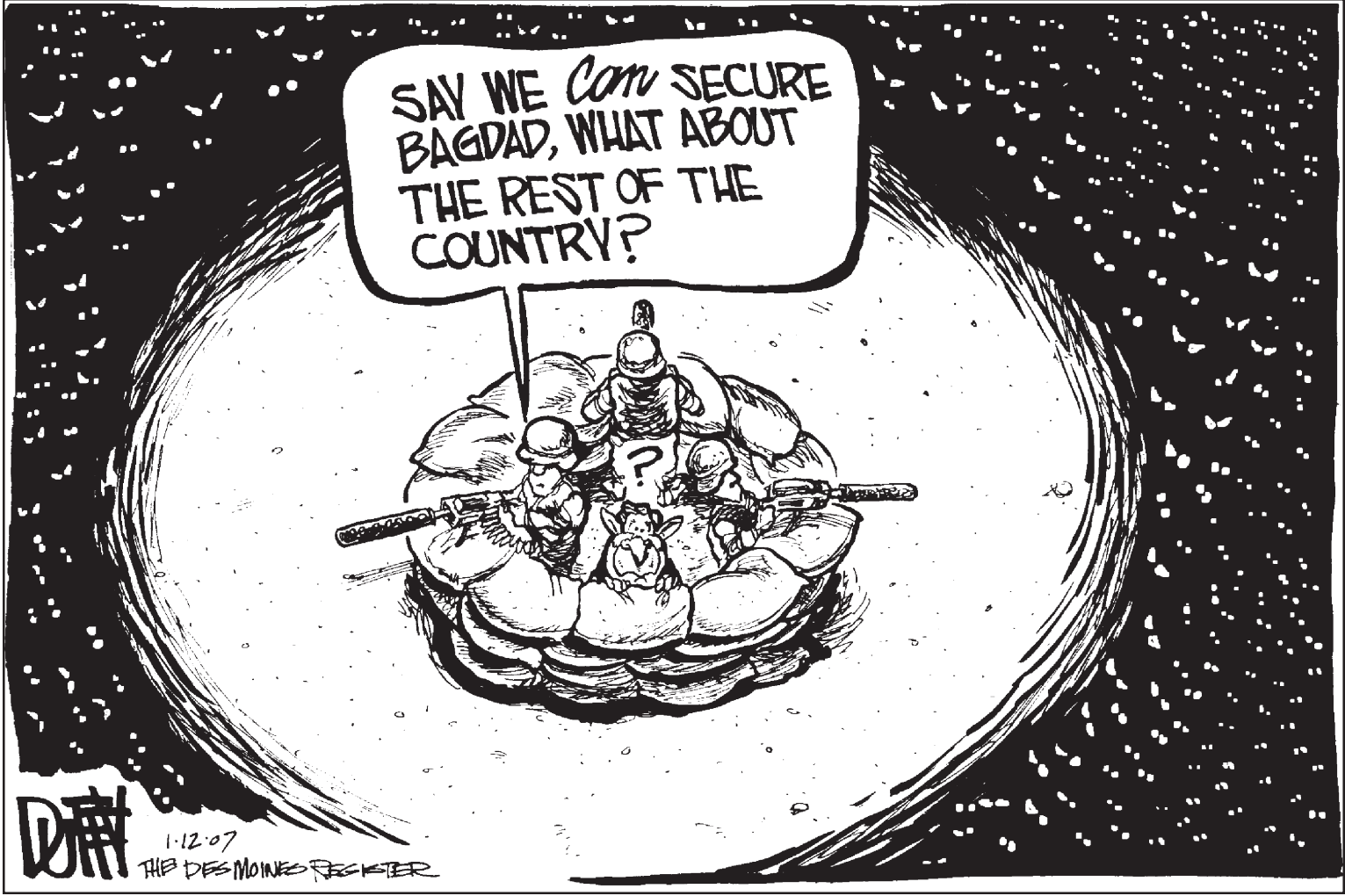
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I’d settle for a cup of coffee

I can’t believe what I just said knowing what was in front of me.

A couple of weekends ago I visited my parents in Sterling, Colo. As with most trips to Sterling, I find some time to see my longtime, dear friend Rod. What has become a new tradition for us, we go to Village Inn late and catch up on things over milkshakes.

(Rod orders a cookies and cream. I go for the chocolate.)

After the small talk about the weather, NFL playoffs and work, Rod asked the first serious question.

“John, do you have any resolutions?”

“I got to watch what I eat,” my reply was. “I said the same thing last year.”

Before moving to Colby, I had a complete physical. The nurse practitioner who did the procedure was also a good friend. I knew she would be straight with me. Days after the physical, she called back to talk about the lab results.

“John, you are in good shape for your age, but you cholesterol is high. It’s not terribly high, but enough to notice,” she said.

I wasn’t surprised to hear about my cholesterol. Years of fast food and my own choices of food at home caught up with me.

“John, just watch what you eat and try and be more active,” I replayed that phone call in my head.

I felt two inches high talking to Rod about that knowing the 12 inches high of fat and calories were in front of me. I know fat and calories are not quite the same as cholesterol — but I can’t believe what I just said knowing what was in front of me.

“I got to watch what I eat,” — yeah, right.

Last year I gave up fast food for Lent. I did extremely well except for the slip on the way to the national basketball tournament in Salina to cover the Colby Trojan women. To redeem myself, I extended my fast-food-fast a week after Easter.

I also remembered the few people I knew who had a heart attack and blamed their terrible diet for it.

Rod said he does not have resolutions but this year he, too, wanted to watch what he ate. His motivation did not come from a person in health care, like me. In May, he will head to the Florida beaches for a few days to visit another friend. He wants to look good on those sunny, sand smothered coasts.

Rod drives a UPS truck through the middle



John Van Nostrand

- Line in the Dust

of nowhere in northeastern Colorado. The few somewheres along his route, he usually picks up fast food and pop after pop. He is beginning to switch. The pop is being replaced by water and he too will change his diet.

It’s not a sin to eat fast food. A burger and fries, or a taco and oles, can be used as a treat or reward after a tough week at the office or a special moment with your spouse or kids. I’ll continue to eat fast food after Lent and Easter, but I will use Lent to strengthen my need to be more careful about my food selections and need to exercise.

I’ll try and walk more from the office to the post office, bank, library and other places that make a reasonable walk. Son Grant is on a kick of playing tag around the living room furniture. Fortunately, our living room is big enough to do that and get my heart and legs moving a little faster. My kids are still light enough to be my bench press. A new bike we received as a gift from a friend will be great this spring.

As for Rod and I, I’m sure we will be accountable to each other about our diets the next few months. The next time I go to Sterling, we will do that — but over coffee.

— — —

We welcomed Kristi Powell and Emily Wederski to our advertising department this week.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

We must respect all property rights

Another legislative session is underway in Topeka.

As usual, many topics are slated for discussion. Currently there is debate in the 40th Senatorial District concerning the introduction of the black-footed ferret on property heavily infested with prairie dogs.

Kansas Wildlife and Parks expert, Michael LeValley, admits the ferret introduction is not intended to control the population of prairie dogs. The ferret needs a densely populated colony of prairie dogs for food supply. I will begin my newspaper articles this year by sharing my views on the introduction of the black-footed ferret.

Please read this article, but do your own research concerning the introduction of the black-footed ferret to control established colonies of prairie dogs located in Logan County. My main concern is that we have a 100 year old law in place to help control prairie rodents, and this law has worked quite well to protect adjacent landowners.

It is my opinion none of us will live long enough to see the day when the prairie dog population will be completely eradicated. As I understand it, in order for the ferret species to survive, the prairie dog population will have to be kept at a dense level. I do think we agree that a

“dense” level prairie dog population will allow a greater chance of these rodents spreading out to adjacent landowners.

We proudly live in a land where the majority has always ruled.

We respect personal property rights, but also must respect our neighbors. An elderly gentleman once told me “good fences make good neighbors.”

I would extend this to say “controlling prairie dogs also makes good neighbors.”

I admit my knowledge of the black-footed ferret is limited. I can only speak from my experience of how prairie dogs became a problem for me in the 1970s. In a matter of a few years, these rodents spread out over a 90 acre pasture that I own.

Out of respect for my neighbors, I eradicated the two colonies that had made their home in my pasture. Just this last summer, 30 years later, I



Ralph Ostmeyer

- District 40 Senator

have located evidence of re-infestation.

My point being that we will never get rid of this rodent because each landowner places a different level of priority in controlling them. I have found that eradication is time-consuming and very expensive.

As long as Wildlife & Parks encourages and protects colonies of prairie dogs by introducing the black-footed ferret, neighbors will have a constant vigil to keep in order to control prairie dogs on their land.

Kansas Wildlife & Parks has mentioned that they will control adjacent property infestation using the boundary method.

Will this treatment be on-going, or just a one time deal for neighbors of the properties on which they intend to release the black-footed ferret? Please consider the consequences to these neighbors because they will be faced constantly with possible infestation of prairie dogs on their property.

I realize my stand against this issue may seem one-sided, but this issue is important to the constituents of my Senatorial District.

We must respect the property rights of everyone, especially the people who are directly affected by this decision.

We need to make sure the laws of Kansas protect the property rights of everyone, as well.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley