

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



### Off to a good start

**From The Lawrence Journal-World**  
Both in tone and in substance, the Kansas Legislature's 2007 session seems to be off to a good start. Many Kansans found it gratifying that, on just the second day of the session, the Kansas Senate approved and sent to the Kansas House a bill that would ensure the third year of funding for school finance legislation passed last year. The House has expressed support of the third year of funding but, of course, has its own measure that would accomplish that goal.

That first major action of the session perhaps sums up what a number of legislators have said they see as a new spirit of cooperation in state government. Although there are positive signs that the governor and legislators are willing — perhaps more willing than they have been in some years — to work together and compromise to achieve important goals for the state, this still is a political arena in which officials pursue certain avenues for political reasons.

For instance, some Republican legislators have said that the budget proposed Thursday by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius makes more costly promises than the state can afford to keep, even with additional revenue created by an economic upswing. That could be a calculated move to make legislators look like the spoilers of popular plans included in the Sebelius proposal.

Nonetheless, there are many positive signs in the rhetoric that opened the new session and the governor's second term. In his response to the governor's State of the State message on Wednesday, Senate President Steve Morris said, "We look forward to working with the governor and ALL of our colleagues in the House and Senate. ..." The emphasis on the word ALL in the written text of Morris' speech seemed to be a message not only for the governor and Democratic legislators, but also for members of his own Republican Party, who often have been stymied by contentious divisions in recent sessions.

Another positive indicator is that the governor and leaders in both the House and Senate seem focused on the same key issues such as energy, education and health care. ...

It's usually easier to agree that something must be done than it is to agree on exactly what that something should be and how much it should cost. For better or worse, politics is bound to influence many discussions in state government this year, but it would be wonderful if the guiding principle for the decisions of our state officials is what is best for the state and its people. Lawmakers seem to be off to a reasonably good start in that regard; it is hoped the same can be said when they reach the session's finish line.

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*.

#### 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, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e-mail: [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) web: [www.morrisonfamily.com](http://www.morrisonfamily.com)
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 [ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto: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@nwkansan.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansan.com)

**NEWS**

**Patty Decker - Editor**  
[pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com)

**Tisha Cox - General Assignment**  
[tcx@nwkansan.com](mailto:tcx@nwkansan.com)

**Jan Katz Ackerman**, Area Reporter  
[ackermanjk@ruraltel.net](mailto:ackermanjk@ruraltel.net)

**ADVERTISING**

**Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director**  
[crystalr@nwkansan.com](mailto:crystalr@nwkansan.com)

**Kristi Powell - Advertising Sales**  
[kpowell@nwkansan.com](mailto:kpowell@nwkansan.com)

**Emily Wederski - Advertising Sales**  
[ewederski@nwkansan.com](mailto:ewederski@nwkansan.com)

**BUSINESS OFFICE**

**Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager**  
[lea@nwkansan.com](mailto:lea@nwkansan.com)

**Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building**  
[japplegate@nwkansan.com](mailto:japplegate@nwkansan.com)

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
[support@nwkansan.com](mailto:support@nwkansan.com)

**NOR'WEST PRESS**

**Jim Bowker - General Manager**  
Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Delisa Allen, David Erickson, Betty Morris and Dana Huthansel

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 \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

**Nor'West Newspapers**  
Haynes Publishing Company



### Tough job, but somebody's got to do it

Roughly 22 months will have to pass before the next presidential election. I have to keep reminding myself of that. Apparently, somebody needs to remind potential presidential candidates of the same thing. Over the weekend, Barak Obama and former First Lady-turned-senator Hillary Clinton announced they are both putting together exploratory committees to look into running in the 2008 presidential race.

In one of the stories on Obama's announcement, it referred to the "imploding presidency" of George W. Bush. An interesting way to put it, but like it or not, he's still president until a new president is sworn in January 2009.

The new Democratic Congress is roadblocking attempts to send more troops to Iraq, along with trying to cut funding to the efforts there.

I don't think sending more troops is the answer, but neither is pulling out. What about the normal, everyday people there, men, women and children — families trying to live their lives in the middle of a war zone?

Bush has a lot to deal with until his time in office is up, but it is his job to complete, and one I don't envy.

Though I've had my issues with his presidency, I respect the office he holds. I imagine being the American president is probably one of the toughest jobs on the planet.



#### Tisha Cox • Off The Beaten Path

But how crazy is it that talk of an election almost two years away is overshadowing the current administration and its issues?

The 2008 election will be here before anyone knows it. It's time to dig in and deal with the problems, and issues at hand now.

A Congress with two political parties at odds, and with the president, as well as a public that really doesn't trust its government.

Being born and raised in rural Kansas, I've seen how people can put aside such things as their political affiliations and work together for the common good. It has to be done, because in a rural area, if people don't pull together, nothing gets done.

Maybe Congress, and Washington, D.C. as a whole could take a page from all the people in a place like this.

Swallow their pride, roll up their sleeves and dig in, because there is plenty of work to complete, and a president that needs direction and

support, not stonewalling. **Snow, again** Speaking of digging in, well, digging out in this case. I can't believe how much snow fell again this weekend.

I am in awe of how much snow has been moved, and piled up around the community. No less impressive is the snow covering all the yards around town. I don't think it's melted much since the 19 inches that fell New Year's Day weekend.

The past three weeks, each time I can see pavement on my street, it has snowed, covering it up again.

I've heard many people say they haven't seen anything like this in well, years. Even at my age, 33, I can honestly say I haven't seen anything like this since I was a kid.

It's crazy, but what can anyone do about it? Appreciate it, and enjoy it, I guess.

This snow will make great memories for families — great stories to tell the kids and grandkids, and pictures to send to friends and family who live in places that don't get much snow. Plus it's going to be great for wheat, and replenishing soil moisture.

\*\*\*\*\*  
*Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. [tcx@nwkansan.com](mailto:tcx@nwkansan.com).*

### First 100 hours

**Last Week in the House of Representatives**  
The Democrats continued the First 100 Hours agenda in the House this week. The House passed legislation implementing more recommendations of the 9-11 Commission. The bill requires scanning of all sea and air cargo entering the U.S. and creates a new grant program for first responders to purchase emergency communications equipment.

The House also passed the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, which provides federal funding to support embryonic stem cell research. In addition, the House passed a bill to raise the federal minimum wage.

Finally, the House passed the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act, which allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate with pharmaceutical manufacturers for lower drug prices.

**Attending the Salina Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting**  
Last week, I attended the Salina Chamber of Commerce annual meeting. Dennis Lauver became executive director for the Chamber in October. It was good to see him and hear his goals for the upcoming year. I introduced the speaker for the evening, former Attorney General John Ashcroft, and enjoyed hearing his thoughts about the national security challenges we face

#### Jerry Moran • Kansas Rep. First District

as a country. **11th Annual Big First Listening Tour Continues**  
I spent time in Canton, Marion, LaCrosse and Ness City visiting with Kansans.

**In the Office**  
Bill Caton, Executive Vice President of the Kansas Equity Fund in Topeka, and I met to discuss legislation regarding the low income housing tax credit program and the effects of the alternative minimum tax (AMT) on affordable housing investment. Several representatives of the Kansas Association of Realtors were in to express their support for small business health plans and other issues important to realtors in Kansas. In with the group were Delores Dalke of Hillsboro, Mike McGrew of Lawrence, Sue Wenger of Mulvane, Cal Lantis of Ottawa, Cherise Sedlock of Kansas City, Brian Jones of Pittsburg, Trista Curzydlo of Wichita and Luke

Bell of Topeka. Sonny Rundell of Syracuse and Judi Miller of Topeka were in with the Kansas Department of Education to discuss the migrant worker education program and changes to No Child Left Behind. Dr. Charles Rice of Manhattan was in to talk about his involvement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Air Quality Taskforce. As a member of the taskforce, Dr. Rice serves as the Chairman of the Greenhouse Gas Subcommittee. Jim and Ruth Anne French of Partridge were in with OxFam to discuss the organization's priorities for the 2007 Farm Bill. Todd Roberts of Emporia was in with the Kansas National Education Association Student Program to advocate for reducing student loan interest rates.

**Contact Me**  
It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an e-mail, [www.jerrymoran.house.gov](mailto:www.jerrymoran.house.gov). You can also contact me through one of my offices below:  
Hays District Office  
1200 Main Street, Suite 402  
P.O. Box 249  
Hays, KS 67601-0249  
P: (785) 628-6401  
F: (785) 628-3791

**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. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

**Mallard Fillmore**  
• Bruce Tinsley

**Mallard's Ode to the End of football season:**  
TO COACHES WHOSE NOTION OF "LOYALTY"...  
...IS MAKING A HUNDRED-YARD DASH...  
...AWAY FROM THEIR PLEDGES TO "STAY HERE FOREVER"!  
TO ANY TEAM OFFERING MORE CASH.