

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

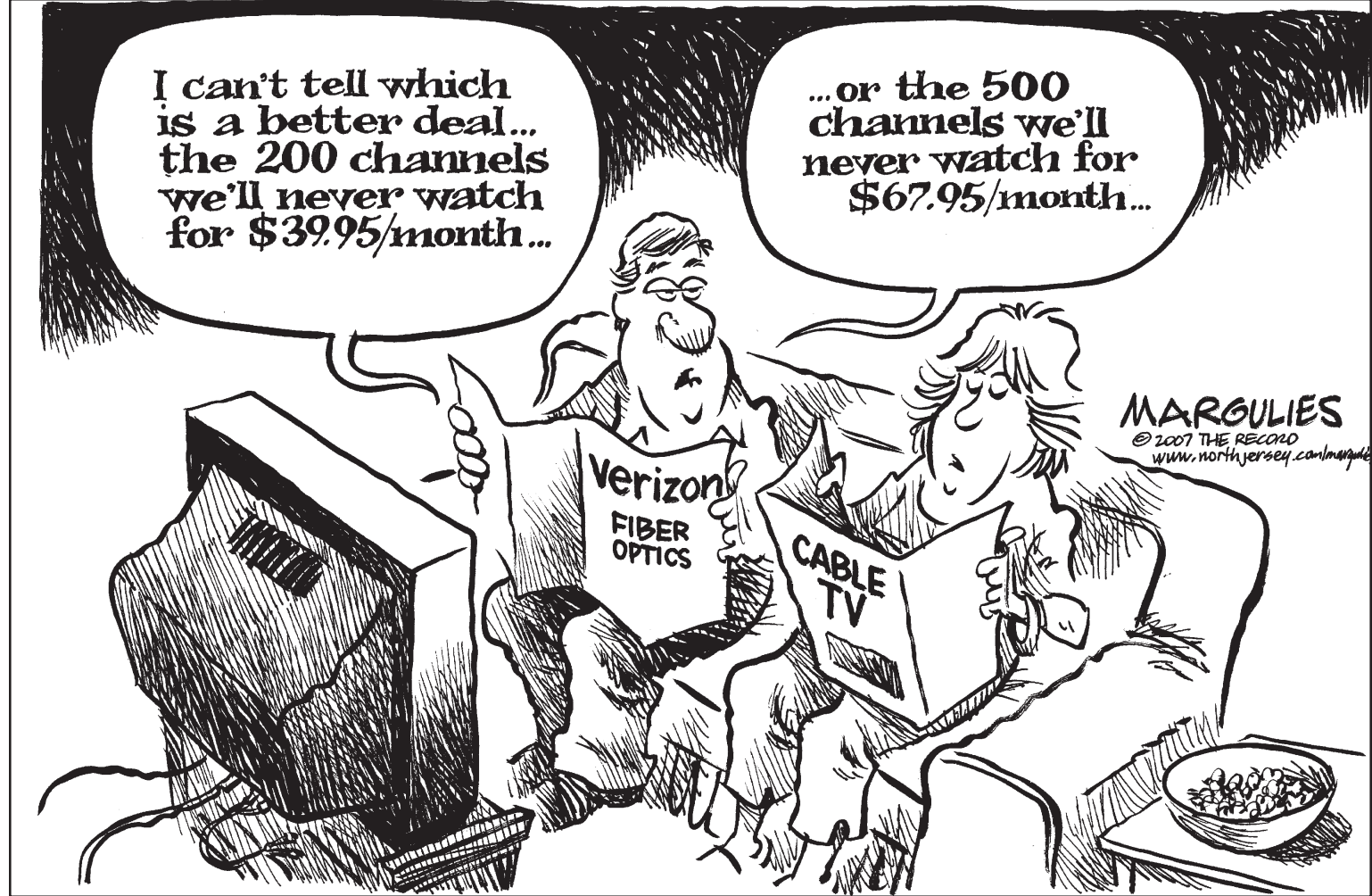
Prevention or promiscuity?

From The Pittsburg Morning Sun
The fight against cervical cancer has made its way to the state Legislature. Kansas lawmakers are debating a bill that would make it mandatory for all girls to get the Gardasil shot to fight the human papillomavirus, which can lead to cervical cancer.
More than a dozen other states are considering similar legislation. Just last week, the governor of Texas bypassed state lawmakers and put a mandate that junior high girls get the vaccine.
Some in the state Legislature worry that giving young girls the shot will be an open invitation to promiscuity because HPV is a sexually transmitted virus. But others realize the vaccine can save lives.
According to the Centers for Disease Control, 80 percent of women will contract HPV before the age of 50. For many of those women, their bodies will heal itself or the virus will be detected and any high risk outbreaks can be fought off — the virus never goes away. But more than 10,000 women each year will be diagnosed with cervical cancer — 70 percent of those cases are caused by HPV — and about 3,500 will die from the disease. ...
For those who still don't think their daughters should get the shot, parents will be allowed to opt out of the mandate by signing a piece of paper saying they are aware the shot is available and the harmful effects of HPV.
Giving a teen or preteen this vaccine is not giving them an open invitation for irresponsible behavior. It is protecting them for the future. The statistics are scary, the threat is real. If there is a way to prevent it, we owe it to our children to help them protect themselves.

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: jmorriso@ink.org
web: 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

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@nwkans.com or pdecker@nwkans.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.



Much changes in 275 miles

While waiting for my wife to finish her massage at Colby Community College's massage clinic last week, the kids and I strolled over to the college library. The kids' interest was caught by the chess board and kids' books.
The "Encyclopedia of the Great Plains" got my attention. (The college library has an excellent selection of regional books about Kansas, counties and others about the American West.)
For starters, I was honored someone went to great lengths to compile and categorize our part of the country. It was not the first time I have seen such a book. I have "Encyclopedia of Southern Culture." The American South is sort of a hobby of mine. It definitely is a country within a country.
"Encyclopedia of the Great Plains" was compiled by the University of Nebraska. Rightfully so, since western Nebraska is considered the Great Plains. But reading the first few pages of the book, I was puzzled by how the authors defined the Great Plains.
The entire state of Nebraska, and Kansas, were considered the Great Plains, not just the western parts.
"Encyclopedia of Great Plains" defined the plains as the area east of the Rocky Mountains to the Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota borders. The plains also include most of west Texas and Oklahoma and portions of Canadian provinces. I thought that was generous.
Ian Frazier's "Great Plains" wrote in his book the eastern edge of the Great Plains is the 100th



John Van Nostrand

- Line in the Dust

parallel — just about where Norton and Dodge City is. Between the two books about the same topic, that is about a 275 mile difference in borders. I based the distance from Norton to Saint Joseph, Mo.
Considering the history and development of all those areas, can there really be a difference among people, history and culture in 275 miles? I think there is.
Frazier wrote when the country developed west, bankers were cautious of giving loans to farmers whose land was west of the 100th parallel. They knew that is where the rainfall amounts dropped significantly and weather patterns were more erratic. Bankers did not always have confidence farmers would have crops good enough to pay back the loan.
Several tiny high schools from west Texas to the Dakotas play six-man football (as does my wife's high school). That started in a tiny Nebraska high school because the inventor wanted the smaller school kids to play football no matter what it took. It's rare for any college program to recruit six-man high school players. College

recruiters spend a majority of their time at the bigger schools.
Industry and economic development also contrast the areas. It wouldn't take long to write down the diverse industries that have developed in Wichita, Kansas City, Omaha and Oklahoma City. Those industries eventually influence the city in one way or another.
With the exception of southwest Kansas' livestock-related businesses, we don't have that long of a list. Some of those city factories have more employees than some of the towns around us have residents.
I enjoyed the "Encyclopedia of the Great Plains" and plan to take a few more notes before I have to return it to the library.
I just wish the authors would have taken a few more notes to find out really where the Great Plains starts and stops.
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Thank you to those who are filling out our Best of Thomas County survey we ran in Friday's paper. We apologize for not having a dedicated place on the survey to write your name if you want a chance to win a free subscription to the Free Press. There is space in the survey to write your name.
Names won't be used when listing the various reasons why people liked whatever category.
Please get your forms to us by Feb. 20.
John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Your turn

Stories stir up trouble

Jackie Bendure Hoxie
I was given the two articles by Jan Katz Ackerman which ran in the Jan, 24 and 25 Colby Free Press. I just want to say that I think we have good people as our Sheridan County Commissioners. I think they are trying very hard to do what is best for the county and for the people. I also think that our elected officials and county employees as a whole are doing a good job. I

applaud the raise in pay for them. They work very hard. I know, for a fact, that many serve above and beyond the call of duty. I am glad that our budget can stand a raise in pay. However, I do think that the County Clerk should have received one, also. It gives the impression that politics had a part in that.
I would hope that other counties will show their appreciation for their county servants in giving a raise to them.

I am also glad that we have citizens who are attending each meeting of the commissioners, keeping tab on what is going on. I would do so likewise if I had a bit more energy.
I am sorry to say this, but I think Jan Katz Ackerman really likes to stir up trouble. Please, look to your own problems, let us solve ours without your help. Please, be very sure of your facts before you publish them. You have hurt a lot of people.

Don't see why office may close

Jody Tubbs Colby
After reading the front page article in Thursday's Free Press "State, may drive licenses out of Thomas County" I was totally confused.
The article stated that Commissioners Ken Christiansen and Byron Sowers signed a resolution asking state officials to keep drivers license renewals in the treasure's office in Colby. Colby has a Division of Motor Vehicle office but

it is not in the treasure's office.
The smaller counties do have a license renewal office in their courthouses to help those who just need to get their licenses renewed.
I do understand that there is a possibility, should new regulations go into effect, those offices may be forced to close.
The article also stated that an effort to centralize the process to larger communities would

mean that people from Northwest Kansas would have to travel to Hays to renew their license.
Colby's Division of Motor Vehicles is one of the large offices and from what I understand it is not under any threat of closing.
They just hired a new License Examiner and I don't think they would have done so if they were going to close that office. The article was very misleading.

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. 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.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

