

# Opinion

## Free Press Viewpoint



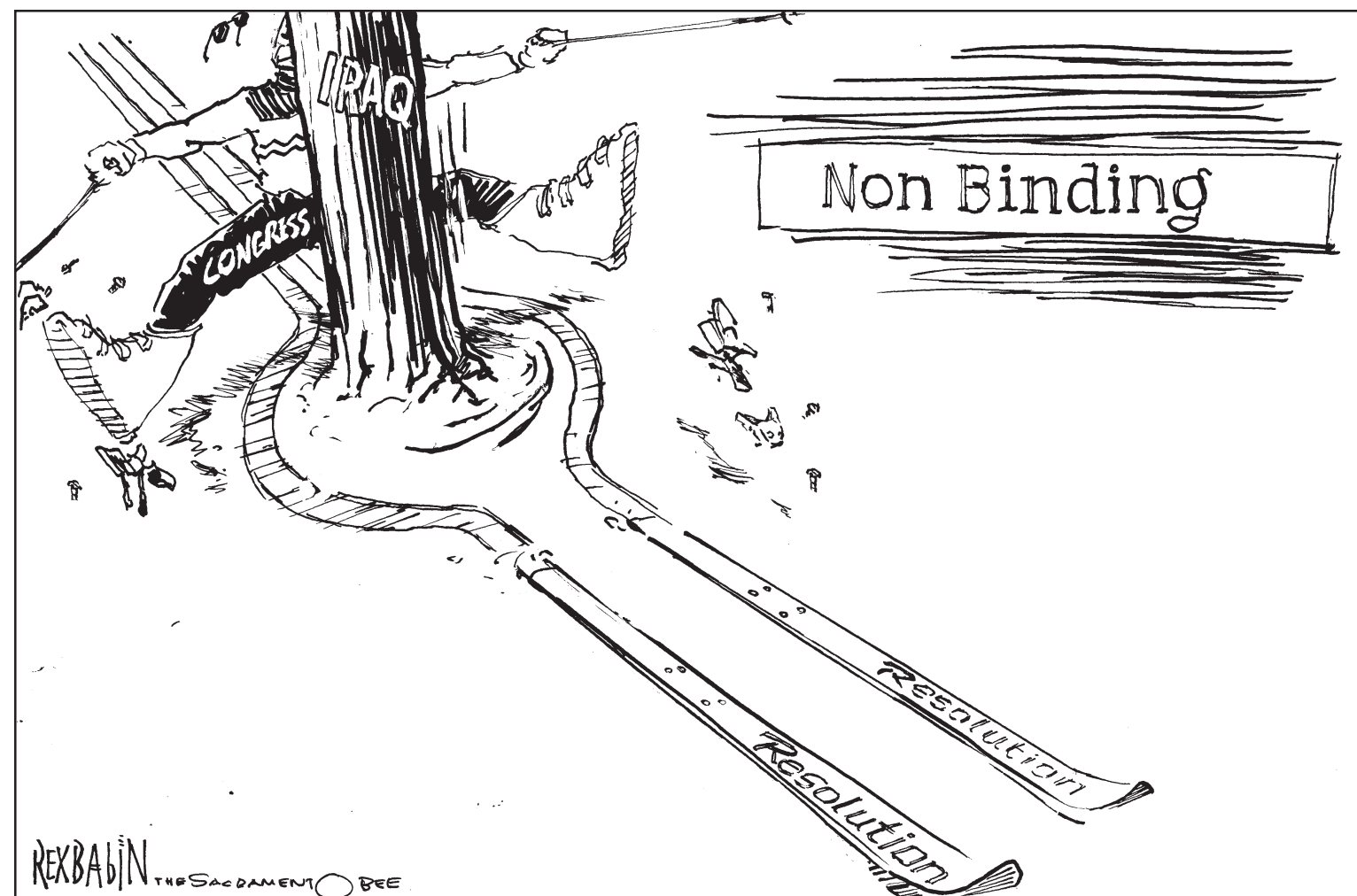
### Time to move on

**From The Manhattan Mercury**  
 Kansans who value education, particularly science education, ought to be gratified that the state Board of Education rewrote — yet again — science standards for public schools.  
 Approval had been a foregone conclusion since the primary election, when Republican moderates ousted enough conservatives to alter the balance of power on the board. That the rewrite amounts to the fifth change in eight years reflects the intensity of the debate over evolution and creationism — including intelligent design.  
 Tuesday's 6-4 vote is hardly a consensus. And although an overwhelming consensus exists among scientists and educators in support of evolution, previous 6-4 BOE votes have undermined science standards and inserted dubious definitions and unfounded assertions about the scientific validity of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.  
 Fortunately, the sometimes furious debate over the topic in the last decade doesn't seem to have had much negative effect on students — at least not on the biology they learn. As the superintendent of Wichita's school district pointed out, that's partly because the changes in standards never lasted long. Also, most school boards seem to have understood the importance of evolutionary theory to biology and other scientific disciplines — and to students' success beyond high school.  
 Fortunately, most districts were unwilling to undermine their students' educations. Those local decisions have lessened the potential for harm by state board members guided more by social or religious agendas than the quest for educational excellence.  
 As for the potential ripple effects of this debate, they're difficult to gauge. Certainly the topic provided ample fodder for late-night talk show hosts and standup comedians, but perhaps no more than the usual stale array of Kansas jokes. Perhaps the debate drove some businesses away from the state, and perhaps the lively civic engagement attracted others.  
 And who knows, perhaps we'll go through this exercise again in a couple of years, complete with the pronouncements from national publications on why what happens in Kansas matters — or doesn't — beyond the state's borders. Recent history would suggest such a recurrence, but maybe, just maybe, we'll evolve enough to move on to other matters.

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



### Keep talking, it's helping

I hope you have at least been informed by our series of stories related to Colby Community College's proposal for a new wellness and activity center.  
 I know I have.  
 Editor Patty Decker really couldn't have squeezed all of the facets of the proposal into the story when the college board formally announced the proposal in January. That is why we thought about some of the most obvious related stories to follow up with.  
 Like others in town, we too heard the discussions about how the center would change the Colby Community Building, a piece of downtown Colby for 50 years. We appreciated city of Colby Recreation Director Ryan Sturdy's candid comments about the building and how the center opens the door of possibilities for other events to come to town and be held in the community building.  
 Yes, the college's proposal does have strong ties to its athletic program. I didn't know women's basketball coach Tom Stephens took some of his own money to improve the locker rooms in the building after some of his early recruits in subtle ways showed him they were not interested in Colby after seeing the facilities.  
 Likewise for Colby wrestling coach Steve Lampe. I haven't talked to all of the college coaches, but he put it best when he said, "Colby is on an island."  
 Coaches at Butler County college in El Dorado can say how convenient Wichita is to those young



**John Van Nostrand**

#### • Line in the Dust

student-athletes. Lampe said he has told some of his recruits Colby is just a few hours drive from Denver, Colo. — implying just how isolated Colby is.  
 Listening to the coaches, better facilities would make Colby a better attraction to potential student and student-athletes.  
 The other side of the story would obviously be the opposition to the proposal. The increase in property taxes to pay for the facility is the leading reason right now not to like it.  
 I told one caller my concerns about property taxes too.  
 "Where I lived in Iowa, I thought it was expensive, but compared to Kansas, Iowa is cheap," I said. I have made that clear in other columns.  
 We tried our best to explain how the people need to circulate the petition with their own question about allowing the funding for the April 3 ballot.  
 County Clerk Shelly Harms said her office has received numerous phone calls from curi-

ous voters about the petition.  
 Has that petition been circulated? We haven't seen one in the office.  
 Other than a few comments about how the center won't be a revenue generating facility, I don't know of other reasons why not to be in favor of it.  
 Our stories don't mean the *Colby Free Press* is in favor of the center. We are confident we are doing our job of finding and relaying the necessary information. We can't tell you how to vote, we can only tell you information we think you need to determine your vote.  
 But the best part of the proposal is the discussion among those interested. Colby's KXXX Golden Plains sports talk show has gone beyond its traditional listen-and-talk routine about games and who is better than who. Callers are talking about the center.  
 People still need to attend the college board's meetings or attend one of Dr. Lynn Kreider's informative presentations at various functions to learn more. He has been on tour promoting the proposal.  
 Keep talking people.  
 Silence means approval.  
 — — —  
 Thank you to all who submitted a Best of Thomas County survey. Give us some time to go over the entries and we'll let you know where the best of Thomas County is.  
*John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press*

### Your turn

### Go figure

**Vernon Flanagin Colby**  
 Projections relating to the actual cost of the college building proposal need to be scrutinized by Thomas County voters. While 25 or 30 million dollars may seem like pocket change to the promoters, those actually paying the bill may think otherwise.  
 So far, what has happened is that a four-member committee involving only one board member has proposed the details of this facility. Quoting from the promotional article on the college website, "Committee members understand that no one wants to pay more taxes. HOWEVER, they agree it's time to spend this money to enable the college and community to grow." Read it again. "They agree it's time to spend this money."  
 It doesn't say they suggest the matter be brought to the taxpayers to see if they agree that their money should be spent.  
 Two resolutions relating to financing the project seem to have been passed by the College Board.

- Resolution I provides for a 4.49 million dollar issue of General Obligation Bonds. As things stand now, this is to be on the ballot April 3 and will be a yes or no vote. No taxpayer action is required to assure this will be on the ballot.
  - Resolution 2 (published in the January 26 and February 2 issues of the *Free Press*) involving about \$16 million requires taxpayer action in the form of a petition if it is to appear on the ballot April 3. A petition is circulating.
  - The need has been explained as \$15 million for the gym and amenities and \$5 million for the dormitory for a total of \$20 million.
- So far, there have been three sources of this money mentioned.
1. \$4.49 in general obligation bonds.
  2. \$15.95 million from Participation Certificates (the Lease Purchase Agreement described in Section 6 of Resolution 2.)
  3. \$5 million from grants and gifts.
- Adding up these figures, we get \$25.4 million (4.49+15.95+5) not the \$20 million the headlines in the paper proclaimed. Is my calculator broken? NO! Actually there is well over \$5 mil-

lion of interest included in the Lease Purchase Agreement. Now, add in the interest on the General Obligation Bonds, and we're up to over \$27 million. But wait; what if there is a 25 percent cost overrun?  
 Tack on another \$5 million (excluding interest) for a cost overrun, and we are up to \$32 million (and this is without any maintenance, taxes, or insurance as stated in the resolution). Interestingly, when the present student union was built way back in the late 60's, the cheapest bid came in 40 percent over the cost estimate!  
 Should the \$32 million figure turn out to be the true cost, the figures you have been quoted for the tax increase on your house, land, and commercial structures could be a lot higher than you have been told. Go figure. Remember, this is on top of what you are already paying to the college now in taxes.  
 All I am saying is that taxpayers need to be informed as to the actual cost of the college's proposal and not wake up too late one day to reality.

#### 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.

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