

Opinion

Other viewpoints



Advances in license technology unknown

The State of Kansas implemented a new way to fight fraud several years ago yet few know about the new technology.

Biometric technology uses a mathematical template of the face when a photograph is taken of a driver for his or her Kansas driver's license.

The formula eliminates hair and skin to measure the distance between the ears, cheekbones, nose, eyes, lips and more. Those images are run through a computer database to find a match or near-matches with templates on file. A Division of Motor Vehicles employee then reviews the matches with a state fraud investigator for follow up.

This process is used in six other states and is paying dividends.

The computer process has uncovered more than 1,200 cases of fraud in the 2 1/2 years it has been used in the Sunflower State, according to a Kansas City Star report on the subject. Some fraud attempts may have been a teen attempting to use an older sibling's photo to get into a bar. Some may include trying to steal someone else's identity and other unimaginable reasons.

Clearly driver's licenses are in big demand as evidenced by the burglary attempt in Ottawa more than three years ago. ...

Driver's licenses serve as so much more than just an ID, which is why it is so important to take this process so seriously. However, it is surprising this process occurred without the public's knowledge.

Hopefully that translates into a lot of identities protected that Kansans didn't know about either.

— *The Ottawa Herald*

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 or pdecker@nwkansas.com.

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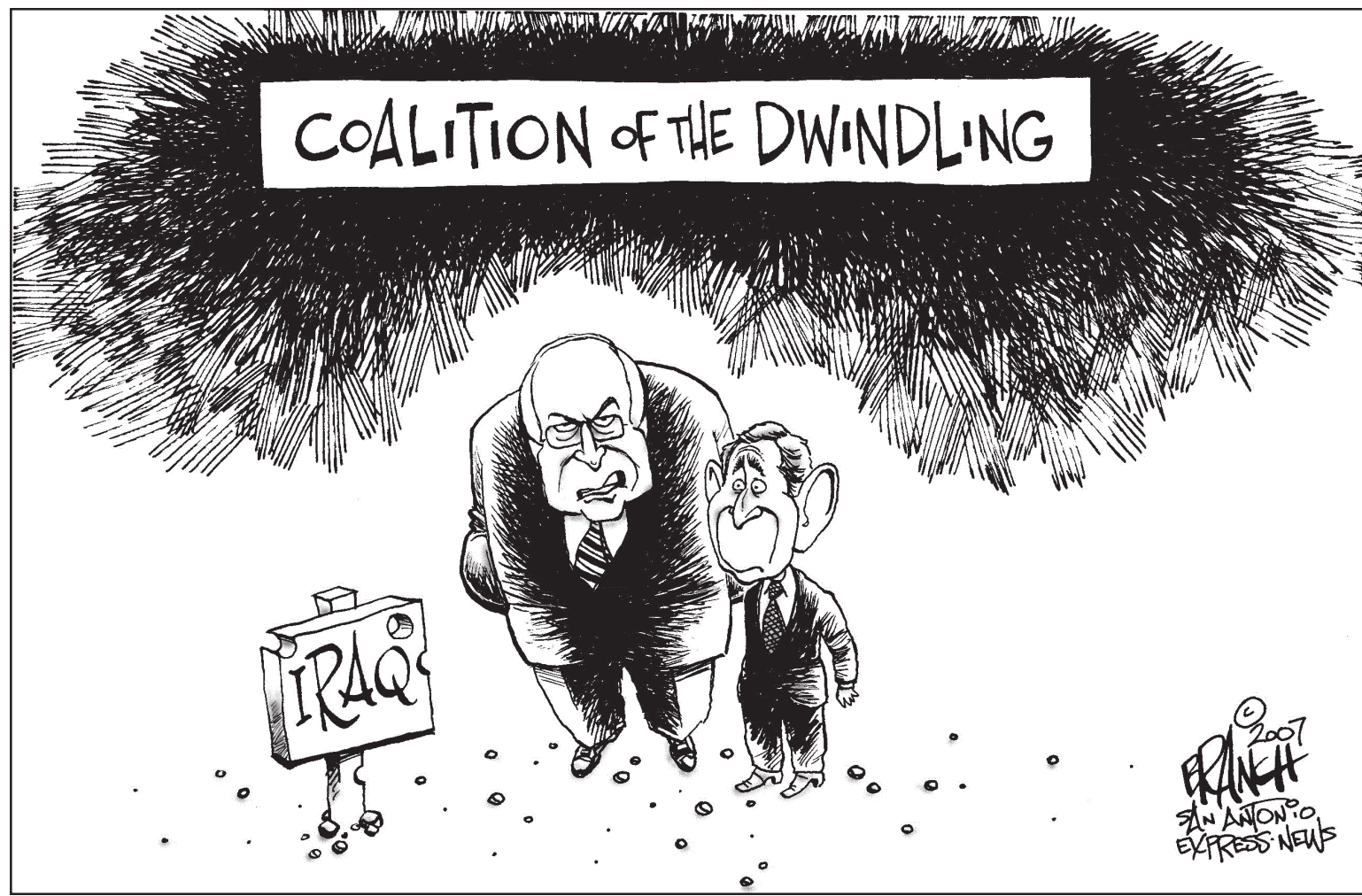
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Watch for district-wide music event

"The music was here...and here (taps his heart, his head). That's the one thing they can't confiscate, not ever. That's the beauty of it. Haven't you ever felt that way about music, Red?"

— Andy DuFresne, a character in the film "Shawshank Redemption"

The past few weeks we have been talking to staff, parents and fans of Colby public school's music department. Tuesday is the all-district concert. Those people we have talked to have asked if we could treat this event like we do when a Colby High sports team makes it to the state tournament.

We didn't see a reason not to do it.

What happens at the *Colby Free Press* is no different than some other papers I have either worked at or know of.

Every so often a parent of a band or choir student will call and ask why the newspaper does not treat the school's music department like it does the sports.

It's not that the paper doesn't like the school's music department, it is just a different entity.

For starters, music concerts are not scheduled like basketball games.

High school teams usually play twice a week. A school's concert schedule is not that often.



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

Depending upon the school, those concerts are held seasonally or quarterly — not every week.

Here at the *Free Press*, we have a short story in advance about who is performing and when and where. We usually follow that with a picture of the performance afterward. If there was a school concert every week, now that would be a different story — pun intended.

We have appreciated the help from those who have already given us with names, contact numbers and those working on some pictures. No matter what, this is the department's biggest time of the year and we want to tell our readers more about the program.

Hopefully this will be something we can do every year.

Northwest Kansas high school basketball fans

should be proud of how many teams are going to the state tournaments which begin today.

Area schools and fans have established the rivalries, but can, and should, there be more of those kind of games?

What would it take to have the three Thomas County schools play each other before league play? Colby and Golden Plains girls both have 20-plus wins and are on the way to state. Wouldn't it be cool to see them play each other during the regular season? Golden Plains and Brewster have a rivalry.

I look beyond the difference in classifications. Colby is 4A and Golden Plains is 1A. Colby already plays the smaller schools like Quinter and Rawlins County-Atwood. Golden Plains girls played Rawlins County in the substate championship.

I don't think the talent difference is drastic from Colby to Rexford, this year, at least.

It'd be great to see Colby, Golden Plains and Brewster play each other early in the season.

Then we would know who would be on top of Thomas County.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Mortgaging our future

America seems to have almost forgotten in less than a week the scare we got when the stock market dropped 400+ points in one day. Many television news channels tout economists telling us it was only a much-needed correction and the economy will recover.

Of course, there are always those who see the picture as less than rosy, but I think their message bears hearing for a couple of reasons.

For one thing, most television economists have about as much credibility as most television evangelists.

For another, even the brightest outlooks have a pessimistic side. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke gave a caveat in his last, mostly upbeat, report to congress that the country could face a crisis in the next 25 years if we did do something about the national debt.

No, he wasn't talking about the budget deficit. He was talking about the national debt. For those crowing about the few years of budget surpluses during the Clinton years, it bears repeating that we did nothing about erasing our debt during that time.

David Walker, the Comptroller General of the United States, who runs the Government Accounting Office and oversees pretty much all of the government spending says much the same thing.

According to his figures, if spending stays on the level it is today, we will need to either cut federal spending 60 percent or double federal taxes by 2040 in order to balance the budget.



Jay Kelley

• Speaking MyMind

Where is the money going? It is being used for two things. First, we have funded massive growth in entitlement programs, especially in the field of health care and, second, we are paying the interest on the national debt.

Walker doesn't believe we can simply grow our way out of the problem, either. To maintain the status quo, according to his figures, we would need sustained double digit economic growth for 25 years. That hasn't happened yet, and I don't expect it to any time soon.

Raising taxes is never popular, but it might also be extremely counter-productive as well. Lower taxes do, in fact, encourage economic growth and therefore create larger revenues to the government coffers, at least up to a point.

Raising taxes, however, can put the brakes on an economy which is already precariously perched on wobbly stool of consumption. That doesn't mean we can't ever raise taxes, but there are something else we should probably try first.

We need to become the land of opportunity, instead of the land of milk and honey, again. The

tentacles of federal funding now reach farther into our local affairs than the founders ever envisioned.

Federal money has become a drug for municipalities, school districts and even local business, including agriculture. Entitlement programs, from food to medicine, have grown to the point of being industries within themselves.

These things belong to the states, not the Federal Government, and should be left to them without funding or mandate from Washington.

Certainly there are some good programs, which see a greater benefit than they could ever cost, but even many of them, especially when it comes to helping the poor, could be more efficiently and effectively administered at the local level without any federal dollars.

No politician in his right mind and seeking reelection is going to suggest cutting benefits or raising taxes, however, and that is the problem. We decry the cowardice and short-sightedness of our elected officials, but we are ultimately the ones who choose them.

Is it any wonder that our government runs in the red when we see the debt our citizens run up for luxuries? We don't need to lower our standard of living; we need to raise our standard of reality.

Until we do, we are headed for a brick wall.

Jay Kelley is a local writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail: jkelley@st-tel.net.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce

Tinsley

