

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Kansas not strong enough for primary

From The Hays Daily News
As lawmakers wrangle with budgets and spending plans in Topeka, we are encouraged by one item in particular that's losing favor with an apparent majority of them. That would be the \$2 million for the secretary of state's office to hold a presidential primary Feb. 5, 2008.

We've offered in the past that we don't believe Kansas' mere six electoral votes are enough to influence the parties' selection of candidates for the Oval Office. This year, it appears to be a ploy to shine a penlight on Sen. Sam Brownback, the Kansas Republican who's struggling for national name recognition.

Events of late have done nothing to sway our stance. California, with its bundle of 55 electoral votes, is planning to move its primary to Feb. 5. Many other states — including Florida, Illinois, Michigan and New Jersey — are either planning or strongly considering moving theirs. All told, if every state goes with its announced or formalized plans, states representing 299 electoral votes will decide their leading candidates on that date. Add in the states with 27 electoral votes that will have January primaries or caucuses, and more than 60 percent of the primary season will be over Feb. 5.

That GOP legislators in Topeka cut the \$2 million funding for a Kansas primary is recognition that it's not worth holding — once again. Even with Brownback in the field. We haven't held a presidential primary since 1992.

"I think we can utilize that \$2 million in a much better fashion," said Rep. Kay Wolf, R-Prairie Village.

We do too. And we look forward to seeing what better fashion is found by the time the Legislature produces its final budget.

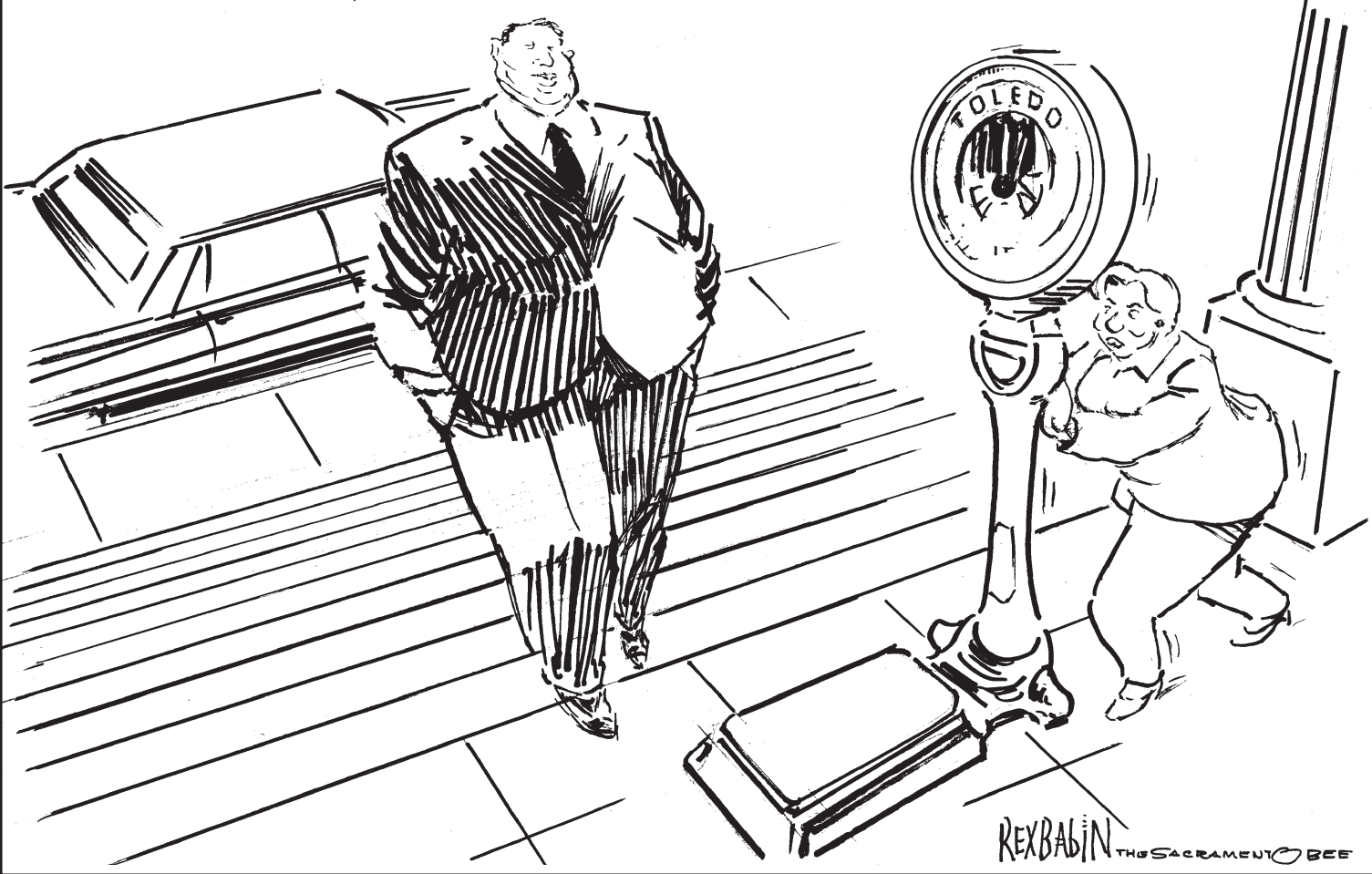
We only ask legislators to see their decision on the primary through to the end. It is not enough to cut funding for the election. State lawmakers must cancel the primary in order for the individual counties not to hold the election. Otherwise, the meaningless primary would be paid for out of the 105 county coffers.

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. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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AL GORE RETURNS TO D.C.



Reviewing the past

Last week, I had the chance to re-connect with someone I had not seen in years. Ten years to be exact.

One of my college friends, who I have not seen since her graduation in 1997, passed through town Thursday from Colorado on her way back home to Tulsa, Okla.

Amy and I met in the fall of 1994 when I transferred to Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. At the time, she was a fellow animal science major, and like me, later changed her major to journalism.

It was good to see her, and I met her husband, Adam, and a couple of people from his Army Reserve unit.

We only had an hour to talk, but an hour was enough.

We've kept in contact by e-mail over the years, and have kept abreast of the changes and goings on in each other's lives, but seeing each other was a chance to see the changes of time.

It's not like we tried to avoid seeing each other, but work and life had a way of keeping us on our own paths until Thursday.

We lived on the same dorm floor for three years and had several classes together. I was always the designated driver on nights out. That was to the popular Stillwater night spot the Tumbleweed.

We had a journalism law class together as well as agronomy. And not to mention the weekends



Tisha Cox

Off The Beaten Path

we didn't go home because she didn't have a car and my home was eight hours away.

We talked about old friends, jobs, families, pets, travel. Amy works in communications for a Tulsa company and enjoys what she does.

The most notable aspect of our get-together, which helped me realize how far we have come, was when we swapped digital cameras to look at the photographic evidence of how our lives are going. Ten years ago, we were still barely Internet literate and I can't remember anyone I knew at the time having a digital camera.

Our cameras served as portable photo albums and we each came away with a few more pictures.

Amy hasn't changed much. She still looks much the same and now she's married. She is more grounded though and still the same Amy. I know I've changed. More outspoken, not so shy.

Despite the years and distance, it's good to know we're still friends. I just hope it isn't another 10 years before I see her again.

Catching a view...

The past two Sundays, I've been glued to documentaries on the National Geographic and Discovery Channels about the dynamic world we call Earth.

National Geographic had a three-part series on the Galapagos Islands and Discovery kicked off its 11-part "Planet Earth."

Most people will probably never go to some of the locations featured but it makes me glad to just know these places and life forms exist. Galapagos is famous for its unique animal and plant life found nowhere else and was where Charles Darwin got the idea for his theory of evolution.

But now, to me, it doesn't matter why the islands are famous.

What is important is people get a chance to see these places, and maybe gain a better appreciation for where they live and hopefully want to take better care of our planet.

It is a dynamic, diverse planet with deserves to be protected.

After all, it's the only home we've got.

Tisha Cox is a reporter for the Colby Free Press.

Your turn

The future of Kansas agriculture

Jon Starns Brewster

Our USDA Service Center closes it's doors. Would this headline get your attention rather than the next county over or a few counties down? Do producers and land owners alike understand that they will be directly affected sooner or later? Is there any concern on real savings for agencies within the USDA system by shutting doors or is it a mission and a band aid covering a deep wound?

Is it possible that streamlining or using the existing expertise that each individual agency has could impact current avenues in a positive way, rather than turf building?

These and many more issues need to not only be addressed but seriously considered because once these agencies are relocated it will take an act of congress to get them back, if ever.

If you attended the Gove County hearing on March 16, it would be safe to say that every concern brought forward from the state level was not only countered but discredited by the few that spoke at that meeting. Proof and opposition was in abundance that day with compelling figures to back up their convictions. In fact, to the people I heard from, if there is any common sense in the decision to close their doors it was so well hidden as they were unable to find any.

One gentleman said it well when asking which would you rather rent \$2 grass or \$20 grass, to put your cattle on if the grass was the same? It is sad to say but so far it looks like FSA and NRCS would rather pay the \$20 rate.

It is proposed that the savings from shutting

down 11 offices across the state would be \$289,000 a year. But what about the wear and tear on vehicles to transport employees to their new destination? Did they fail to mention the cost to pay these employees for the time to do so? Did they fail to mention the cost of fuel to transfer these employees? The list of questions goes on and on. What about the time spent driving rather than working, or did that slip their realistic agenda too? This is if all the employees don't move. If that were to happen then they would have economies to factor in.

More money can be saved by just streamlining or rather making more efficient use of the programs and delivery system that are currently in place. Ask any FSA employee if they like all the duplication and if they enjoy or deem necessary the paper trail that is currently in place. Could it be simplified, therefore, creating less administration time dedicated to paper shuffling? Could a computer friendly program for producers be a way of freeing up employees so they could better serve the agency? Would NRCS officials rather be shuffling paper or back in the field doing what they were trained to do so well? Has as much energy been put into fixing the problems rather than adding to them? Can we actually use the words common sense and politics in the same context?

Perhaps when the USDA was founded they meant to not only serve and implement programs and land grant institutions, other than; to gradually starve out their purpose over time by choking the very unwavering adherence to which it was intended by design to help.

The farm programs delivered by FSA, NRCS, and Conservation districts do not just serve farmers and ranchers. They help protect both urban water supplies and the erosion of roads, rivers, and streams. And let's not forget that this money protects our underground water, wildlife and can anyone remember the dirt blowing in Kansas?

I can name a few families that lost loved ones recently and not so recently due to dirt storms. Are we willing to put a price on that? Every school in Kansas has an opportunity to partake in the education that is offered through these entities. Scholarships, and training sessions, as well as educational camps for the teachers are offered though these entities. The services and opportunities are of mind boggling numbers. Are the citizens of Kansas going to be able to access these opportunities if they are many miles away? Yes, but with much added cost. Are we really saving money or just redistributing? It really should be of no big surprise to those of us who are the active participants of these programs that we will take yet another big hit in the pocket book once again.

Are we willing to let a selective few determine the future of Kansas agriculture, who seems to have little, if any, foresight or patriotism to a very old and diminishing profession? This doesn't affect a chosen few, but rather a much larger picture that has prosperity or lack thereof written all over it. If you do nothing then you are aiding to the demise of agriculture and its colleges. Get involved and get involved now because you may not have another chance.

The last day the Colby Free Press will run letters to the editor related to the April 3 election will be Friday.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

