

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint

Law needed to protect families

By Gov. Kathleen Sebelius

Kansas is known for a lot of things — our history as a state devoted to freedom for all residents, great leaders like President Dwight Eisenhower, our leadership in agriculture and aviation and countless other achievements.

But in recent years our state also became known, sadly, as the home of a group of individuals who spread hate by protesting at funerals, particularly those of military personnel killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

None of us can adequately express the gratitude we feel to the men and women who have made such immense sacrifices on behalf of our nation, as well as to their families. It's reprehensible anyone would try to disrupt the funeral of a fallen service member, or of any Kansan.

More than 30 states have passed laws restricting protests at funerals, yet Kansas wasn't one of them — until now.

I signed a ban on funeral protests into law during a ceremony at the State Capitol on Thursday surrounded by members of the Patriot Guard along with Brandy Sacco, whose husband Dominic died while serving our country.

The Patriot Guard has traveled around our state and nation providing a shield to mourners, and I want to thank them and their supporters for the comfort they've provided. These men and women have truly honored the sacrifices made by our military by blocking out the protesters who try to use the deaths of others to aggrandize themselves and their hate.

This new law will keep protesters away from funerals, with fines and jail time awaiting any violators. Additionally, families will be able to sue protesters who defame the deceased.

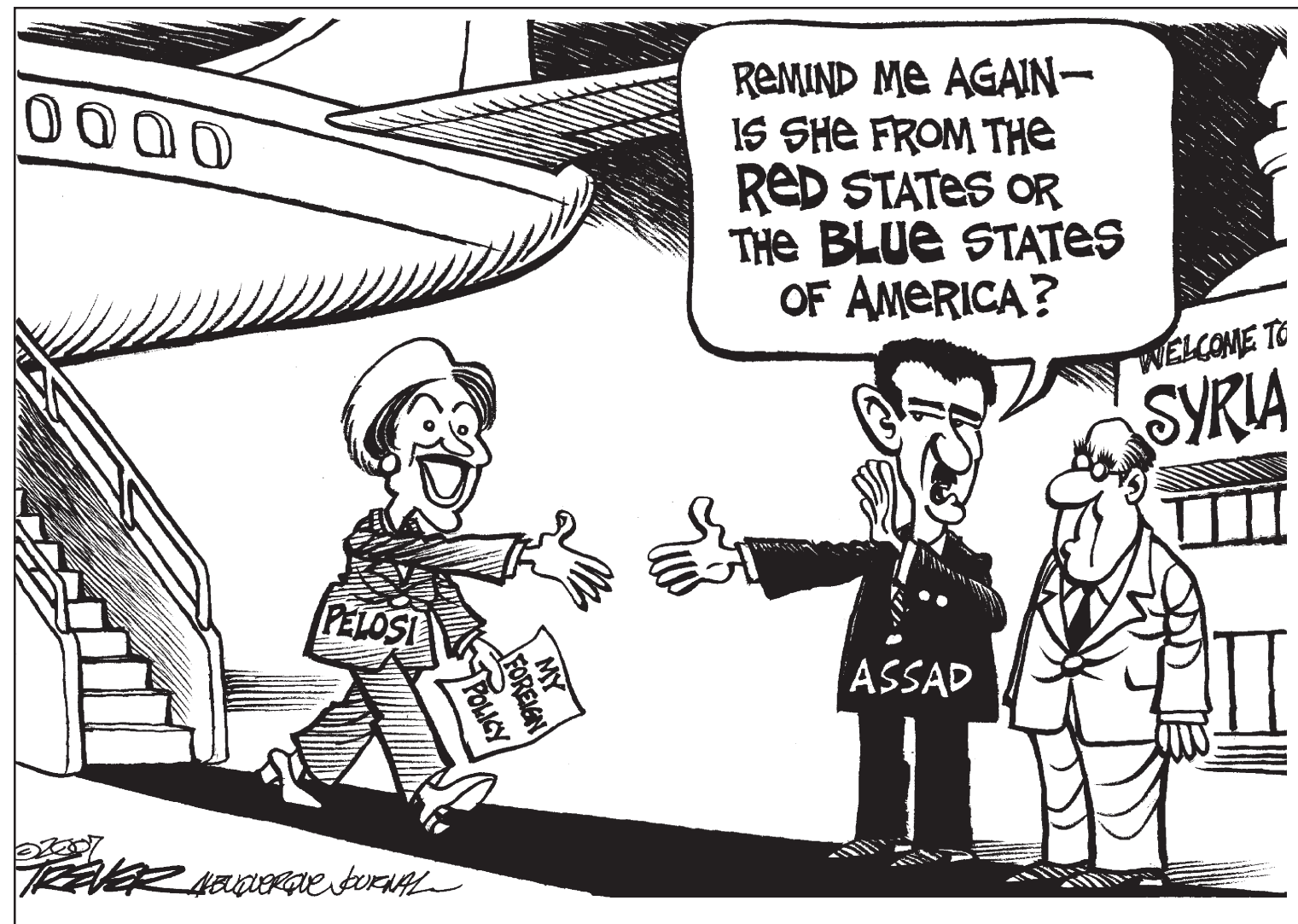
I know a big concern of many was that this law could be challenged in court and damages could be awarded to protesters if it were found to be unconstitutional. To avoid that, Attorney General Paul Morrison will take this law to the Kansas Supreme Court or a federal court to test its constitutionality before it takes effect.

I'm certain this ban on funeral protests will be found to be constitutional and will — finally — become the law of the land.

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 or 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, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e-mail: jmorrison@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



Birds of a feather

In the movie "Jurassic Park," Sam Neill's character, a paleontologist, explains to a kid that essentially, a certain type of dinosaur was nothing more than a giant, predatory turkey.

Turns out that bit of fiction may have been right.

Evolution is in the headlines again, but thankfully, not in Kansas.

Headlines last week were about how scientists had done DNA testing on a Tyrannosaurus Rex fossil and found that of all the modern animals it could be related to, the chicken is the closest.

Yes, the chicken.

I remember hearing a couple of years ago scientists had found the fossil remains of a young female T-rex and discovered preserved soft tissue inside the bone.

They managed to extract some DNA to test it. That dinosaur's DNA may have opened up a whole new chapter in the book of evolution.

Back in the 1960s, Robert Bakker, a paleontologist, put forth the theory dinosaurs may have evolved into the birds of today.

His reasoning was modern birds have the same wrist bone as velociraptors, the dinosaur made famous in "Jurassic Park."

The most telling evidence had been the similarities between the two species. Besides the wrist bone, the two also share similar hip bones, and scientists have gone as far to theorize that raptors possibly had feathers, also.

Far-fetched? Maybe. I think it is interesting they have found a genetic link between dinosaurs and birds.

I've spent my fair share of time around dino-



Tisha Cox

Off The Beaten Path

saur bones. I used to volunteer at a small, Colorado museum where I was trained to work on fossils — mainly preservation.

I had always known there was a great variety of species, and more being discovered each day. But what I didn't know was how well documented the evolution of certain species.

The ceratopsians, or the group that contains Triceratops, (the frilled-skull, three-horned, four-legged dinosaur) has shown a clear line of evolution.

They started out as small, two-legged critters with a parrot-like beak, and evolved into large, four-legged creatures with heavy, horned frilled skulls.

As they evolved over the years, they developed small frills, large frills, long and short horns, spiked faces and more.

I find the variety amazing, and no matter how hard science tries to explain it, there is no way to really explain the variety. And try as scientists might, there is still no explaining us.

Playoff paranoia

The National Hockey League playoffs began last week. Already, the fighting and mucking

have started, along with vicious hits.

Several games have already gone to overtime. In the NHL playoffs, if a team does not decide a game in regulation, they go to sudden-death overtime. They play 20-minute periods until somebody scores.

The first game of the Dallas-Vancouver series last week went to quadruple overtime. The game had a late start for the U.S. because it was played in Vancouver, British Columbia. The game that took about six hours to play ended between 3 and 3:30 a.m. It was the sixth longest game in playoff history, and the game has been around more than 85 years.

That has caused a debate that maybe the game needs to be changed. However, there have been too many changes that haven't sat well with fans over the past five years or so.

Overtime has always been part of the playoffs since the beginning. In the end, it always comes down to what team wants it more.

The players understand this, and so do fans.

But for some reason, the television networks showing the games suddenly want that to change this year.

Hockey is a gritty sport. There are fights and hits, and sometimes, blood. That is the nature of the game. So much of it has changed, and I don't see how the sport is going to gain more followers if what makes it what it is keeps being sacrificed.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcx@nwkansan.com.

The value of grassroots politics

By John Schlageck, Kansas Farm Bureau
While it's still a great big world out there, our planet is getting smaller every day. Globalization has changed everything and everyone. It's hitting hardest in rural areas where we live — Kansas farms and ranches.

Today, most Kansans live in suburbs or cities and this demographic shift is becoming more pronounced and more distant from the people who make their homes and earn their living in rural Kansas. This distance has a direct impact on agricultural producers, their businesses and their rural communities.

This ever-growing chasm is measured in more than just miles. It's measured in perceptions and expectations and it drives societal trends. As populations shift from rural to urban, trends and expectations naturally follow. It's happening all around us.

Demographic changes, population shifts and the simple passage of time have resulted in more and more individuals holding public office in Kansas who have little or no direct, personal knowledge or experience with agriculture. These public officials today are often one, two, and sometimes three or four generations removed from the farm.

Still, in each and every county in Kansas, there are farmers and ranchers who are vested in their communities and this business we call agriculture. Many of these same Kansas citizens belong to commodity and farm groups. In moving a policy agenda, that's where power and clout rest. Those organizations with individual member-funded political action committees have

Other Viewpoints

From Pens of Kansans

never been more vital in helping to achieve those goals.

It's where the agricultural voice must resonate. It's where we must visit with, inform and educate our neighbors and friends whom we elect to government offices. Before they became office holders, they were candidates waging political campaigns to get into those offices.

Will Rogers once said, "Politics has gotten so expensive that it even takes a lot of money to get beat."

Regardless of whether we talk about presidential, congressional, state or local elections, one fact remains — elections cost a lot of money and their price will continue to go up.

This is one reason political action committees and advocacy organizations like Farm Bureau in Kansas play an important role in the political process. Working together, groups like this support candidates who share our positions on issues important to farmers, ranchers and rural Kansans.

Everyone with a vested interest in agriculture and rural Kansas should step forward and support candidates who understand us and our issues, including holding the line on property

taxes, landowners' rights and reasonable environmental regulation. We have no one to blame but ourselves when legislation is passed that weakens our state's economy or candidates unsympathetic to our concerns are elected.

During the last two decades, political action has become an integral part of the culture found in nearly every sector of the economy. Grassroots activism and financial strength represent an industry's best tools to build and enhance relationships with influential members of Congress and state legislators.

As more and more Kansans lose the ability to make a direct personal connection with agriculture and rural communities, it will become harder and harder to change their minds.

Still, that's our charge. That's agriculture's job. It's the responsibility of farmers, ranchers and those people who inhabit rural Kansas. That's where political action committees can be one of the most important issue-mobilizing forces protecting and promoting our goal of creating an environment in which farmers, ranchers and our families can prosper and grow.

With this tool, we can strengthen crucial working relationships with those whom we elect to public office.

We can educate and inform them on the important public policy issues facing rural Kansas. Given today's demographics in Kansas, individual farmer/rancher participation in the political process has never been more important.

John Schlageck is a commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas and was born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas.

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

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansan.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcx@nwkansan.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter
ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director
crystalr@nwkansan.com

Kristi Powell - Advertising Sales
kpowell@nwkansan.com

Emily Wederski - Advertising Sales
ewederski@nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping, Ad Building
japplegate@nwkansan.com

Everett Robert - Circulation, Classifieds
erobert@nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansan.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight

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

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

