

Opinion

Kansas Viewpoint



It's time for Wichita to do Sunday sales

From The Wichita Eagle
You'd think allowing Sunday liquor sales was a big deal, judging by how most Wichita City Council members are dancing around the issue. It's not. Just do it, council members. It's time for the state's largest city to join the growing ranks of communities that allow liquor retailers and consumers to do business on Sundays.

This is about convenience and freedom, not morality. It's about government not dictating what days of the week that private businesses can operate.

There's no compelling reason to keep this outdated restriction. People already have a right to consume alcohol on Sundays. Why should government refuse to let them buy it on that day?

Some still see this as a moral issue. But they're in a distinct minority: A new SurveyUSA phone poll last week found that Wichitans overwhelmingly support Sunday sales, with 63 percent in support and 35 percent against.

As council member Paul Gray noted, the economic situation is changing, too, as more surrounding communities have approved Sunday sales, including Andover, Maize, Benton, Rose Hill, Kechi, Park City and Cheney.

In effect, Wichita already has Sunday sales — it's just inconvenient because people have to drive farther to buy liquor, which also is drawing economic activity away from Wichita.

The City Council should cut to the chase and approve Sunday sales from the bench, as several other communities have done.

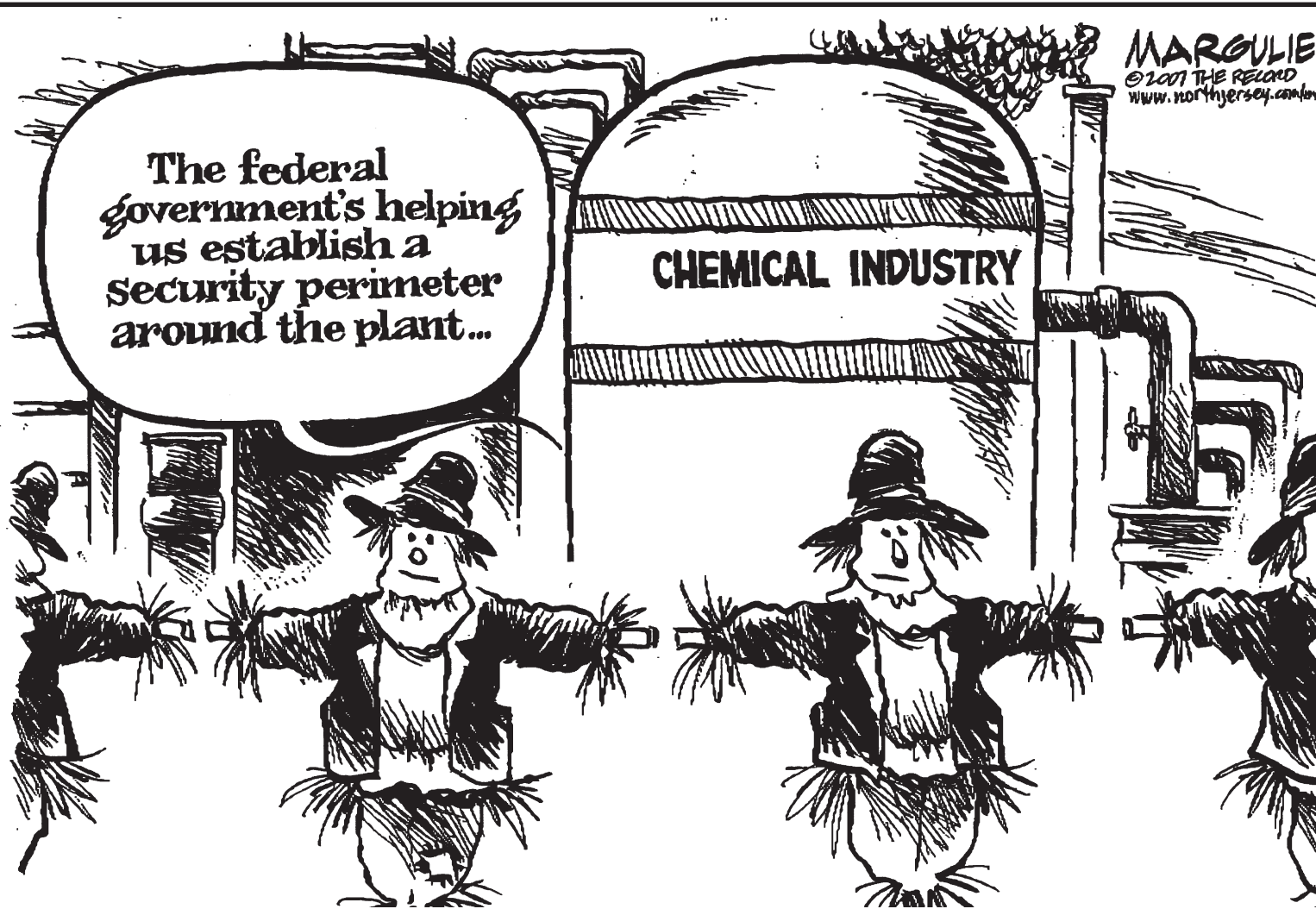
That doesn't necessarily end the debate. If opponents can muster the petition signatures, they can force a public vote. ...

Given clear community support and economic pressure from surrounding cities, the burden should be on opponents to prove Wichita doesn't want Sunday sales. ...

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*.

Where to write, call

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- 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



Sheridan County gets a gift

We all know life is tough sometimes, but a Sheridan County couple is trying to make life easier for three county commissioners by donating them a comfy chair.

Roch and Marilyn Meier were high bidders at an auction on March 31 where they bought a leather executive chair. Rumors are floating around the county about Roch's attempt to lessen the pain of sitting one at a time when the commissioners get their back sides chewed about political issues.

Meier told me Monday he watched first hand the chewing outs his dad, the late Francis Meier, received the 14 years he served as commissioner from 1972 to 1986.

He said people went so far as to single out his dad at church and complain about this or that, particularly road conditions.

Donated to the auction by Hoxie Office Supply owner Marge Reitcheck, I made a special trip to the Sheridan County Courthouse to sit in the chair.

Sure enough, sitting off to the northeast side of the commissioners' table is a burgundy, leather office chair with a high back and yes, a comfortable padded seat.

Story goes though, that neither Commissioner Keith Kennedy, Ron Schamberger or newly appointed Commissioner Doyle Kauk has jumped at the chance to use the chair.

I guess since the commissioners already have comfortable chairs to sit in they don't feel the need to use the one the Meiers donated.

Hopefully they won't let it go to waste and my



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

suggestion is to make it the "hot seat."

If you have never sat before a board of commissioners asking for something to be done you just have not lived.

I say that tongue in cheek, because far too many times over the past 15 years I've had to be on the agenda of this or that board asking for information as part of the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

While 99.9 percent of the time I put my request in writing, but in a few instances I've had to make an on the spot decision to gather information. In 99.9 percent of the instances the information has been supplied in a quick and courteous manner, but not always. In the other percent of times, it's been like pulling teeth to furnish the public information.

While I try my best to provide the public with as much information as possible and stay out of the hot seat, but should that take place again, I know the Sheridan County Commissioners' room has a comfortable hot seat in which to settle my backside. Or should I say bottom side?

Speaking of bottoms, I hope Mother Nature has scraped the bottom of the barrel for snow for the year.

Last weekend's threat by weather forecasters left it a little too close to the boy crying wolf.

If the eight to 12-inch snow had happened Monday, many people would have been battling blizzard conditions and in bad shape.

While I know forecasters have to do their jobs, I wish they could be a tad more accurate.

I left Hoxie Saturday morning in somewhat nice conditions and drove to southwestern Kansas arriving to find between four and five — 12 inches of snow on the ground.

While the work I had to do there got cancelled, the trip, needless to say was worth it if it meant saying goodbye to snow for six or seven months.

And, while the moisture we received was again a blessing, I'm sure there's at least someone out there with a complaint that it was too much, not enough, too early or too late.

Just goes to prove we need to try and live content with what the Good Lord gives us. It took me just over 51 years to learn it, but lo and behold, I finally have the concept down pat.

I try and remember this very thought:

Yesterday is history,

Tomorrow is a mystery,

And today is a gift, so that's why they call it the present.

Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press. Her column appears on Thursday.

Your turn

Remember our children

Tanya Koehn, Infant Toddler Consultant Colby Community Resource and Referral

There are more than 35 million children birth through age eight in this country. The early years are a crucial time for their growth and development, and a time when we help children prepare to succeed in school and in life.

April 22-28 is Week of the Young Child, a time to recognize the needs of young children, and

thank the adults involved in their education and care. Parents, teachers, caregivers and other adults play important roles in the lives of young children, and Week of the Young Child celebrates their efforts.

Early education programs-including child care, Head Starts, preschools and elementary schools- provide crucial learning experiences for many young children. Supporting these

programs is the right choice for kids.

Every adult in this community has opportunities to make a difference, from volunteering at a local program to supporting the efforts that help more young children benefit from quality early education. Week of the Young Child is a good time for all of us to acknowledge the needs of children, and work together to build better futures for all children.

Why pick on Gem?

Kenneth F. Poland Gem

Why were Gem and Menlo ostracized for apparent lack of civic interest?

The big city of Colby had only one person filing for most of their council positions. USD 315 had one position that had no candidate.

Rexford and Brewster very seldom have any active campaigning for positions. I think the only contest in Rexford was for city mayor.

Quite often townships do not have candidates on the ballot. I would venture to say that Gem has a better percentage record of eligible voters casting ballots than Colby. Maybe not this time around, since the college building issue seemed to motivate a much higher percentage of participation than usual. When the normal turnout for the spring elections is in the 20 percent range, it doesn't show any great civic involvement, regardless of the size of the political jurisdiction. Across the nation, rural areas generally have a better turnout for all elections than urban and metropolitan areas. Rural voters generally have to travel greater distances to vote than do urban

and city voters. Gem and Menlo voters no longer get to vote in their own communities.

There is a fee charged to get your name on the primary ballot. The citizens in most of the townships and smaller towns know who holds the positions and will write in the name, if they are satisfied with performance. If there is dissatisfaction someone will suggest a write in to replace the incumbent. The system has worked that way for years and continues to work.

The reference that the Gem's Lions Club occasionally did things was puzzling, to say the least. The turnout in Gem that reaches between 300 and 700 people, far exceeds any comparison that Colby can muster for their activities. It would take a turnout of 30 or 40 thousand to equal our performance. The Gem Lions maintain a very substantial endowed scholarship fund for re-entry students at Colby Community College. The Gem Lions assist individuals regardless of where they live in the county. Gem City and Gem Lions cooperate in maintaining equipment for the community building.

Our newspaper published information telling

the Gem folks they were to vote in Rexford. Wrong. The newspaper reported there was no city council elected. Wrong. There is a full elected council and mayor. Some of those members have served 15, 20, and 30 years. Their performance must be satisfactory. Incidentally, Gem and Menlo both have public businesses that do collect sales tax. The newspaper indicated they didn't. Wrong, again.

Someone's reporters need to be a little more diligent in gathering facts. Gem has a beautiful and handicap assessable community building. Groups from Colby rent the facility for their activities. Gem has a full service post office that fields phone calls from Colby residents asking questions about postal regulations. Colby's post office isn't listed in the phone directory.

I am not a resident of the city of Gem. I'm a country boy that considers three-fourths of miles close enough for my nearest neighbor. I do consider Gem as the center of my community and appreciate the amenities that even a city the size of Gem can offer.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



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