

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

State court needs to do what's right

From The Chanute Tribune
On Thursday Kansas' funeral picketing law took its final step toward being enacted. Attorney General Paul Morrison filed a lawsuit asking the Kansas Supreme court to rule on the constitutionality of the law. Once the law is deemed constitutional, and it should be, Kansas will join 38 other states with funeral picketing laws.
The funeral picketing law states that protesters cannot be within 150 feet of a funeral one hour before, during or two hours after the end of the service. This provision does not restrict the protests. It simply sets up a perimeter surrounding the service that not only protects the families but also the protesters. It is only a matter of time before an enraged family member crosses a picket line and attacks one of the protesters...
Morrison filed the lawsuit to keep the very people the law was written for, Fred Phelps and his band of followers, from filing their own lawsuit. The provision was placed in the law so that Phelps' family wouldn't bring forth a legal challenge, win and collect legal fees from the state...
A funeral picketing law is long overdue in Kansas. While Phelps and his family have the right to picket these funerals, human decency would tell you to respect the grieving family. This law will help provide that level of respect. As previously mentioned, 38 other states have enacted funeral-picketing laws. So far they have been upheld in three states but struck down in one. If the Kansas Supreme Court does what is right and upholds this law, there will be one more state where families can grieve in peace.

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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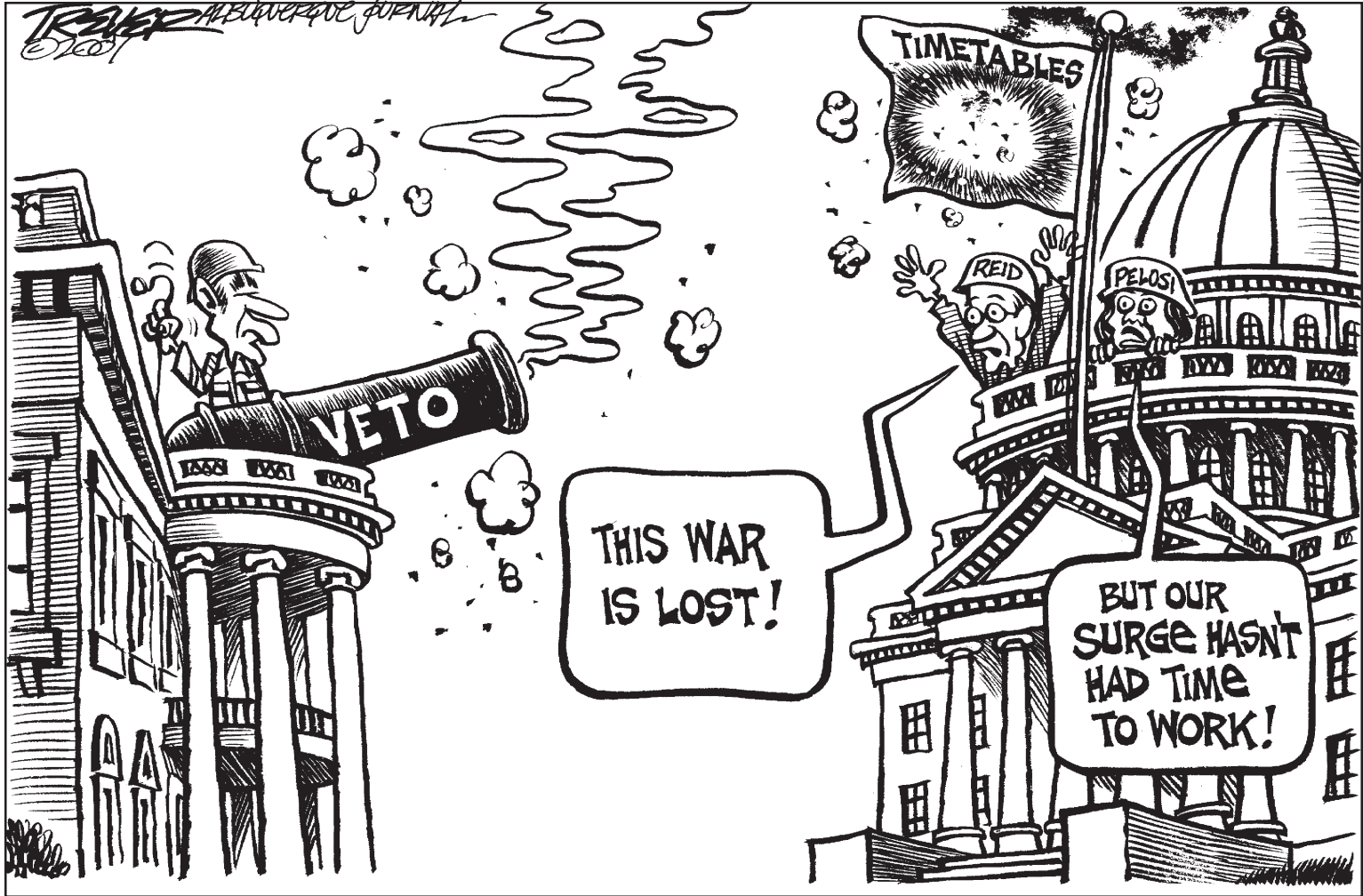
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Once in a blue moon

*Blue moon, you saw me standin' alone
Without a dream in my heart, without a love of my own*

Blue moon, you knew just what I was there for
The song is about a person looking for their love, but there really is such a thing as a real blue moon. And as the saying goes, they do happen, well, once in a blue moon.

Except the real definition of a "blue moon" is two full moons in one month.

Depending on where someone lives, their blue moon this year was in May, or will be in June or July. For us here in the U.S. there are two full moons in June. The first was on Friday, the second on June 30. Other parts of the world will get theirs this month or next.

According to <http://www.Space.com>, a blue moon isn't all that rare, and they actually occur about every 32 months.

Also, the moon doesn't change color, but it can happen, when there is a volcanic eruption or other exceptional atmospheric interference.

In honor of the two full moons last month, here are some facts about the moon from <http://www.Space.com>:

1. The leading theory on the formation of the moon is that a Mars-sized rock slammed into the Earth not long after the solar system formed more than 4 billion years ago.
2. The moon causes the tides in Earth's oceans, and is actually causing the planets movements to gradually slow.
3. Because of the moon's size, it and Earth



Tisha Cox

- Off the beaten path

- could be considered a double-planet system.
4. The moon is geologically active, and sometimes has moonquakes, caused by Earth's gravity.
 5. The moon doesn't have a perfectly round shape. Instead, it's shaped more like an egg.
 6. Planet Earth could have a second natural satellite. In 1999, its gravity captured a three-mile wide asteroid. Called Cruithne, the asteroid takes 770 years to complete on orbit around Earth.
 7. The cratered moon surface resulted from bombardment by space rocks. The craters have not changed much in billions of years because the moon has no atmosphere and very little geologic atmosphere. Without these erosive influences, the surface has not evolved.
 8. Earth has trees from the moon. On the Apollo 14 mission in 1971, 400 seeds from Earth were taken on the mission. The seeds were returned to Earth and planted.
 9. The moon always shows the same face to Earth. Earth's gravity slowed the moon's move-

ment on its axis.
10. The moon is moving away from Earth at a rate of 3.8 centimeters each year.
I know our moon looks big, but it isn't the biggest moon in the solar system. That honor belongs to Ganymede, a moon of Jupiter. Ganymede is larger than the planet Mercury, and is one of Jupiter's four moons visible to the naked eye on a clear night.
The second largest moon in the solar system is Saturn's moon Titan. Titan's other claim to fame is it is the only moon in the system to have a dense atmosphere.
Though Earth has only one moon, it is the largest in relation to the size of its planet.
There are more than 140 moons in the solar system.
Also, Jupiter has the most moons of any planet with 62, followed by Saturn, which has 33.
All of the moons in the solar system have unique characteristics, ranging from craters, a canyon running around three-fourths of one moon, 10-mile high mountains, volcanoes, hydrocarbon lakes.
But of them all, only Earth's moon looks as it does, and is a vital part of the way its world works.
I'd say we're lucky to have it.

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

Put bio and agro-defense in Kansas

By John Schlageck, Kansas Farm Bureau
In Kansas and our neighboring states, protecting our food supply – crops and animals – is key. This nation's economy depends on farmers and ranchers and those who work in this valuable sector.
Agriculture provides more than 22 million jobs in the United States even though less than 2 million are farmers and ranchers. The agribusiness sector contributes more than \$1 trillion annually to this nation's economy. This amounts to 15 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.
There are many reasons to believe rogue governments and extremist groups might prefer to use agricultural biological weapons against the United States rather than targeting people in our nation's cities. First the technology involved is less sophisticated and there is much less risk to the individuals collecting or developing the biological agents.
Crops and livestock represent "soft targets." They're largely unprotected and vulnerable to attack. The likelihood of U.S. officials detecting such an attack is also low.
Lastly, there are fewer quandaries for those who might hesitate to kill people randomly.
Being prepared and countering an agricultural biological attack will take a coordinated effort

involving federal, state and local governments. It must also include relevant industries and this country's research universities.
When it comes to intellectual and physical assets, Kansas has a rich history of embracing and leading innovation.
Our agricultural heritage, combined with a smart workforce, academic resources, transportation infrastructure and public and private support make Kansas well suited for the challenges of a national project focused on public health and the safety and security of our national food supply. Kansas is ready and determined to facilitate the proposed National Bio and Agro-Defense facility.
The charge of this facility is to provide our nation with a safe, secure and innovative laboratory to develop research and response capabilities designed to protect our people and our nation's agriculture from naturally occurring and intentionally introduced disease threats.
These facilities are safe both for the general public and laboratory researchers, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease.
To date there are no recorded incidents involving community contamination from any of the existing facilities in the United States.
This facility has the potential to position Kan-

sas as a leader in the medical, food and agricultural research, science and technology fields, say those close to the effort to bring the facility to the Sunflower State.
The project could create more than 250 jobs and generate an estimated economic return of \$3.5 billion during the next 20 years.
Such a facility will compliment the foundation of the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor, stretching from Columbia, Mo., to Manhattan/Junction City including more than 120 animal health organizations and 13,000 specialists.
"We believe having the NBFA located with the agricultural heartland would be ideal for the region and certainly advantageous for the nation," says Steve Baccus, Kansas Farm Bureau president.
With deep roots in agriculture, long-standing expertise in medicine and veterinary sciences, abundant technological resources, dedicated citizens and location in the center of our nation, Kansas is exceptionally well suited to be the new home for the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility.
— *John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

About those letters . . .

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