

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Diversity is needed

From The Hutchinson News

As long as Kansas' public schools continue to struggle with a shortage of teachers, no one can say that we don't need new ways to certify more teachers for the classroom.

But alternative certification proposals continue to find opponents, chief among them the state teachers union and some officials in Kansas higher education.

The union, of course, is out to protect its own and views alternative certification as a threat. To some degree, universities do, too. They want to maintain a hold on the process.

But outside of those provinces, most folks should not find threatening a bill proposed by Rep. Mike O'Neal, R-Hutchinson. His measure would allow school districts, community colleges or district consortiums to establish programs to ready professionals to teach in public school classrooms. ...

The idea here is to take mid-career professionals looking for a change of pace. It might be a scientist or someone who has a college degree in the sciences — maybe even a master's or doctorate — who the education system believes must be thoroughly schooled in pedagogy before being blessed to stand in a high school classroom. ...

State universities have room in their education programs for more students, one university official said recently, but fewer students are going into the field.

That is all the more reason to open it up to a more diverse pool of potential educators long past receiving their college diplomas.

Being a good teacher takes a special gift, and not everyone has it. But an education degree and state certification does not always equate to gifted teaching.

Other gifted teachers likely are among the population, just in different fields. Eliminate some red tape, and at some point in their lives, they might be interested in teaching.

And at least at the junior high and high school levels, subject matter knowledge is more critical than pedagogy.

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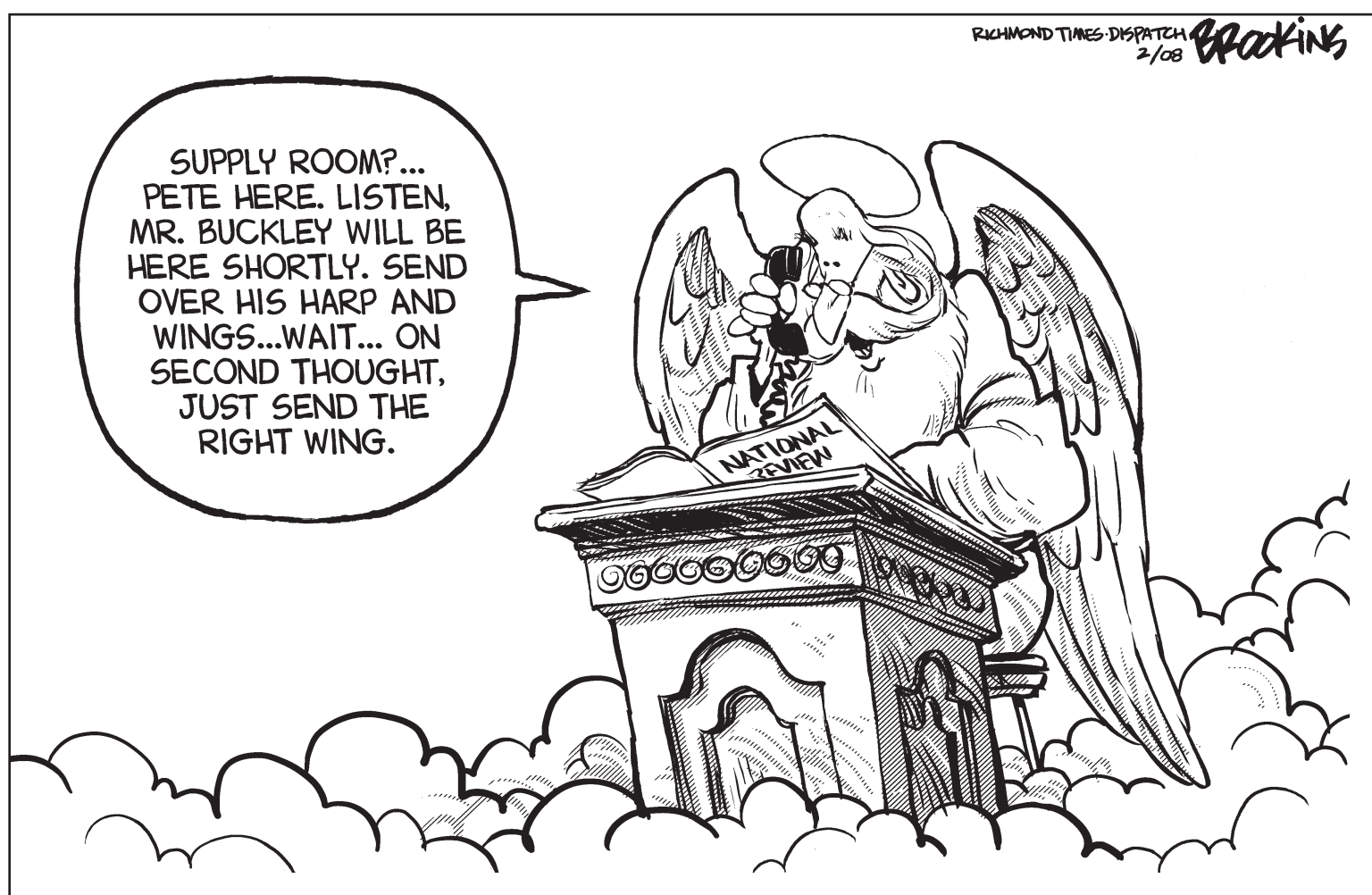
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Trips and falls

Our daughter and son-in-law, who live in Berlin, Germany, returned to the states earlier this month to visit family.

For months we anticipated their trip and I tried hard to stay as healthy as possible — but it figures, the day before we were to see them, I started getting a sore throat.

Adding insult to injury, I decided to go out the night before we left to get Girl Scout cookies for our son-in-law, David, and our daughter, Tracy.

David has never eaten a Girl Scout cookie and Tracy loves the thin mints.

So as I walked up to the house to buy the cookies, all I could think about was seeing them, how much they would love the cookies, and the overall excitement of hugging them and enjoying long conversations during the visit.

No sooner had I stepped out of the car — with money in hand — I somehow rolled my left foot off the sidewalk, stumbled, tried to regain my composure, fell again on my right knee and down on my chest. As for the money, it went flying all over the place.

Laying in a heap — all I could think about was the last words my husband, Randy, said to me.

"Just wait until tomorrow and we can pick the cookies up then," he said.

Maybe I should have heeded the warning. Although I knew I was bruised and battered from the fall, I did my best to "deny" the injuries as I walked up to the door to get my cookies.

Of course, I first had to pick up the money scattered all over the snow and with a pained smile, I walked to the door, bought the cookies and did my best not to limp as I returned to the car.

I left the cookies in the car (I couldn't face them at that point) and I walked into the house. Randy was on the computer, so he wasn't exactly focused on me.

Before telling him what happened, I thought it best to see how bad the damage was first so I went into the bedroom to check things out. When I pulled my shoe and sock off my left



Patty Decker

• Deep Thoughts

foot, I noticed the side of the foot was black and blue; the palms of both hands were bright red; my right knee was scraped up and the ribs on my right side hurt.

Unable to avoid limping, I went back into the living room and told Randy what happened. Surprisingly, he didn't lecture me, but rather wanted to make sure I was OK.

I told him I didn't think I broke anything, but my foot hurt and one or more ribs might have gotten bruised.

The worst part of this entire episode was I had told Randy at dinner (that very night) people hurt themselves because they aren't paying attention to what they are doing.

Funny how that conversation would come back to haunt me.

The next day, though, we loaded the car and headed east to Atchison, where we met up with Tracy and David, along with their Uncle Pete (my brother).

Atchison is a good half-way point, since one set of Tracy's relatives are in Illinois and other are in the Wichita-area.

After Tracy visited with her brother, Joey the college student, we packed her and David off to Hesston and for the next two days took them shopping, went to dinners and introduced David to the other set of family members.

Unfortunately, Joey was sick when we arrived in Atchison and even though he tried to shield us all by serving some sort of "airborne" cocktail, I managed to succumb to a flu-type cold on our way to Hesston.

Within hours of arriving in Hesston, I had such a bad fever, chills and worse, Randy called the doctor to see what he could do for me.

I spent the rest of that day in bed, but did manage to pull myself together the following day for the big night out with the other relatives in Wichita.

We returned to Atchison two days later to drop Tracy and David off at the rendezvous point with Pete.

I refused to complain about being sick or let my foot, ribs, cold, flu or whatever else keep me from enjoying the time with our children.

It was a short 10-day trip and even though Tracy and David had so many places to stop, I think it went fairly well.

Returning home, I was looking forward to a nice, long weekend and getting back into the swing of things before returning to work — but that didn't happen either.

By Monday (Feb. 18), I was so sick, I knew I needed to see the doctor, but like most people, somehow when the word "doctor appointment" is mentioned, all of a sudden, I don't feel quite so bad.

Still, I made the appointment and discovered I was worse than I thought and it would be a few more days before I started mending — thanks to antibiotics, breathing treatments, Tylenol and more.

Somehow it never fails, whenever I visualize how something is going to work, it doesn't and, although I would have liked to have been healthier for David and Tracy's visit, the worst of it didn't hit until they had returned to Germany and I was back in Colby.

I guess this means Randy and I will just have to take a trip to Berlin in the near future to make up for the time I missed.

I better start "selling" him on the idea and make a few promises that I won't go running out at night on impulse buys or see anyone who is sick before we go.

Reporter Kevin Johnson has left the Colby Free Press to pursue other interests. Jan Katz Ackerman, who Kevin replaced last fall, has returned to the Free Press.

Patty Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays.

Kansas City offers cash for new residents

From The Kansas City Star

An ambitious plan to use college scholarships to attract new families and boost student achievement reflects forward thinking in Kansas City, Kan.

"Dotte Promise," using the moniker that county residents have adopted for themselves, was proposed by Wyandotte County Unified Government Commissioner Pat Huggins Pettey.

She said the prospect of college scholarships would encourage families to move into Kansas City, Kan., and also inspire students.

Mayor Joe Reardon refined the idea in his annual State of the Government address. To

finance the scholarships, he proposed using tax revenues from slot machines that are expected to go into use soon at The Woodlands racetrack. Pettey had suggested asking voters for a sales tax increase.

Reardon's proposed funding source would be more appropriate, Kansas City, Kan., residents already pay high property taxes and don't need an additional sale tax burden at this point.

Ideally, Wyandotte County wouldn't be anticipating revenues from a pastime that creates a good deal of social damage. Since gambling appears to be headed to the county, however, leaders are wise to come up with a progressive

program to benefit from it.

As the idea now stands, Dotte Promise would ensure annual scholarships of \$2,000 beginning in 2010 to graduates of Kansas City, Kan., high schools.

Reardon has proposed that qualifying students also donate 40 hours of community service in Wyandotte County over school breaks or in the summer.

These ambitious ideas will require cooperation from high schools, social service agencies and business leaders. As an economic development and educational incentive, they are well worth pursuing.

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

