

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Chamber reminds looks do count

By John Van Nostrand

Pink is not a color for Christmas. Just ask the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce. Saturday, during the chamber's annual banquet, plans to improve the town's Christmas decorations were announced. Plans are to replace the current red and green colored banners with new, blue ones depicting a winter scene. Another winter scene decoration was sculpted out of metal and will also be hung on utility poles. We say red for the sake of Christmas. As people with red decorations hung outside know, over time the sun will eventually turn that red into pink.

It's a great idea for the Chamber and we thank them for their efforts. They need more help.

It's little things like Christmas decorations that give a town a sense of pride and cheery image. The better the decorations, the better the pride and image. Chamber officials selected the right ones.

But pride and image should not only be a concern during the winter holidays.

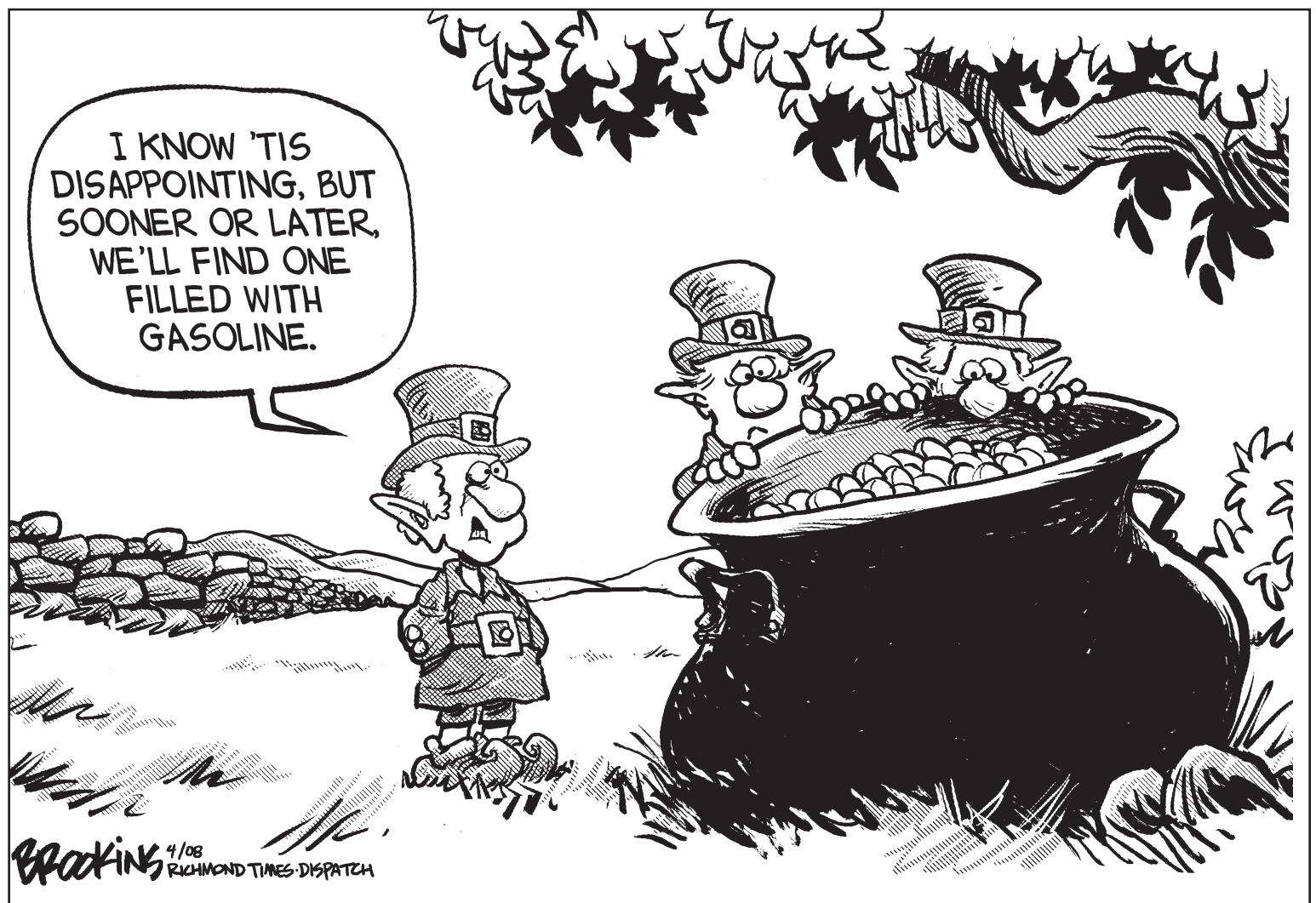
Take now, for example.

The city of Colby is looking for a clean community official. The job title pretty much says it all. Whoever has the job is on the look out for nuisances, mainly property upkeep.

With warmer weather arriving, those pesky weeds will arrive too in our lawns. This is a good reminder to keep whoever gets that job to write as few violations as possible. Make sure the weeds in your lawn are held to a minimum, if not removed.

Good-looking neighborhoods make a good impression on others passing through town no matter what time of year it is.

—John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.



I'm not laughing

Dear Congress, I wanted this to be a thank you letter for the tax rebate check you approved earlier this year and will start sending out in May.

But I don't know anymore. I know the objective of the checks is to get people to spend money to supposedly get our economy back on track - whatever that means these days. I've already spent mine.

At the end of May, my family and I are flying to Georgia for a good friend's wedding. When he called last summer and asked me to be in his wedding, I was flattered. After I hung up I was also flattered after adding up how much it will cost to go to Georgia. I haven't flown in eight years. As you probably guessed, I spent that entire rebate check in one place. Anyway, I did what you wanted to be done with those checks - spend.

I didn't want to call my friend and back out of the offer because of how much it will cost to go. Friendships shouldn't be founded on finances. That doesn't happen in D.C., does it?

Flying was the best option. We considered driving, but you never hear about it. In the Middle East oil-producing countries get smart and start building oil refineries too, that means gasoline will go even higher and we're in bigger trouble. Can you do anything about that?

Why don't we force health-care providers and facilities to lower their prices so people are not spending money on those services? Make grocery store chains lower the price food too. That will help. Where would those suggestions stop? The best economic-engine I've heard is to lower taxes. What do you think? I'm not convinced these checks will be the cure all. Some people will be able to pay on their mortgage, but depending upon where they live and the cost of their home, that check, like mine, will also be spent at one place at one time. The people who are still struggling with their sub-prime mortgage will still be in a world of hurt. Then there are people who will continue their suspicious spending habits with the money. Gamblers, who already are in financial trouble, will have more to gamble. Las Vegas is already hurting because of the woes. Substance abusers will be able to buy and use more substance. I know you can't help what people will do with their checks. I'll respect the people who do wonderful things with their rebate checks; save, invest wisely or help a worthy charity. Some people have told me our current situation reminds them of Revelation in the Bible. The world gets into money trouble. A loaf of bread is worth a bag of gold. Those people have wondered if we are now taking proverbial baby steps to the end of the world. And it's an election year. When we find the leader everybody likes, then the Revelation-



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

reference will make even more sense. Remember, not everyone likes Obama, Clinton or McCain and so on. Others laugh at the notion.

I'm not laughing. What prevents me from making this a thank you letter for the rebate, is what is behind it all. Kansas Rep. Jerry Moran said the funds for the checks came from China. That's not a big surprise since most of America is made in China and we don't seem to care. Over the years stockholders of American companies have forced the relocation of American jobs to low-pay China so they can get a bigger return on their investment. That is at the expense of American people who need the job to buy whatever product they make. Do those stockholders' profits fund your campaigns?

China's economy is much better than ours because we are driving their economic development. The Communist reign to determine the flow of money helps too.

Now, it seems like America is supporting slave-labor again. Yes, you read that right. We have just polished it compared to how it was done in the States in the 1800s. Back then, slaves were only given food and housing. In China, many factory workers are paid enough only to afford food and paltry housing. What's the difference? Not every landowner then could afford slaves (it was a costly practice). But now, more companies are finding ways to have their product made and imported from China and create more slave-labor.

I know it sounds like I should decline that rebate check, but you wanted me to have it for the benefit of the country. I can respect that, I think. But friendships are founded on good deeds, not dollars. Does that happen in D.C.?

—John Van Nostrand is publisher of Colby Free Press.

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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, 2202 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

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By Governor Kathleen Sebelius:

Soon, the Kansas Legislature will return to Topeka for their wrap up session.

Traditionally this time is used for putting the final touches on the Omnibus Budget Bill and tying up loose ends.

However, this year the Legislature has a lot left to do.

One of the most important issues the Legislature has put off is keeping our commitment to Kansas children and enhancing our investment in early childhood programs.

To ensure that all children are ready to learn by the time they reach kindergarten, I proposed \$23 million in block grant funding for early childhood education.

These grants would also include opportunities for expanded pre-natal care, newborn screening, Parents as Teachers, Early Head

Start and quality child care.

My budget also proposed a fourth year of our school finance plan, including \$27 million for all-day kindergarten. All-day kindergarten provides children a stronger foundation for a lifetime of learning.

Unfortunately, the Legislature has postponed early childhood funding decisions until the very end of the session. I am hopeful that when they return, they waste no time in addressing these needs.

As we make these strategic investments in our schools, we must also remember that a child or family racked with illness cannot focus on learning.

Rising health care costs are a burden for families, business owners, workers, and seniors. To address these issues, I endorsed the bipartisan health care reform package crafted

by the Kansas Health Policy Authority and requested by the legislature.

This reform package is based on three priorities: promoting personal responsibility for health and wellness; paying for preventative care; and providing all Kansans with affordable health insurance.

The Legislature has basically ignored this comprehensive plan. I urge them to move beyond the incremental steps of the past and endorse the meaningful reform proposals, developed by the Authority with input from health care providers, employers and consumers.

The Legislature has a lot to accomplish in a very short amount of time. They must work together, finding common ground on the issues that are important in every corner of our state. The people of Kansas are counting on them.

About those letters . . .

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

