

Opinion



A Free Press Viewpoint

Let people decide

By John Van Nostrand
Now, this one is almost funny. And scary. Certain Democrats in Congress are trying to pass a bill to force media outlets to have a balanced offering of, yep, you got it, — conservative and liberal opinions and information. Where do you begin? Who decides what is liberal and conservative?

For the past 15 years or so, conservative talk radio has blossomed. Like him or not, Rush Limbaugh has led the way and revitalized radio that way. Rush is not alone either. Ronald Reagan's son, Michael, is another popular radio talk-show host, and taking after his conservative dad who was in radio decades ago.

The liberals tried to fight back. Earlier this decade, AirAmerica hit the radio waves offering a liberal/Democrat slant to talk radio. Oh, sorry, they call it progressive, not liberal.

The station used comedian/author/entertainer Al Franken as its signature host. But it doesn't appear AirAmerica is still not serious competition for conservative talk-show hosts. Franken, who can be very funny and very liberal at times, left the station last year to campaign for a Minnesota Congressional seat.

It's scary to see what others choose not to see. First of all, the bill is a threat to the Bill of Rights and the freedom of the press. Forcing one news outlet to have the opposing views, cancels the freedom.

Let the media consumers decide. With the onslaught of the Internet, pretty much anybody can be in the media these days (which is just as scary). If people don't like it, they will go elsewhere and outlets will adapt.

Not only has Limbaugh been a voice for the conservatives, but FOX News has provided the visuals at the same time. Knowing the strength and support both entities have, the Democrats are scrambling to find someone to quasi-represent them. Those entities already exist, they just have not acknowledged them. Little was said after NBC's Brian Williams and another co-worker earlier this year expressed that they could see nothing wrong with Obama so why should the news media be objective with him.

Because of the massive growth in information and news outlets, the masses have wondered if the media is liberal, which counteracts the bill proposal.

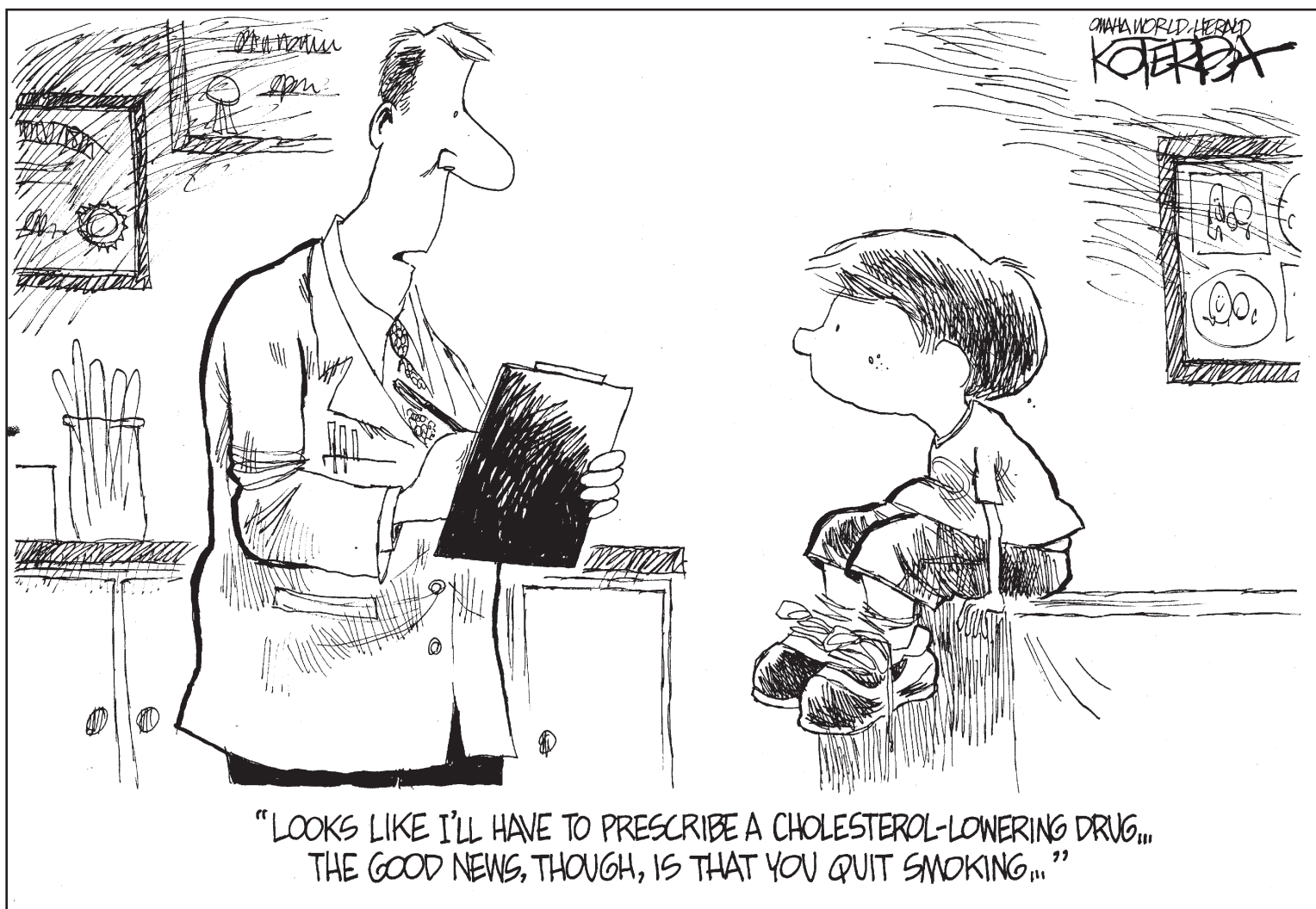
The bill, if passed, will do nothing but erode our American way of life even more.

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

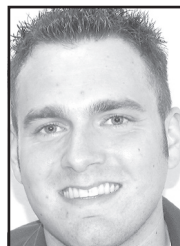
Where to write, call

- 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**, 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 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

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@nwks.com or pdecker@nwks.com



Time to go



Joe Falkoff

• A Sideline View

For the last couple of months, several people around town have asked me if I was leaving the Colby Free Press.

Each time I told them I was looking at other jobs, but nothing had happened yet.

Well, now I have an answer. And yes I will be leaving the newspaper. I accepted a job at the Winfield Daily Courier in Winfield, earlier this week, and my last day at the Free Press will be July 18.

Bigger paper, bigger town, better pay and closer to home, so it really wasn't much of a choice. Nothing against Colby, but it's a logical step up for me.

These last few weeks have been so mentally exhausting that it's hard right now to express what I want to say, but one thing I can't believe is how much of a whirlwind this last year has been.

I thought college went fast. It was nothing compared to working here.

I remember my first day (July 16) like it was yesterday. The fact that it's been nearly a year since then is unbelievable to me. Working at a newspaper is so unique, because unlike most jobs, you aren't sitting there watching the clock and waiting for the day to be over. Instead, there's some days you wish the clock would turn back an hour. Eventually, it all adds up and before you know it a year of your life has passed by.

Before I say anything else, I just want to thank Publisher John Van Nostrand and Editor Patty Decker for giving me the opportunity to start my career here.

It doesn't matter how talented you think you are, you can't go anywhere until someone gives you that first opportunity and they did

that for me. They took a chance on a 22-year old kid from the other side of the state, and for that, I will be forever grateful.

Even though my dad is a sportswriter, I was pretty green with experience before coming here. I had never taken pictures, layed out a page or even covered a live sporting event. In the last year, I got to do so much of that it's felt like journalism boot camp 101.

It's been an experience I never want to do over again, but one I will probably look back on and realize I couldn't have done without. There were a lot of times where I said to myself 'this is ridiculous. It's too much work.' It wasn't much fun at times, but I also feel like there's not many other jobs that could've prepared me better to have a chance to be successful in this business.

You hear about parents who use tough love to instill discipline in their kids, and that's kind of like what this job was. They gave me the opportunity, and I could either sink or swim.

Fortunately, I believe I've been able to stay afloat, and I'm a better person for it.

I wrote a column at the end of last July promising to provide the best sports coverage this area has ever seen. I don't know if I did that or not, but I do know I gave everything

I had trying to do so. There would be many-a-night during the fall and winter where I'd be up until all hours of the night trying to get stories done. Some of that was my own doing, but you don't go to as many games and do as many extra stories as I did unless you care. And I truly cared about giving this community top-notch sports coverage.

I know some people have been ticked off at some of the negative tones I've taken in my articles, and a lot of that is due to the fact that I wasn't used to reading small-town newspapers. I wrote based on articles I've read in bigger papers, and in doing that my writing style didn't always mesh with the ideals of this community.

But enough about negativity. I'm excited about my next job, and I'm even happier things were able to work out this last year.

There's so many people to thank, but just in this space I want to recognize all of the coaches at Colby High and the college. None of what I was able to do would have been possible without your cooperation.

I also want to thank the secretaries at the high school and employees at the administration building. I'm sorry for being so annoying throughout the year.

Finally, I'd just like to thank this community for being so receptive to me and for all of the compliments I have gotten. You have no idea how much all of the support has meant to me.

It's been a good ride, but now it's time for me to move on.

Peace out Colby, and good luck to the Eagles and Trojans next year.

— Joe Falkoff is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

State offers web site help for youth

Attorney General Steve Six unveiled a new Internet safety website: NetSafeKansas.com. He made the announcement while visiting Boys & Girls Clubs in Topeka and Kansas City.

"We know education is the key to preventing crime and keeping our kids safe. We know from experiences in our state—as well as across the country—that the more we raise awareness about online threats the greater the chance we can prevent crime," Six said. "Today, I'm here to announce the Kansas Attorney General's new Internet safety and education web site: NetSafeKansas.com."

The new web site is geared towards kids, teens, parents and consumers to increase Internet safety education. By giving Kansans additional knowledge about the threats they face online, Six hopes to prevent internet crime in Kansas.

The new website contains information for kids and teens that focuses on the new threats of cyberbullying, cyberstalking and social networking web sites. This new resource will help teach kids to protect themselves online and how to report improper or illegal activity on the Internet.

NetSafeKansas also gives parents the tools to better protect their children online. As a parent of four young kids, Six knows how impor-

tant it is for parents to know how to protect their children on the Internet. This web site provides simple safety tips that anyone can follow.

"These days, kids many times know more than their parents about the Internet, social networking web sites and instant messaging," Six said. "Our goal was to give parents tools to educate themselves and their children about online threats."

NetSafeKansas also has a complete section devoted to issues and threats consumers may encounter on the Internet. From online auctions to identity theft to online lotteries and phishing scams, this new website teaches consumers how to spot scams and protect themselves.

"These days, consumers can use the Internet to shop, bank, pay bills, and much more. With more transactions taking place online, the opportunities for fraud, scams, and identity theft are growing," Six said. "NetSafeKansas provides resources to help consumers identify scams quickly."

Education is the best way to keep Kansas children safe, give parents the tools they need and help consumers stay away from scams.

"As new threats emerge, NetSafeKansas.com will adapt and expand to protect our fam-

ilies on the computer," Six said. "Criminals are finding new and complex ways to use the Internet to find victims, scam seniors, or steal money. Through this web site, my office and our Cyber Crime Unit will educate Kansans about online threats and prevent crime in our state."

In late February, Six visited another Internet safety training program in Topeka at Jay Shideler Elementary School. At that visit, he announced plans to expand the Attorney General's Cyber Crime Unit. He asked lawmakers to join the fight against Internet crime and provide additional resources to help prevent cyber crime and protect Kansas children.

Unfortunately, the legislature did not appropriate funding for the program. Even without additional resources, Six followed through on his commitment to protect Kansas families from cyber crime.

"My office is doing everything we can within existing resources to prevent Internet crime," Six said. "But in the near future, it will be absolutely critical for lawmakers to make a substantial commitment to fighting online predators and other Internet crimes."

To learn more, visit www.netsafekansas.com or the Attorney General's web site at www.ksag.org

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

