

# Opinion



## Other Viewpoints

### Chancellor leaving KU in good shape

Being the chancellor of a major state university is a tough, mentally and physically challenging job. The average tenure of a chancellor or university president these days is between five and six years.

Robert Hemenway announced recently he intends to step down from the University of Kansas chancellorship effective next June after 14 years in this high-pressure position. ...

He has done a good job for KU. In fact, in a recent survey about the state of the university, KU alumni and friends said the school had enjoyed successful years recently, both athletically and academically, but they were concerned about the future and the vision and leadership of the institution.

Hemenway will be leaving the chancellor's office with the best wishes and appreciation of those interested in the welfare of the school. He is a good man and has conducted himself in a manner that reflects credit on the university. ...

It is interesting, if not unprecedented, that KU, Kansas State University and Pittsburg State University all are looking for new leaders right now.

Hemenway plans to take a sabbatical next year to work on a book he has had to delay, then return to the campus possibly to fill an endowed chair that would allow him to teach and do research.

The timing of Hemenway's announcement should provide ample time to recruit and select a replacement to move into Strong Hall soon after his departure.

Much will be written about Hemenway's resignation and his record at KU, but now the important — rather, critical — task is to search the country for an outstanding individual to help lead the university to even greater heights as one of this nation's truly outstanding state-aided academic institutions.

The challenge is great, but so are the opportunities with visionary, inspiring, courageous leadership.

The announcement was not totally unexpected, but it probably came as a surprise to most KU alumni and friends. Hemenway has done a good job for the university and state, with record enrollments and sizable increases in research funding. He deserves thanks and appreciation for his work and commitment to KU.

— *The Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press*

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## Underworld fascinates with deception

It's hard for me to think of anything more strange than America's obsession with gangsters.

From the Godfather movies, to Scarface, to Snoop Dogg to the Soprano's, we never seem to lose interest in the lifestyles of the people who control America's black market. But what I don't understand is why it is always so trendy to think gangsters are cool.

I'm not saying they aren't intriguing characters. There's always something fascinating about learning about a lifestyle you don't understand — and will most likely never be part of. But isn't it a little immoral for corporate America to be getting filthy rich off of promoting movies and gangsta rappers who embrace a lifestyle of death, drugs and nihilism?

Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against hip-hop music. I think rappers like the Lupe Fiasco, Brother Ali and Talib Kweli are some of today's most talented musicians. But these rappers are not anywhere nearly as popular as gangsta rappers such as 50 Cent or Lil Wayne.

I have no problem with gangster movies as long as the gangsters are not glorified as anti-heroes for kids to admire. How are parents supposed to get their children to believe in doing the right thing when they see Tony Montana embraced by the media as if he's some kind of role model?

The most repugnant aspect about the entertainment industry's canonization of the gangster lifestyle is how glamorous Hollywood has



**Andy Heintz**

• Wildcat Ramblings

made "thug life" seem. In reality, there is nothing glamorous about selling drugs on a street corner. Most people who sell drugs feel it is the only way for them to escape the violent, impoverished place they're living in.

There is something awe-inspiring about rural and suburban teens bumping gangsta rap lyrics when they have never had to live in areas infested with gang violence. If they lived in places where it isn't safe to be out past 8 p.m., would they still be nodding their heads to Young Jeezy or Lil Wayne music?

At the heart of the issue is whether or not we should view actors in gangster movies and rappers who champion thug life as successes or failures. If you measure success in terms of how wealthy and powerful you are, then many past and present people who have championed the gangster persona certainly have been successful. Sure, they became wealthy by selling drugs and murdering people or by championing a lifestyle where people are killed for the almighty dollar, but they went from rags to riches, so who really cares?

America's fetish for gangsters is emblematic of our obsession with achieving success at all costs. While corporate America's embrace of gangsters and gangstas may be one of the more obvious examples of putting profits over people, it is by no means the only example.

Insurance companies deny health care to people with cancer because they aren't profitable. Politicians back subsidies for some of America's wealthiest farmers for political gain, even though those policies hurt family farmers in this country and impoverish millions of people in developing countries.

Gucci-clad pirates from Wall Street tricked people into buying homes they can't afford because they thought it would make them a quick buck. Corporations that own the media hire narrow-minded ideologues not because they think they will keep the American people informed about the inner workings of government but because they know they will increase their ratings. Multinational corporations scan the globe for the cheapest labor possible.

When are we going to stop buying in to the idea that the only way to be successful is to make bucket loads of money?

This is a wonderful country, but it could be so much better if we quit mistaking greed for success.

*Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.*

## Health care federalism starts at home

I can say up front that no one has all the answers to what ails our health care system and how we can possibly mend its every flaw. What I can say is that adding a greater burden of government to an already overburdened taxpayer is not the solution.

Yet with the recent election of Barack Obama and a strengthened Democratic majority in Congress favoring government-controlled health care, it's probable that we will get some movement in the direction of a universal, government-funded health care system.

What might such a system look like? *The Wall Street Journal* had an instructive lesson on this in the Nov. 20 editorial. According to the *Journal* editors, the plan Obama will probably push is the one being proposed by Montana Democratic Sen. Max Baucus.

Baucus would create a national insurance exchange which would offer a menu of competing private insurance plans competing with a newer public insurance program, managed like Medicare. Lower-income Americans would get subsidies to buy insurance through the marketplace.

Businesses and individuals would be required to buy insurance through this exchange; those businesses that did not do so would be taxed on their payroll. Obama never specified in the campaign what such a tax would be.

Sounds good, right? Private insurance would be allowed to market plans within a highly regulated environment. Every American would be required to get their health care through the exchange and every American would receive coverage, some with a subsidy from government.

### Other Opinions

• Gregory L. Schneider  
Flint Hills Center

Here are the problems with the plan. First, since the government will force businesses to pay a tax if they don't offer insurance, if the tax is set too low, businesses may decide to buy out their workers and force them into the public system, thereby increasing the cost to everyone else.

When the public market is flooded with new entrants, then the whole house of cards collapses as spending on health care will go through the roof and the private insurance market will be destroyed. If the tax is set too high, businesses may not be able to compete.

Rather than continuing a process of centralizing health care decision-making and spending in Washington, why not look to reforming the system by allowing the consumer the ultimate decision? Why not create a true health care marketplace?

How can we do this? The states are providing some of the experimentation needed in health care reform.

In Kansas, a new policy brief by the Flint Hills Center focuses on a six-point health reform recommendation for legislatures, small measures which can go a long way towards reducing costs in health care and hopefully

insuring more Kansans. Among the measures is one designed to move the bulk of Medicaid recipients from publicly funded insurance towards private health insurance, leaving Medicaid for the disabled and those who cannot support themselves in any other way.

The state can reduce insurance mandates — requirements, often decided by politicians, to force insurance companies to pay for services. In recent years, there has been pressure on legislators to mandate coverage for bariatric surgery and autism. Mandates raise costs for the rest of us and lead to growing numbers of uninsured, since insurance costs rise as a result of mandates.

Empowering the individual and experimenting with health care reforms at the state level will provide a better way of addressing the complexities of health care than a single universal national health insurance system. Let's hope politicians figure this out before concentrating more of our economy's power within the Beltway.

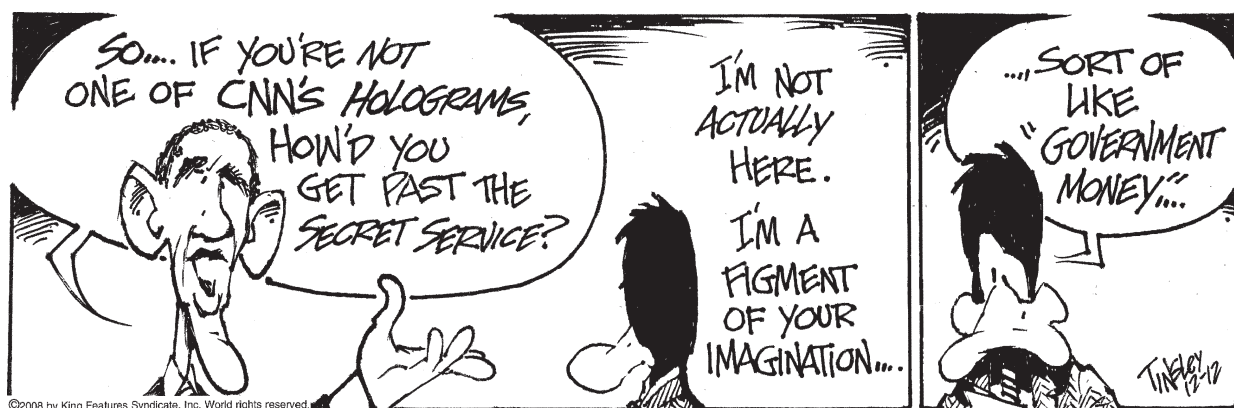
Haven't they done enough of this already?

*Gregory L. Schneider is a senior fellow with the Wichita-based Flint Hills Center for Public Policy. A complete bio can be found at news.360newsletters.com*

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### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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