

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Governor's speech avoids money issue

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius never talks money in her State of the State speeches, preferring to stick to generalities about overcoming adversity and working together.

In good times, that big-picture approach works well enough. But the state is looking at possible shortfalls of \$186 million and \$1 billion this fiscal year and next.

Sebelius should have better reflected that unsettling reality Monday in her State of the State speech, her seventh, and reassured Kansas businesses and families that she knows the way to what she called "the path toward better days."

Instead, she left lawmakers and Kansans guessing until the rollout of her revised 2009 budget and 2010 blueprint, warning only that she would recommend "significant reductions" for most agencies, facility closings, program eliminations and a hiring freeze.

She also chose not to get specific about parts of the budget that she views as essential, vaguely calling lawmakers to "commit to focusing on priorities: investing in public schools and public safety, continuing basic state services to our most vulnerable populations, putting Kansans back to work, and including all state agencies in a dialogue that results in shared solutions."

Most surprisingly, she offered not a word on behalf of health care reform, which has been her top issue for several years.

Because ideas can flow even in cash-poor times, Sebelius highlighted the special working groups that are mapping out the future of economic development, transportation, energy and environment; another will work on how to make Kansas a leader in "green technology" jobs...

For inspiration on how to pull off a budget miracle in the weeks ahead, Sebelius pointed legislators to supposedly insoluble challenges of the past that were met with strong, bipartisan leadership and partnerships across the public and private sectors.

The state's recent triumph in the fierce competition to win the \$450 million National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility — a decision formally approved by the Department of Homeland Security — especially stands out as a model of how well all the state's stakeholders can work together when their economic lives depend on it.

That's certainly the state of Kansas' economy at the moment. Now, the question is what the Democratic governor and GOP-led Legislature are prepared to do about it.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press.*

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Marj Brown, Vera Sloan - Society Editors
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager
jstewart@nwkansas.com

Heather Wofter - Advertising Sales
hwofter@nwkansas.com

Tyler Zolinski - Graphic Design
tzolinski@nwkansas.com

Jessica Estes - Classified Ad Desk
jestes@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Tammy Withers - Office Manager
twithers@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris,
James Ornelas, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Elizabeth Brock

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail within Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.



Christmas lights down 'till September

The Christmas lights are off, the extension cords rolled and put away until summer. But it wasn't easy, I'll tell you.

Cynthia never wants to turn the holiday lights off.

I told her this year, they could stay until the weekend after Epiphany. Epiphany was last Tuesday — we missed church — and that meant the lights went off on Sunday.

She agreed. Sullenly, but she agreed.

So after we napped Sunday — twice in her case — I went out to the yard and unplugged all the orange extension cords. That's the most important thing to me at this point: once they're unplugged, the lights are disabled. Then I can roll the cords up and they won't be hidden by a blizzard, only to reappear in May.

Then I disconnected the electric-eye box that turns the outdoor lights on at dusk and off at daybreak. We've used that for several years to save money, though in December, there's not much daylight for the lights to be off during. Still, I figure I saved some money.

Cynthia finally came out and, a little groggy from the second nap, started pulling colored lights off the bushes. She did this not exactly cheerfully, but she didn't complain too much.

I rolled the extensions and hauled them to the garage, then pulled lights off the "little" cedar tree by the house. We call it the little cedar because it was only a foot tall when we



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

discovered it growing beside the old garage a few years ago.

The contractor who tore the garage down put it in a bucket, and we planted it where it would screen the back yard some day. That was about 15 feet ago.

Working lights on a cedar can be a little prickly, but it sure smells good.

By that time, Cynthia had cleaned up the front bushes and was taking those lights indoors. I moved her bird-feeder stand away from the house — she thought it was too close to the windows to attract any birds — and she went to get the white lights off the aspen tree.

While refilling the bird feeders, she mentioned that we'd need a ladder to get the top string of icicle lights out of the aspen. I decided we'd get those when we got back from walking the dog.

Walking the dog is kind of a euphemism around there, by the way. We walk; the dog trots, canters, leaps, bounds, jumps and rolls.

While we were out, I figured out how to hook the light string out of the top of the aspen with an edger tool. Safer than a ladder at our age, I figured.

And so it was that at sunset, I was pulling icicle lights out of the last tree and Cynthia was rolling them up and storing them for the year.

She's already started putting the wreaths and Santas inside away. That just leaves a few dozen little trees and angels scattered around, plus the Christmas cards.

Oh, and the big tree in the living room and the little one upstairs. I told her those'd have to go before vacation. Having a lighted tree in the living room in March would be a little too weird.

She said, what if we just unplug them and put them away when we get back?

That just leaves the strand of lights on the cedar chest in the dining room. I figure I'll unplug them next weekend.

As long as no red and pink lights appear in the yard for Valentine's Day, I'll have this thing under control until fall. Addiction is a terrible thing.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Technology transforms free expression

Welcome to 2009 — and to the era of First Amendment 3.0.

First Amendment 1.0 was the time of origin, when the Founders debated, discussed and eventually created in 1791 a statement — the first 45 words in the Bill of Rights — that both declared and protected freedom of religion, speech and the press, and the rights of assembly and petition.

First Amendment 2.0 was the time of definition, where the nation — through its independent courts — defined those basic freedoms and applied those protections to state as well as federal laws.

Which brings us to 3.0 — a time of transformation.

At a pace and range not seen before, we are attempting to apply the principles of the First Amendment to an increasingly diverse society even as technology is redefining — at breakneck speed — what we mean by free expression and free association.

The religious-liberty pronouncements of a society once largely defined as Protestant, Catholic and Jewish are being tested by world religions, Wiccans and those who profess no religious beliefs.

The means and meaning of free speech and free press are exploding through the World Wide Web via social-networking sites, blogs, YouTube and a host of other high-tech means.

And even the concepts of assembly and petition are being altered to include instant Internet communities, unprecedented campaign fund raising and online support, and presidential debates that seamlessly cross from in-person comments to on-television appearances to online questions and answers.

The era of First Amendment 3.0 requires us to consider old issues in new ways. Pub-

Other Opinions

• Gene Policinski First Amendment Center

lic records deemed essential to tracking what government is doing to whom and when, long have been considered "open" — from driver's license files to land transfers to court documents detailing divorce, business relationships and the like.

Information on people could be assembled in the past, but it was a time-consuming, tedious task. In an era of instant communications, a person's life history can be "aggregated" in a near heartbeat — causing a collision between privacy claims and the public's need to know.

Childish scrawlings on a wall date back as long as there have been walls. But in the online, worldwide bulletin board that is the Web, someone can take a once-obscure message — or slur or slander or lie — and give it global, near unerasable reach.

How does the law punish perpetual harm or compensate for perpetual defamation?

When did we turn the technological corner to a 3.0 era for First Amendment issues? A few examples:

• Earlier this month, the Committee to Protect Journalists announced there were, for the first time in its annual accounting, more online journalists jailed around the world than from any other medium: 56 of a total 125.

• Powered by Internet overseas sales and publication, dozens of international libel lawsuits prompted attempts by U.S. lawmakers to

preclude foreign defamation laws from being enforced unless the nations involved match free-speech guarantees provided in the U.S.

• In May, Missouri lawmakers recognized that harassment could move from the playground to the computer screen, enacting a bill to make cyberbullying illegal. The bill was spurred in part by the suicide of a young girl who was the victim of a horrible online prank.

• In June, Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama — already attracting 1.8 million donors, many of them via the Internet — became the first candidate from a major party to bypass public campaign funds. By the election's end, many said his success spelled the end of public financing.

At December's second annual conference of the Family Online Safety Institute, the group proposed creating the job of National Safety Officer within an office of Chief Technology Officer for the United States.

Perhaps the most profound change in the 3.0 First Amendment environment is found in the news media, where traditional media face potentially fatal economic challenges, and at best seem destined to survive as smaller, more focused or localized versions of their selves.

According to the 2008 State of the First Amendment survey, the Web is now the principal source of news for 17 percent of Americans, up dramatically from just 2 percent in 1997.

All of this is really putting the "new" in the New Year — and the 3.0 — in the First Amendment's third century.

Gene Policinski is vice president and executive director of the First Amendment Center, 555 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

