

# Opinion



## Other Viewpoints

### Give grocery stores equal opportunity in marketing beer

Already worn out from trying to balance the budget, some Kansas legislators are ready for a beer break.

Up for consideration in the House and Senate are bills calling for an end to the requirement that beer sold in supermarkets have an alcohol content no greater than 3.2 percent.

Here's hoisting a glass to those efforts. The lower-alcohol beer, also called "cereal malt beverage," is a holdover from the state's dry past, when it was sold legally to get around a long-standing ban on stronger alcohol. Later it was sold as an exception to the 21-year-old drinking age.

But Prohibition is long gone, and the state — to avoid the loss of federal highway funds — had to quit indulging older teenagers.

Now the only reason for the 3.2 beer requirement is to keep liquor store owners happy.

But that rationale, like Kansas supermarket beer, is a tad weak. Laws generally shouldn't favor one type of legal business at the expense of another.

There's really no good reason to keep the archaic law on the books. It's a wasteful hassle for consumers to have to make separate trips to buy full-strength beer.

— *The Kansas City Star, via The Associated Press*

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## Sunny day brings story about persecution

It was a perfect day to play tennis. I hadn't played for over two months because it was either raining or too cold. But I can feel that spring is just around the corner and I can hardly wait.

Sunshine was pouring through my window that Wednesday afternoon, so I pulled out a book to read. It's actually not for school. Or even a book club. In fact, it's not even a romantic novel or a book from the best-selling Twilight series (a vampire love story) that most people would find in the hands of a girl.

It's called "The Pastor's Wife" by Sabina Wurmbrand. She gives a first-hand account of what it's like to be persecuted for being a Christian in Communist Romania in the 1950s and 60s.

What's interesting about this book is that I forget that I'm not reading a story about a concentration camp survivor from the Holocaust. The similarities are compelling. As the country celebrated the end of the second World War, those who appeared to be a threat to the government were arrested without reason. Thousands upon thousands experienced torture as the rest of the world experienced freedom.

Sabina Wurmbrand (a Jew converted to Christianity) has become someone whom I greatly admire. Her amount of faith is rare in people today. Her love for God, which was beyond the love she had for her husband, is even more unheard of.

She recounted a scene that has been on repeat in my mind ever since I read it. The government was summoning a meeting in the Parliament building. They were calling it a Congress of Cults. Every confession and religion was



**Michelle Myers**

### • A Moment with Michelle

asked "to send a big delegation."

When the evening arrived, some 4,000 bishops, pastors and priests, rabbis and mullahs were in attendance, along with the top Communists. Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator, was chosen as the honorary president of the Congress. Each priest and pastor took to the stage to give flattery and lies (also known as propaganda) to the people, praising the government for their "freedom of religion."

"Sabina had heard enough."

"Will you not wash this shame from the face of Christ?"

"Richard knew what would happen: 'If I speak, you will lose a husband.'"

"At once I replied — it was not my courage, but given to me for the moment: 'I don't need a coward for a husband.'"

"He sent up his card. The Communists were delighted."

Richard was arrested off and on after that scene, and he eventually vanished. His wife spent months looking for him, asking friends and relatives, going from jail to jail. He never seemed to be "on the list."

Sabina eventually was arrested, as well. She was the wife of a pastor; religious people always have a political agenda, which made the

Communists paranoid.

She continued to look for her Richard at each prison. Police said he had pleaded guilty to treason. Interrogators told her he was dead. But she knew in her heart that he was alive and was sharing the love of Christ with other prisoners. That thought kept her own body and spirit alive.

They were separated for 14 years. And though she was released years before they were reunited, she refused to divorce him or replace him with another man.

Richard was imprisoned and tortured during those 14 years, spending three of them in solitary confinement. His only human interactions were with his torturers.

Why am I reading a book with these stories of unimaginable hell?

Well, why does anyone read? We want to learn, to be inspired, to let our emotions be moved in a way that's beyond daily life. Reading these stories makes me value each day, every moment that makes me smile. They make me appreciate my life.

As I walked to my first class that morning, I was so happy that I did not have to wear a jacket to shield myself from cold or rain. Soon, I would be able to wear a dress to class.

And then the words of Sabina came to my mind: "Perhaps, when your heart is so unhappy about your new dress, which you need, remember your sisters, in rags, hungry, beaten, put to shame by the Communists. Pray for them, and praying for them thank God for all you have. And learning to thank God your heart will be blessed and will be happy and you will be a blessing to those around you."

## State tax revenues plunge

**State General Fund Update:** Receipts through January were a cumulative \$57.1 million below the November Consensus Revenue Estimates. Contributing to the shortfall were tax collections, \$68.4 million below projections. For the year, tax-only receipts are \$100.3 million below collections from fiscal year 2008. Although total fiscal year 2009 State General Fund receipts are currently \$193 million above fiscal year 2008 receipts, two large transfers from the General Fund occurred during the 2008 fiscal year for the Keeping Education Promises Trust Fund and the Statewide Maintenance and Disaster Relief Fund.

**2009 Rescission Bill Alert:** The House approved Substitute for SB 23 and the conference committee was expected to begin meeting Thursday afternoon on a compromised version.

**Senate Bill 3, Confirmation Oversight Committee:** The bill increases the membership of the Confirmations Oversight Committee from six to seven; it passed 38 to 2.

**Senate Bill 11, Community Colleges:** SB 11 requires the state Board of Regents to establish service area boundaries for community colleges. It would allow community colleges to acquire land and improvements in both their community college district and service area. It passed 40 to 0.

**Senate Bill 29, Licensure of technical professions:** The measure amends existing law by allowing the Board of Technical Professions to expand who they issue authorization certificates to by including limited-liabil-



**Ralph Ostmeyer**

### • State Senator

ity companies and partnerships and corporate partnerships or other legal entities created by law. Currently, corporations are the only entity issued a certificate. SB 29 also allows for geologists, engineers and land surveyors to be issued intern certificates and alters the two-year cycle for the issuance of renewal certificates. SB 29 passed 37 to 3.

**Senate Bill 35, Interest Rates on Municipal Bonds:** The bill would temporarily suspend the interest rate cap placed on bonds issued by cities and other local taxing subdivisions of the state until June 30, 2010. SB 35 passed 35 to 5.

**Senate Bill 40, At-Risk Education Council:** SB 40 would do away with the At-Risk Education Council, which fulfilled its statutory requirements in 2006. The bill has no fiscal note. Passed 40 to 0.

**Senate Bill 43, Campaign Finance:** SB 43 increases the campaign contribution limit for state Board of Education candidates. The current limit for political committees and individuals is \$500 for each primary and general election and SB 43 would increase it to \$1,000. Passed 40 to 0.

**Senate Bill 80, City Elections:** The measure would allow cities with a population of 2,000 or less to sell utility properties as long as a majority of the town's residents vote in support of the sale. Passed 40 to 0.

**Senate Bill 102, Automated External Defibrillator:** The measure would hold any individual who uses an automated external defibrillator harmless by striking the definition and requirement that only a qualified person be allowed to operate the defibrillator. Passed 40 to 0.

**Senate Concurrent Resolution 1604, Kansas Sesquicentennial:** SCR 1604 expresses the support of the Kansas Legislature to the state Historical Society so it can begin fund raising and preparing for the Kansas Sesquicentennial celebration in 2011. Passed 40 to 0.

**Senate Concurrent Resolution 1606, Relocation of Guantanamo Bay detainees:** This resolution strongly expresses the Legislature's opposition to the relocation of Guantanamo Bay detainees to Fort Leavenworth or other potential sites in Kansas. It encourages President Obama and the federal government to remove Kansas from consideration as a relocation site due to the negative impact it would have on the economy, safety, and security of Fort Leavenworth and the state. Passed 38 to 0.

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### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

