

# Opinion



## Other Viewpoints

### Sebelius needs to either stay or go

We don't know whether President Barack Obama will nominate Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to be secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, but whatever he decides, we hope he acts soon.

Sure, we hope he takes long enough to check potential nominees' tax records, but we also presume that by now, potential nominees have this information ready for inspection.

Among the effects of the latest Cabinet go-round is uncertainty in the state Capitol. There, unlike Washington, budget negotiations don't extend into the hundreds of billions of dollars, and there, unlike Washington, lawmakers are required to balance the budget.

That's a difficult enough task without the inevitable partisan sniping. Hardly needed was the latest tit for tat associated with the possibility that Gov. Sebelius will take the Cabinet post and how that turn of events might affect budget deliberations.

Recently, Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt made a comment in jest about the governor, saying he'd considered writing an anonymous letter of reference to President Obama on her behalf.

Not a big deal. Not even when Sen. Schmidt, one of the Senate's moderates, also said that the governor's departure to Washington "might actually be helpful" in the Legislature's effort to resolve the state's budget problems.

Although the absence of the state's top Democrat would benefit Republican causes beyond GOP budget proposals, Sen. Schmidt could have left the issue alone.

Then again, so could Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley. He is well regarded, but perhaps because legislative Democrats lose more battles than they win, he also is sometimes more sensitive than is either necessary or useful. He accused Sen. Schmidt of launching "partisan potshots" and faulted the Republican for a lack of leadership in budget deliberations.

Such exchanges are hardly extraordinary, either between legislative leaders or among rank-and-file members of the two parties. That doesn't make them productive. It would be nice once in a while if the combativeness would ease, if legislators would acquire the ability to shrug off comments from time to time.

Sen. Hensley's kneejerk response gave Sen. Schmidt's mildly critical comments of the governor more statewide publicity than they would have received otherwise. If that was his intent, it's hard to see how it serves his cause.

— *The Manhattan Mercury, via The Associated 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. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org)

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:s.haynes@nwkansas.com)

#### NEWS

**Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter**  
[aheintz@nwkansas.com](mailto:aheintz@nwkansas.com)

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**  
[mballard@nwkansas.com](mailto:mballard@nwkansas.com)

**Marj Brown, Vera Sloan - Society Editors**  
[colby.society@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.society@nwkansas.com)

#### ADVERTISING

**Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager**  
[jstewart@nwkansas.com](mailto:jstewart@nwkansas.com)

**Heather Wofter - Advertising Sales**  
[hwofter@nwkansas.com](mailto:hwofter@nwkansas.com)

**Tyler Zolinski - Graphic Design**  
[tzolinski@nwkansas.com](mailto:tzolinski@nwkansas.com)

**Jessica Estes - Classified Ad Desk**  
[jestes@nwkansas.com](mailto:jestes@nwkansas.com)

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

**Tammy Withers - Office Manager**  
[twithers@nwkansas.com](mailto:twithers@nwkansas.com)

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
[support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com)

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Jim Bowker - General Manager**

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, James Ornelas, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Daniel Spillman

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.



### Pink mist heralds campus Valentines Day

We have been warned. It's going to come eventually. Professors, staff, faculty and students have seen what it has done to other students, so they are doing their best to prepare us for what is about to come.

They call it pink mist, and it comes only in the spring. This mist, which is invisible, infects students with romantic feelings for each other and can be extremely contagious. Fortunately for those wanting to resist, it's easy to spot those who have been infected.

Couples are walking to class hand in hand, eating at the "date tables" in the cafeteria, studying under the warm sun on a soft blanket or at picnic table. They have deep and meaningful conversations on the DTR (define the relationship) benches between the women's dorm and the men's dorm. The girl fidgets with her key in front of the entrance to her dorm, looking longingly into the eyes of her beloved.

Those are the symptoms only for new lovers. For those who are in more serious relationships, it's all about getting a ring by spring. The women's dorm is filled with anxious girlfriends waiting for an upgrade to fiancée. And the moment a girl comes home from a night of blissful romance with a diamond on her finger, the dorm erupts with screams, squeals and cheers. It's truly priceless entertainment. Then she spills the what and where and when and



**Michelle Myers**

#### • A Moment with Michelle

and why and how it happened. And it is always so sweet and so cute and so romantic!

It's only February but two of my friends are in relationships. Maybe they were infected with a different form of pink mist, since it's not officially spring, but the talk of engagement is by far and the forefront of their minds.

One couple has been dating for almost a year. She tells me that she's been "wishin' and hopin' and thinkin' and prayin', plannin' and dreamin' each night of his charms." For encouragement, I tell her "All you gotta do is hold him and kiss him and squeeze him and love him, just do it and after you do, you will be his."

OK, not really. But she really is hoping a proposal is in the near future. And by near future, I mean two weeks. I sure hope he knows this.

Another friend of mine is currently enduring the absence of his girlfriend, as she is in Germany volunteering at a camp for military

kids. My diagnosis is that the lack of seeing her face each day is causing him to realize that he cannot live a day without her; or perhaps, he would rather not live a day without her.

I captured the turn of his thinking when I saw him reading 105 Engagement Ideas. He was frequently nodding with a big grin on his face. He quickly looked up at me. His smile contorted into a grimace.

"I need a job!" he blurted out to me. "I-I don't have any money. I don't have a place to live. I have nothing to offer her." He was deeply distraught. "But I know she's the one!"

I assured him that being poor is synonymous with being a college student. After all, we attend Multnomah Bible College (and we all know that Bible college can easily be translated into Bridal college).

When the pink mist does hit campus, I don't know what's going to happen to these two friends of mine. I don't know what's going to happen to me.

Although, truth be known — well, I'll let you know what happens.

Have a Happy Valentine's Day!

*Michelle Myers, a Colby native, is a student at Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., majoring in Bible and journalism. She enjoys the 32 Starbucks found within five miles of her campus.*

### There are troubled waters in Kansas

Since when has it become the method of conducting business where a public water group applies for a water right with the Division of Water Resources; attempts to take the land, by eminent domain, in order to access that water; and then does so, all without informing the landowners up front of its intentions?

Seems there have been several instances where the process for acquiring a water right has been manipulated and misused in this manner — one that dramatically violates the private property rights of landowners across Kansas.

"We are aware of applications for permits to appropriate water which have been filed with the Division of Water Resources by municipal water users with no knowledge or consent on the part of the owner of the land that constitutes the basis of the application," says Kent Askren, Kansas Farm Bureau water specialist. "These applications have been held by the division when the record clearly indicates no landowner consent had been given — and even approved — again without any showing of legal access to the property in question."

Landowners, farmers and ranchers understand and support the principle that water is owned by the state and the right to use this water is granted through an appropriations process. They know water belongs to Kansas citizens. These entrepreneurs also understand their right and potential to develop their property free from actions by those who would reduce the value of their property or impede its future development.

Water is very much a part of every farming operation, says Sen. Janis Lee, a Democrat who represents the 36th District. Lee's family has farmed near Kensington in Smith County for generations. She also serves on the Senate Committee on Natural Resources.



**John Schlageck**

#### • Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

"Without the availability of water, farming operations will be forced to change dramatically or in some cases, cease to operate," Lee says. "It's important every water-right holder knows well in advance what someone else has in mind for their water rights and property."

Such fundamental rights could be directly compromised when entities are permitted to make application for permits to take water using land owned by others as the basis for their application. This is especially true when there is no demonstration of consent or other legal access prior to assigning priority or approval to these applications.

Kansas law allows for any person to apply for a permit to appropriate water upon the land of another. However, it also requires such applications be made in good faith and sets the initial procedure for processing the application.

"These statutes were never intended to become a tool to allow parties who have neither consent nor control to gain a foothold in developing a water right on property they have no legal access to," Askren said.

Further, a standard condition attached to all permits to appropriate water reads, "this permit does not...authorize entry upon or injury to public or private property."

"It seems disingenuous at best to provide a permit in this manner when evidence is clear

and the chief engineer should be fully aware the applicant has no legal access to the property," Askren says.

There is a solution to this situation. It's a simple, easy procedure. It will also provide adequate protection for Kansas property owners.

What is needed, according to Askren, is a minor adjustment to current water law. This would require the chief engineer to verify when any applicant has either consent of the landowner or control of the property in question prior to processing the application or assigning any priority. If proof cannot be made in 30 days, then the chief engineer would be required to dismiss the application.

Kansas landowners, farmers, ranchers and others are willing to address the needs of rural and municipal water users while protecting their own property interests.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

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.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

