

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Tougher teen laws protect all on road

The Kansas Legislature should be applauded for toughening the rules for becoming a fully licensed driver. Under terms of a bill sent to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius for her signature, Kansans would not be able to obtain a regular, unrestricted Kansas driver's license until they are 17. The old law allows an unrestricted license at age 16.

As much as teens don't want to admit it, the data supporting this change is pretty clear. The younger and less experienced a driver is, the more of a threat that driver is to himself or herself, his or her passengers and others on the road.

Kansas is actually slow to come to the realization that this change has benefits for the general public. Assuming Sebelius signs the measure, Kansas will be the 49th state with a graduated licensing law.

The bill would keep the state's current practice of allowing kids to get a farm permit or learner's permit at 14. A learner's permit allows someone to drive if they are accompanied by an adult...

The best argument against the bill, which isn't very good, is that it will inconvenience parents, who either must chauffeur or ride shotgun for an additional year. That's true enough.

Perhaps the inconvenience they feel will be partially assuaged by the reduction in auto insurance premiums they reap, if not by the increased security of knowing their children are more likely to be home safe that night.

Many teens will view the proposal as an unfair restriction on their liberty. They will note, accurately, that the restriction was imposed upon them by people who drove under the old, more liberal laws now being changed. They will note that many 16 year olds are responsible drivers. All of that is true.

But none of it changes the statistical reality that safety behind the wheel improves with age and experience. The measure ... seeks to give Kansans — of all ages — the benefit of that reality...

—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: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail s.haynes@nwkansan.com or colby.editor@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

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@nwkansan.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@nwkansan.com

NEWS

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansan.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansan.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor
colby.society@nwkansan.com

ADVERTISING

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager
j.stewart@nwkansan.com

Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales
hwoofter@nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Tammy Withers - Office Manager
twithers@nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansan.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager
Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, James Ornelas, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Daniel Spillman

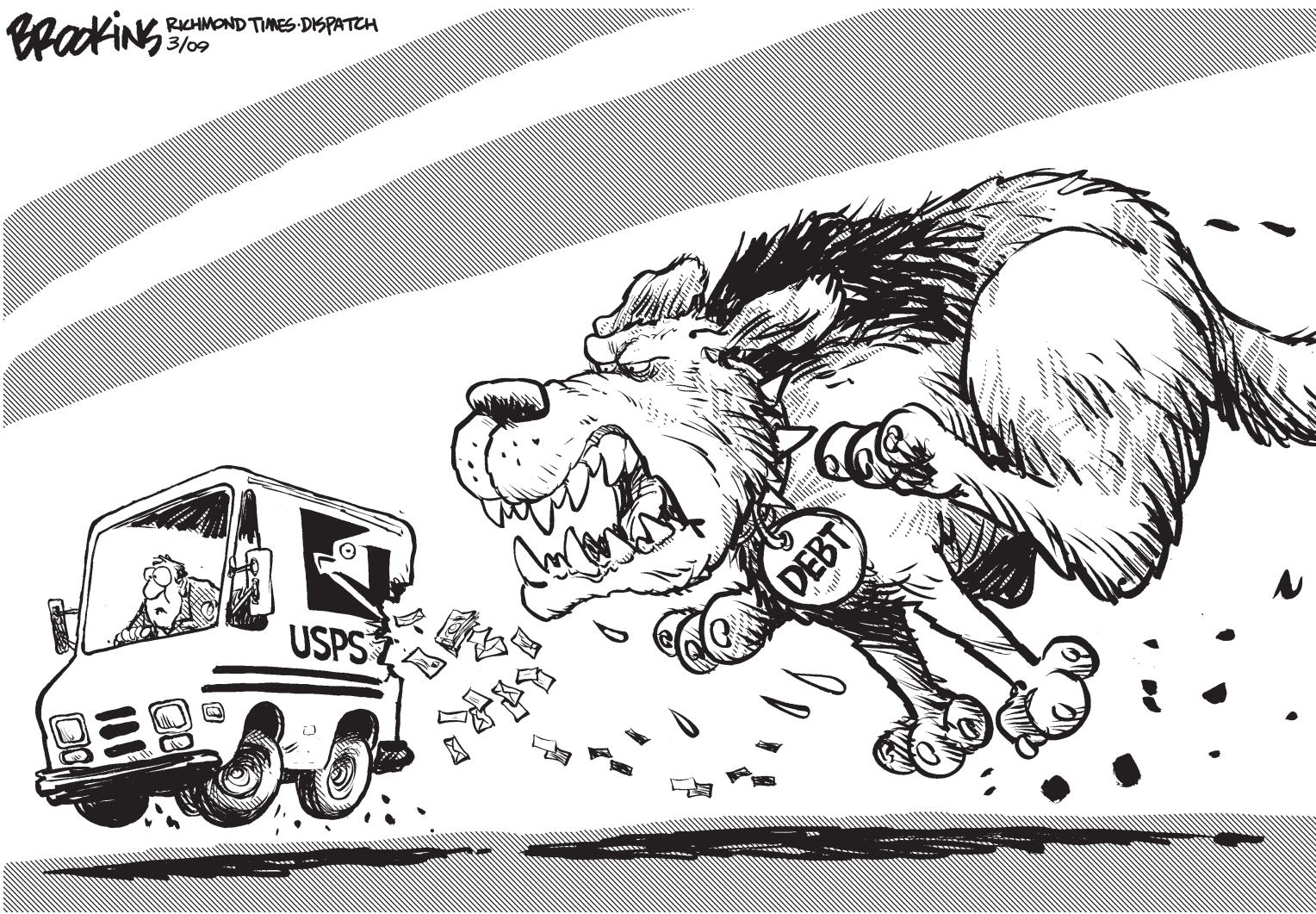
THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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.

Brookings RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH 3/09



Data saturation blocks communication

Life is short. None of us really know when our number will be up. Given this undeniable truth, I think it is important to live every day to the fullest.

This is easier said than done. The trials and tribulations of everyday life can distract us from the things that are really important. This can lead to us losing precious hours in our lives squabbling over petty issues and worrying about things that are not very important in the long run.

It's a sad irony that in an age of abundant technologies, people are communicating with each other less than ever before. Genuine face-to-face interaction has taken a back seat to e-mails, texting and the all-important cell-phone conversation. Recent technological innovations have left many people unable to engage in conversations that go beyond who got really drunk last weekend. Many people seem to have lost the ability to feel genuine human emotions.

And losing the ability to feel is not a hard thing to do. Long working hours combined with the bombardment of advertisements trying to convince us to buy something we don't need can cause even the most introspective individual to lose his or her grasp of reality.

It is easy to begin to think about yourself as a customer as opposed to a person with emotions and needs that cannot be fulfilled by mass consumerism. But in an age of materialistic corporatism, it's essential that we hold on



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

to our moral autonomy. When the capacity to make moral choices is crushed by the amoral messages forced fed to us in the media, any sort of nihilistic behavior becomes possible.

Most people are much deeper than what we see on the surface, but discussing emotions and engaging in self-reflection is hard to do when there are so many things to distract us. Qualities like patience and curiosity has been bred out of many people in my generation. Some people are unable to think critically about issues because they are constantly inundated by technological stimuli that numbs them to thinking.

Given the false reality many people are engaged in, I think now is a good time for people to take a long, hard look in the mirror and decide what is really important to them. I believe that once people are able to ignore the commercial, soul-depriving aspects of our culture, they will choose to engage in lives that are able to meet the needs of the broad range of emotions we require in order to feel truly content. Contentment will always trump short-term,

fabricated euphoria in the long run. Once alternative ways of thinking seep into mainstream thought, people will be able to acquire the tools that are needed to guard the good aspects of their personality from the temptations of undisciplined self-interest.

So I propose we start dealing with each other on a more human level in all aspects of our lives. When we communicate with each other, we shouldn't just hear each other, we should LISTEN to each other. When we do business, we should treat people like human beings as opposed to customers.

We should never miss an opportunity to tell the people we love how much they mean to us and how important they have been in helping us maneuver through the peaks and valleys of everyday life. We should also be cognizant of the contributions every person adds to our society, whether it's the person who mows our lawns and cleans our floors or the corporate executive in the upper echelons of a multinational corporation.

No one should go unnoticed and unappreciated for their contributions to our economy and our culture. Americans are too diverse and complex to live in a way that ignores some of the most critical aspects of human nature.

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.

Most legislation will be done soon

After next week, there will be very little legislation to pass or hold over until next year.

The Senate passed a version of a mega-appropriation bill that was similar to the House version, but the Senate was unable to pass or match the House's version of a bill addressing the below-market wage problem.

I was pleased that Senator Mark Taddigan, R-Clifton, was able to restore \$355,000 to the state pregnancy maintenance program that helps women get prenatal care. This program, named after the late Sen. Stan Clark, was to be used statewide to provide women facing crisis pregnancies with a wide array of support services, including counseling or alternatives to abortion.

More than half of the pregnant women served live at or below the federal poverty level. Because of this program, there are children alive today who otherwise would have been victims of abortion. In addition to that, supporting services that help prevent premature delivery and low birth weight, which cost the state millions through Medicaid, offer a good return for the state and its investment.

Senator Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, was



Ralph Ostmeyer

• State Senator

able to amend the mega-appropriation bill to make sure that Planned Parenthood and similar organizations which provide abortion services don't get any state or federal money in Kansas. I am proud to be a part of the coalition to get these two amendments added.

The Small Home Owned Carnival exemption should be on the way for the governor's signature after the Senate concurs with the House position. I am disappointed that it took so long to pass this exemption, keeping everyone in suspense. The Labor Department had a lot of concerns and we just needed to work through those problems. Needless to say, Topeka now has a better understanding of the importance of our home-owned carnivals!

House Bill 2134, In God We Trust license

plates, is in a conference committee that should not have too many problems reaching an agreement. I have 2,000 signatures on my desk wanting one of these tags. Carmen Alldritt, director of vehicles, told me that with the governor's signature on the bill, beginning July 1, people would be able to place orders for these tags at their county treasurer's office.

I would like to thank Francis and Geri Landry and John Bremenkamp for their patience and support while the bill was being worked. This no doubt will be one of the most popular tags that the Legislature has ever signed off on.

I appreciate the many contacts from home these past two weeks. Once again the session has flown by. After April 3, all that will be left is the veto session, which should last from three to 23 days. As usual, I hope for a short closure. Take care and God Bless!

Write to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 262-E, Topeka, Kansas, 66612 or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is ralph.ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov. Let me know if you would like to be on my mailing list.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

