

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Silencing buzz would improve talk

Thankfully the election cycle is over for a little while, and our print news, airwaves and television stations are not inundated with political talking heads spewing buzzwords, but unfortunately we still hear them crop up quite a lot in the news.

Probably the worst offender is "out of touch." I think I heard it a dozen times a day during the election (from just about every candidate: city, state and national), and it grates on me every time I hear it.

Of course, any given person, even an elected representative, is going to be out of touch with what a good portion of the people around them think. That's just life. Everyone thinks just a little differently from everyone else. Everyone has inclinations and opinions that are going to vary with the person next to them, even if they are from the same party.

I've been hearing this buzzword lately with regards to the Republican Party. Pundits are saying that their recent defeat at the hands of Barack Obama shows how out of touch the party is with average Americans.

Out of touch is a bad buzzword because it is most often either a horrible oversimplification or a bad smear. You must examine why this person is out of touch, and who they are out of touch with. And you must also examine who is calling him out of touch, since often their words will tell you more about them than their opponent.

Is it a pundit angered by his party's loss? Is it a candidate trying to say that he has your interests more in mind than his opponent does? Always look at who and why before you decide if a person really is "out of touch."

Another bad buzzword is "average American." First of all, there is no such thing as an "average" American. Average what? Income? Social status? Marital status? Religious affiliation? Sure there are plenty of people who fall into the term average in those categories, but are anything but in most of the others. Second, what they really mean is moderate voters. Voters who might be persuaded to vote for either party, rather than having a strict affiliation.

One buzzword that mostly journalists are guilty of is "blast." Think how many times you have seen a headline that says, "Political candidate blasts opponent's plan." Tell me, did he rig the plan with explosives? There are so many other words that tell you more and make more literal sense. Did he criticize it? Or chastise it? Or denounce it? Or perhaps he found most of it OK and decided to nitpick it a little?

As journalists, we should try and be more creative and more accurate than "blast." There was another bad one on Thursday, "GOP rips Obama over budget cuts." Did they physically grasp him and try to tear him in two? Tsk, tsk, CNN.

Politics attracts buzzwords. Buzzwords are easy to come up with and easy to remember. The idea is that the more you say your buzzwords, the more people will remember them and believe in them. Repetition is key if you want conventional wisdom on your side. But they divert people from getting at the real issue.

For example, think right now how many times you hear the word "socialism" in regards to Barack Obama's policies. Socialism is a touchy subject for most Americans because many of us were brought up during the Cold War, when the socialist Russians were the enemy. But what is socialism? Is that what these policies are? Will they be permanent or temporary? Will they be good or bad for the country? These are the questions that can't be answered by a buzzword, whatever the answers may be.

As always, the key is to look deeper. Look beyond party lines, Republican, Democrat and independent alike. If we all look deeper, than maybe one day we can make this county free of buzzwords, and through that a much better place.

— Kevin Bottrell, editor

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 @ nwkansas.com or colby.editor @ nwkansas.com.

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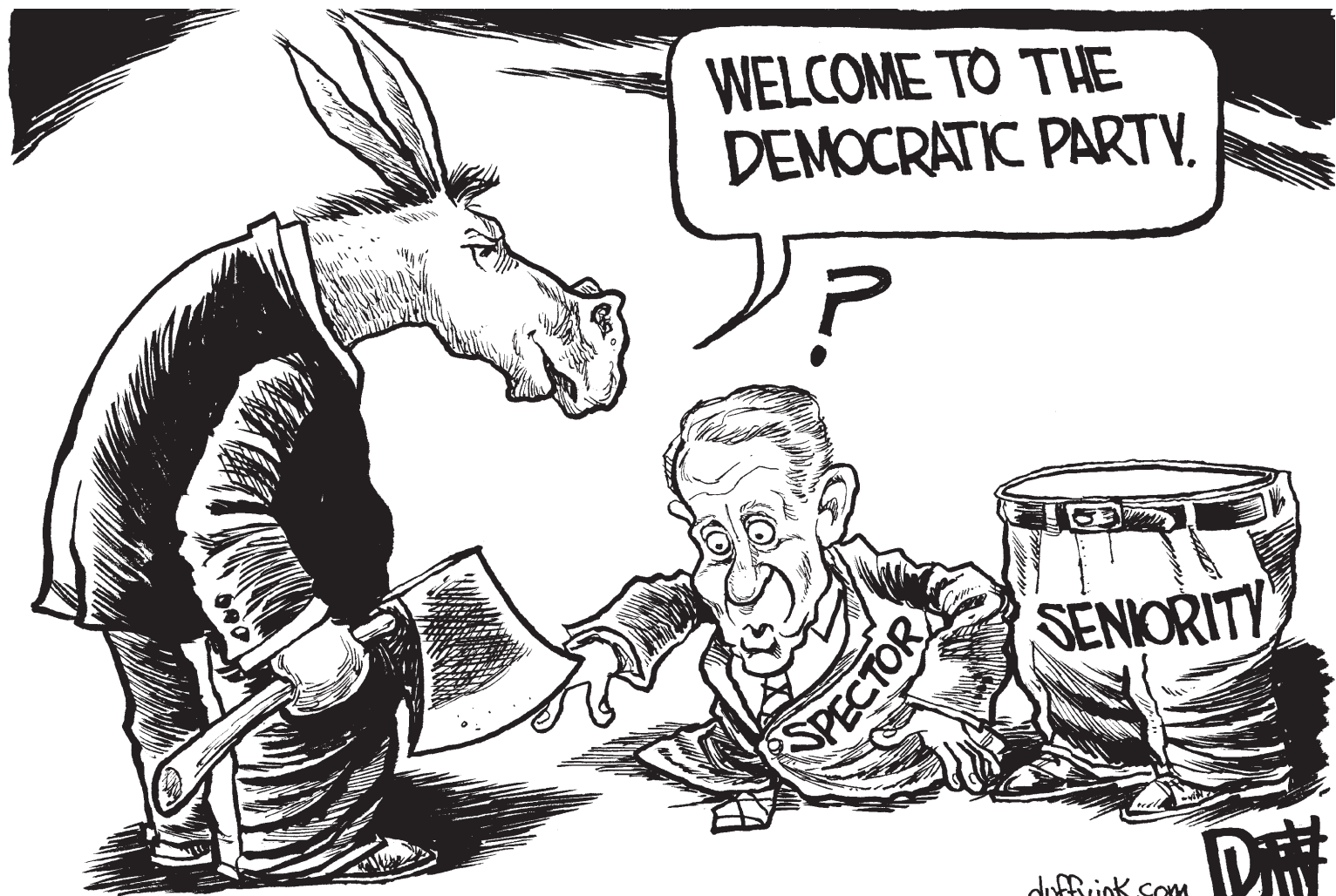
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### Start working on getting more involved

America needs to start on a path towards a deeper democracy personified by a press dedicated to investigative journalism and an American public determined to have an informed, participatory democracy, as opposed to an uninformed spectator democracy.

This kind of democracy would be quite a switch from what we have today. The press would have to disentangle itself from the media conglomerates that currently own American cable news networks and big newspapers. The public would have to be eternally vigilant in order to keep government from catering to special interests not interested in supporting policies that would benefit the majority of the population.

Blind nationalism would have to take a back seat to careful scrutiny of American foreign policy in order to make sure the politicians in Washington are practicing what they preach.

All of these changes will not be easy, but real democracy is not supposed to be easy. The United States' experiment in democracy is an ongoing project that needs to be continually re-evaluated and reformed in order to be saved from becoming a DINO (democracy in name only) country where politicians only serve special interests, military spending continues to rise without any explanation and the government develops a habit of making important decisions behind closed doors.

The current economic crisis is in many ways the result of a passive public and a timid media that was too distracted by Hollywood scandals



Andy Heintz

- Wildcat Ramblings

and television shows to see that our government had legalized torture and given a small group of individuals on Wall Street incredible influence over our economy with hardly any regulation or oversight.

For years we sat by while politicians pontificated about the our new service-sector economy that would be dominated by privatization and deregulation without questioning the serious problems this kind of economy could bring upon our country in the long run. We allowed politicians to sidestep serious questions about our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, our crumbling infrastructure, our bloated prison population, our failing health care system and a military budget that remained gigantic even after the Soviet Union had crumbled.

Our refusal to press the media to be the watchdogs for the people that they are supposed to be has left us scrambling to recapture the democrat spirit that has led to some of our country's greatest accomplishments.

Why are we not calling on the media to spend more time focusing on the hard work blue collar America is engaging in every day

to make sure we can maintain our quality of the life? The show Dirty Jobs starring Mike Rowe has done a better job at a shining a spotlight on hard-working Americans than the news crews.

Americans should be studying up on the most pressing issues of the day and presenting our own proposals to our elected officials instead of waiting for politicians to solve the problems. The government is supposed to serve the needs of the people, but in order for this to happen, the people need to stay informed so they are not manipulated by self-absorbed politicians and egotistical members of the media trying to convince people to back policies for their own self-interested reasons.

A democracy is about more than just voting every four years. A democracy is personified by a society full of people continually pressing their government to support policies that will meet the needs of the entire population.

Over the years, democratic mass movements have risen up in American to protest for important issues such as women's rights, labor rights and civil rights to make sure our country lived up to its ideals. This needs to happen again today.

A true democracy cannot exist alongside a public that is uninformed and a media that has given up its role as government's watchdog.

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.

### Salesmen, pets draw attention in spring

To the Editor:

I have a couple of concerns that I wish to pass on to the citizens of Colby.

Recently, the Police Department has received complaints concerning door to door solicitors. Many of these are magazine and vacuum salespersons. The City of Colby has ordinances dealing with solicitors, canvassers and peddlers, found in the City of Colby Code in Chapter 5.

Basically it says that persons may not go door to door selling any merchandise, soliciting sales, etc., without first obtaining a license issued by the city clerk. Individuals applying for a license will undergo a criminal history check, and the application must be approved by the chief of police or his designee. Persons receiving a license must carry the license, or a true copy, on their person, and must present the license to anyone requesting it prior to agreeing to any sales.

So if you have someone come to your door to solicit sales or services, simply ask them to show you the license issued by the city clerk. If they can't produce it, you can tell them that



#### Free Press Letter Drop

- Our readers sound off

you don't do business without seeing proof that they have a license to solicit or sell. If they do have the proper license, you are absolutely under no obligation to make any purchases or listen to their proposals. Simply tell them that you are not interested.

If they attempt to pressure you, in any way, advise them to please leave your property. I would ask that you call the police and advise us of the circumstances surrounding any negative contact. Please try to get a good physical description of the individual(s), including their clothing, etc. If you see them enter a vehicle, try to get a good description of the vehicle as well.

Also, as the weather turns for the better, more and more citizens are out walking, riding their bicycles, and doing other outside activities. As this happens, we begin receiving more complaints about dogs running at large, and even going after people or people's pets.

The City of Colby animal ordinances are found in chapter 2 of the city code. The most abused ordinance is 2-206 RUNNING AT LARGE. This ordinance states that it shall be unlawful for the owner or harbinger of any dog or cat to permit such dog or cat to run at large within the city.

Any animal or fowl found at large shall be impounded as provided in Section 2-118 or 2-207. In lieu of impounding the animal or fowl, officers may issue citations for violations. Any (one) convicted of the violation of this article shall be fined ... not exceeding \$1,000....

Please be responsible for your animals. If you have questions about either of these concerns, please call the Police Department at (785) 460-4460.

Randy Jones, Chief of Police

#### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

