



## Other Viewpoints

### Prosecute suspects, don't relocate them

Kansas' congressional delegation is just looking out for the state's interest in trying to keep terrorism suspects detained at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, from being sent to our own Fort Leavenworth.

They are doing their jobs dutifully. But they and other members of Congress who oppose relocating the Gitmo detainees to domestic facilities are missing the point.

What we really need to do is either prosecute or release remaining detainees so this no longer has to be an issue.

Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Kansas, spoke on the floor of the House last week arguing against relocating detainees to Fort Leavenworth. He is a sponsor of legislation introduced by Rep. Lynn Jenkins, R-Kansas, seeking to prevent any such move.

Sens. Pat Roberts and Sam Brownback of Kansas similarly have made noise about the proposal to close Gitmo and the suggestion that Fort Leavenworth could house terrorist suspects.

Such opposition might serve to scuttle the plan, but for how long is the question. At some point, the U.S. needs to deal with these detainees. Gitmo cannot operate forever, at least not without some international sanctioning.

Guantanamo Bay was a short-term solution, when terrorist suspects were captured and before the U.S. knew what to do with them. The military base on Cuba offered a no-man's land where they could be detained outside the traditional judicial system.

The problem is we still don't know what to do with them.

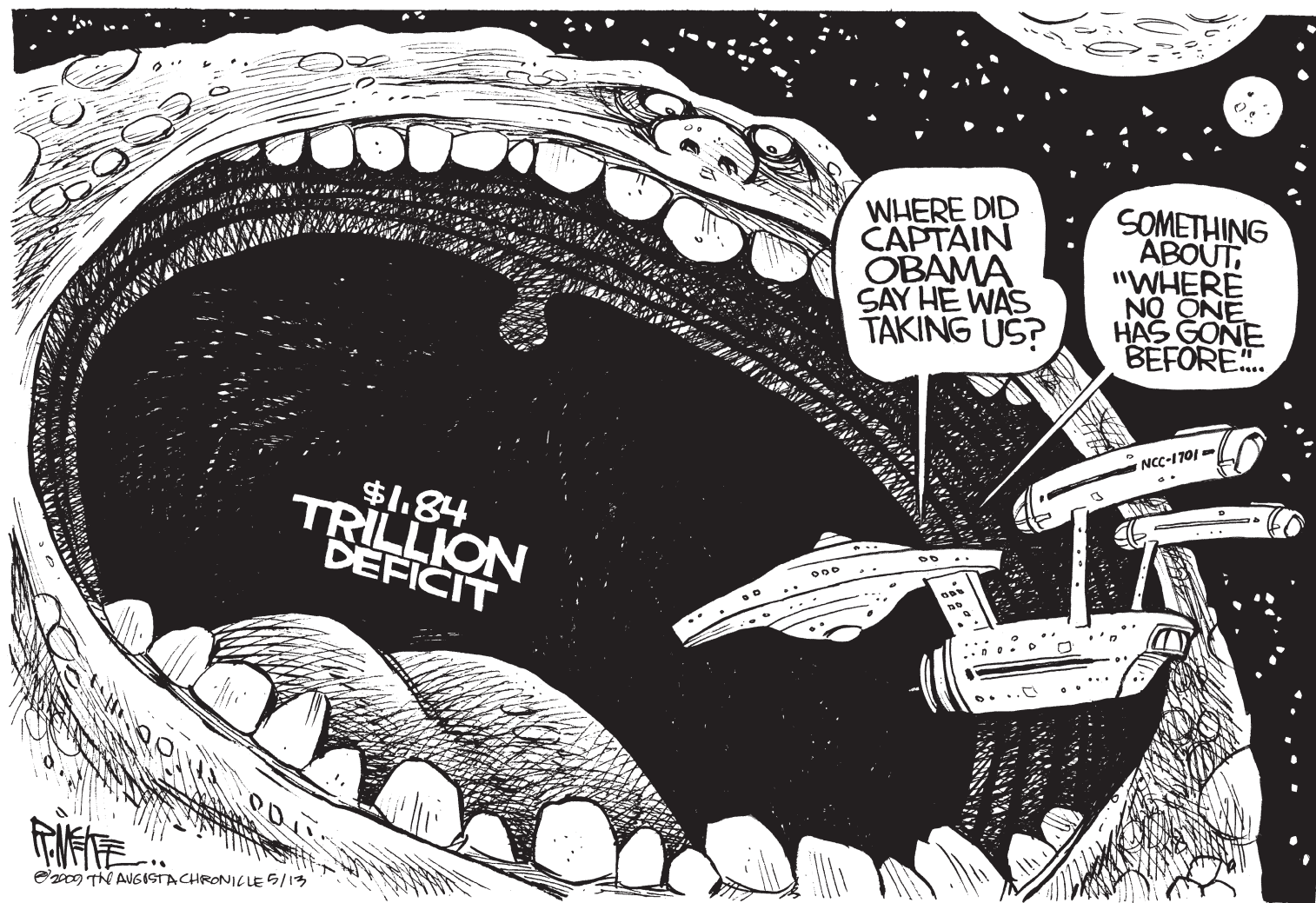
Whether they stay or go — to Fort Leavenworth or somewhere else — the U.S. needs a long-term solution.

Seemingly that means they either need to be tried within the American judicial system or under the auspices of some international war crimes body.

The real issue is expediting that process. The crimes need to be adjudicated or the prisoners released.

No one in Kansas probably wants them here, but the government needs a deadline to close Gitmo to the detention of terrorist suspects for no other reason than to settle their long-term status.

— The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press



### Nothing happens in a media vacuum

In our media-saturated world, nothing happens in a vacuum.

If a child falls sick of some new disease in Georgia, a CNN camera team will be there this afternoon. A reporter will be standing in front of the child's home or school or church by nightfall.

If some crazy person snaps and kills two or three co-workers, Fox News will have tape rolling in half an hour. An affiliate will have a news team in place down the street before the next newscast. Helicopter shots will show police crouched outside the building.

If a bomb goes off in a crowded market in Baghdad, a local crew — blonde-haired, white-skinned network reporters are no longer allowed out of the Green Zone — will be on the scene in half an hour, beaming images of the bodies straight to New York.

It's all a far cry from the days when five bells on the wire service machines alerted the telegraph editor of your local newspaper that something was happening.

Today, the pictures will go on the air as soon as a circuit can be cleared. Airborne reporters transmit police chases in progress; by nightfall, Nancy Grace will be showing pictures of the victims and talking about how to prosecute the shooter, kidnapper, funny uncle or whatever.

The truth is, we have more media than we have news, and the problem is bound to get worse. All-news television, cable and radio channels, websites and the wire services compete for a limited amount of breaking stories. Once a juicy one turns up, they all sink their



**Steve Haynes**

- Along the Sappa

teeth until it is chewed over and tasteless.

Then we have the spectacle of the same reporters trying to come up with a fresh lead hour after hour, week after week, until the case goes cold. Or a new clue revives it. Again and again.

The discovery of a newly mutated influenza strain emanating from pig farms in Mexico, is only the latest bandwagon for the media to jump on, over report and then trample in the mud as the crews rush on to the next big story.

In a case like this, it makes no difference how likely the fears of officials are to become a reality. The fears themselves justify the media feeding frenzy.

There is a source, a story, a ready market for the reporting. And so off the herd goes.

The next decade may be marked with an increase of this kind of pack journalism as the big city newspapers either fold or contract and the network news operations struggle to remain relevant.

As the opening of New Media channels on phones and portable devices creates even more ways to distribute news, agencies will have to have something to feed into them. They will

no longer be able to "scrape" their headlines out of the reporting of respected newspaper journalists, because no one will be paying them to report.

And what already appears to be a vast wasteland of media — cable, web, wireless, broadcast, print — will surely become more vast — and vastly more underfed.

One shudders to think what kind of reporting it will take to fill vast new wastelands with something to soak up the minutes and fill the pages.

Money is the real problem, though. As print publications lose favor to the Internet, the websites lose their ready source of information. And as networks lose the ability to pay reporters and camera crews to do real news, the sources for legitimate reporting will become fewer and fewer.

While the Internet may be capable of killing the revenue sources most big news organizations depend on today — advertising, national and local — no one has yet to figure out how to finance reporting from pitifully small Internet ad revenues.

So expect more junk news, not less. More instant crisis, and less analysis of real problems. More fluff and less substance. And get used to it.

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.

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### Don't measure universities by efficiency

Is Kansas getting our money's worth when it comes to state universities? Just how "efficient" are our various Kansas schools at delivering student credit hours per dollars spent?

That is a question that is supposedly being addressed by a legislative post-audit committee. In this recent era of rising tuition costs and desperate economic times, that could be an important question to answer if it was being done correctly.

Sadly, this study appears to be shallow bean counting that will cause a "race to the bottom," with colleges hiring cheap faculty to teach cheap courses and turn out cheap, popular degrees.

Unlike a bank "audit," where inspectors come on-site to check if the paperwork actually matches what is in the safe, this "audit" is conducted in Topeka and therefore can only focus on numbers. All quantity. No quality. The result is not something the Legislature should accept for many reasons.

First, the way for colleges to get the highest "efficiency" is to crowd hundreds or even a thousand students into one big lecture hall or auditorium. That is being done at some schools for some courses.

Triple class size, and you reduce costs to one-third. This generates a lower cost-per-student figure. It also provides lousy education.

Any time class size rises much beyond 24-30 students, the student becomes another number and is mostly on his or her own to struggle through the course. Forget the faculty open-door policy that provides the extra help and attention that has helped so many Kansas students succeed and enter graduate school or



**John Richard Schrock**

- Education Frontlines

the professions.

Second, ignoring research and service and focusing on just teaching is a bad idea. Nationwide, university "CEOs" are moving toward hiring part-time adjuncts to teach courses as piecemeal, and shed the costs of health care and retirement. This is not a good idea either, although to the university-as-a-business folks, it provides great "fiscal flexibility."

Cheap faculty are a real problem, because Kansas wants and needs teachers who are current and active in their field, participating in the academic community and bringing that expertise to students who can begin their research at the undergraduate and graduate level. On a per capita basis, Kansas once had the largest number of listings in the Who's Who in Science of any state. Kansas needs to continue having our best faculty minds working with our best student minds. To push for discount-store "efficiency" will end that.

Finally, public universities need to operate for the public good. The number of physics, chemistry and foreign-language teachers has never been enough to maintain numbers that would support those departments on a business-model basis. But we desperately need every physics and chemistry and foreign lan-

guage teacher we do produce — for the good of the state.

To eliminate low-enrollment programs in response to the "efficiency" mandate would completely eliminate the few graduates we produce and so desperately need. And since the faculty and courses are still needed to support other programs, this shortsighted surgery would not save any resources at all.

State legislators from rural Kansas know the value of "quality." Look at the green-and-yellow machinery sitting in their fields. They could buy cheaper equipment. It would be more "efficient" for a year or two. But cheap equipment doesn't do the job — not for long. They know that over the long haul, "cheap" turns out to be more expensive.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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.

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

