



Free Press Viewpoint

Bring detainees to Kansas prisons

President Barack Obama seems to be adamant that the Guantanamo Bay detention facility be closed. Set aside that it is an obvious public relations maneuver (it's not as though we are releasing them) and focus on the reaction in Congress.

Before the announcement, there was widespread clamor among citizens and lawmakers to close this facility where, it had come to light, the detainees had been mistreated. Since the announcement, our elected representatives are falling all over themselves to keep the detainees out of their particular state. Understandable, if silly, but Kansas, and really any state with a little vision, is missing an opportunity here.

Bring them here. Bring the detainees to Kansas.

And while all the talk is about bringing them to Fort Leavenworth, that's not the only option. Don't forget there are maximum security facilities in El Dorado, Ellsworth and Lansing. After all, the Department of Defense contracts out many different things, why not detainees?

There are several reasons to do this. First, the detainees are not your ordinary prisoners. They are not housed communally and they are not allowed contact with the outside world. These would not be the kind of prisoner that local residents would see out on a work detail or on a prison firefighting team. Also, since they are mainly international citizens, there would not be many families moving here to live closer during a prison sentence, as sometimes happens with American inmates.

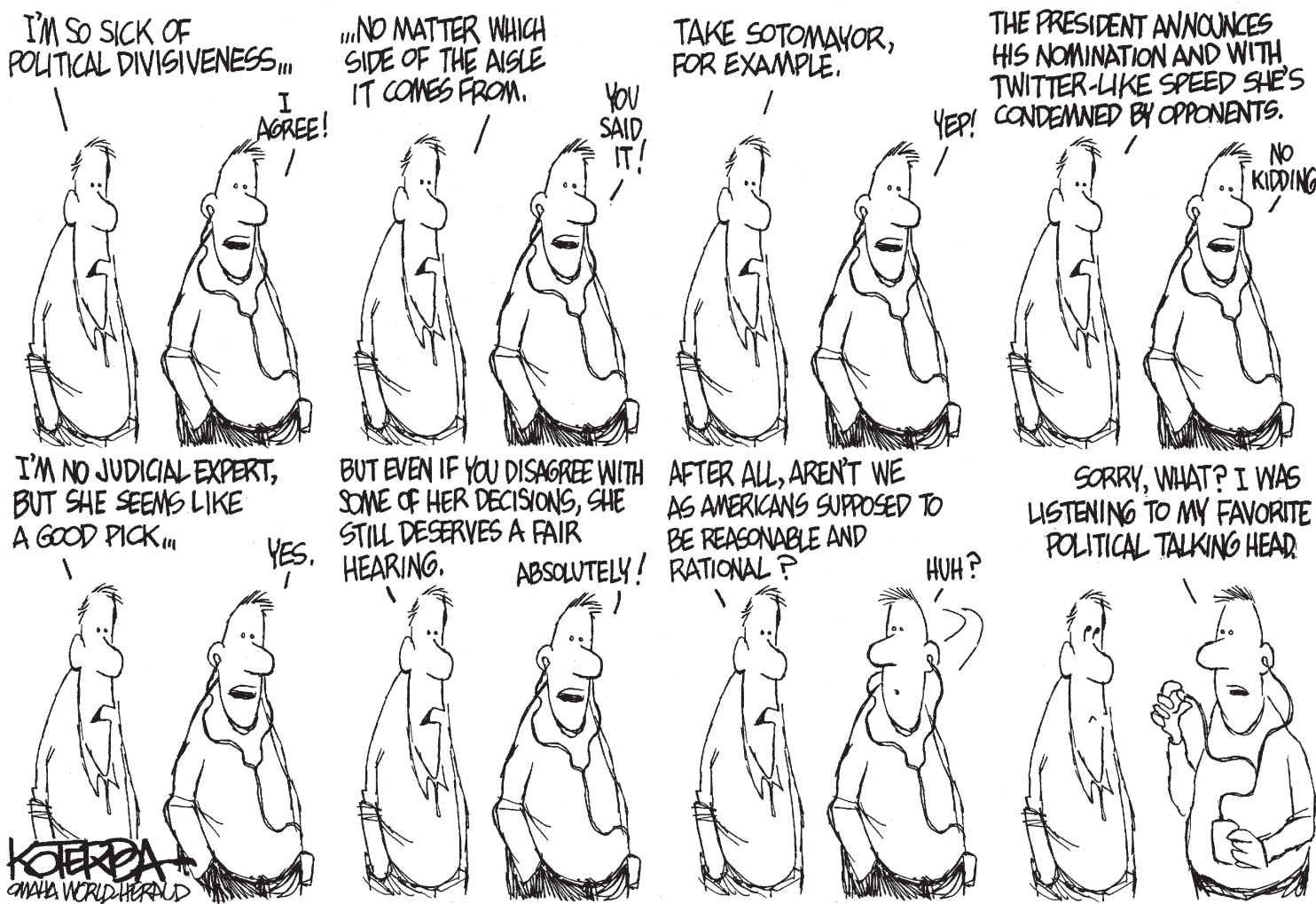
It would be a great way to trumpet the Kansas Corrections System. We've all heard many of our small-government-minded legislators say, "States can do it better than the federal government." So this is our opportunity. Shout it to the rafters of the United States Capitol Building that Kansas can do it better than the Department of Defense. We can provide a facility that will securely house these people (they are still prisoners after all) with a minimum of risk, a respectable standard of living and a tough but fair attitude. We can provide a staff that will not let them lounge about on our dime, but also will not infringe on the rights that we all hold dear. We can show the detainees, our fellow citizens and the world that this how we can and should treat our prisoners, as human beings who have done wrong, not as animals.

After all, the courts have ruled that they are entitled to the minimum protections of our justice system. Kansas can handle that no problem.

We could even build them a new facility, since we might as well create a few jobs while we're at it. A prison can bring a big economic boost to a town, bringing in people to build it and people to staff it and their family members, some of whom will need jobs or would want to start businesses. Why not go further? Make it an environmentally friendly building: wind or solar powered, carbon neutral and all electric vehicles.

In any case, why should we not be the first to say: "Kansas can put an end to the shadowy malpractices that have plagued Gitmo, can bring the detainee process into the light of day, and improve it so that it is no longer objectionable." After all, if we can handle the BTK Killer and Michael Vick, what's a few terrorists?

—Kevin Bottrell, Colby Free Press



Freedoms offer a new course

The United States of America could chart a new course for the world if we can recapture the democrat spirit and courage that inspired a group of patriots to take up arms against the mighty British Empire in 1775.

This new course will require an adherence to four freedoms that will need to be followed if we want to transform our country into a deeper democracy where everyone has a voice and where constructive dialogue and Socratic questioning are the norm and hostile, divisive, ideologically-driven rhetoric is met with deep distrust and antipathy.

These four freedoms are as followed:

- Freedom from fear
- Freedom from want
- Freedom from ideology
- Freedom to dissent

I believe embracing these four freedoms will foster a vibrant democratic atmosphere where the voices of hope and optimism will drown out the harbingers of hate and division that are beamed into our television screens each night. In the rest of this column I will briefly explain why each one of these freedoms is essential to fostering an environment where individuality can be harnessed in a way that is satisfying to the self and the public.

No country or society can expect to prosper if they live in fear of their own government or outside forces looking to inflict death on members of its population. Over the years there have been several occasions in our nation's history when we as a people have given



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

in to the politics of fear and paranoia. Some of the more egregious examples include sending the Japanese Americans to internment camps during World War II, the wiretapping of anti-war protesters and civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Junior during the Vietnam War and the jailing of suspected terrorists in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq without giving them right to a fair trial during today's war on terror. A country blinded by fear is always vulnerable to politicians willing to crush civil liberty in order to protect the republic. Citizens should guard themselves against this kind of rhetoric because in reality the only way America will be destroyed is from within.

Freedom from want is essential to creating a deeper democracy because it stands in staunch opposition to those eager to push a free market fundamentalist agenda that will only lead to more environmental destruction. The results of our insatiable need for more stuff has come with a huge environmental cost in America and other countries where the commodities we buy are made. Rejecting consumerism in favor of a more earth-friendly approach that champi-

ons producing more with less would lead to a healthier country in the long run.

Freedom from ideology is maybe the most critical freedom our country needs to embrace if it wants to continue to prosper. This means not rejecting any opinions just because they are considered liberal or conservative. Meaningless labels like the two mentioned in the previous sentence only put constraints on free thought by causing people to reject ideas without carefully scrutinizing their legitimacy just because they have been taught that any idea that is considered liberal or conservative must be bad.

Freedom to dissent is important because it would prevent our citizens from feeling like it's unpatriotic to ever question American foreign policy. Blind nationalism obliterates irreplaceable qualities like mercy and reason and creates an ideology that requires unquestioning obedience. I love this country as much as anyone but you can't study our nation's history in Latin America and Middle East without acknowledging that at times we have acted immorally due to greedy self-interest. The United States has done some wonderful things throughout our history, but it is important to recognize the good along with the bad.

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.

Never forget



John Schlageck

• Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

in cemeteries across our state.

Some of these graves are filled with young men who barely reached adulthood when they died. Their stories tell of dreams unfulfilled, of promises and potentials cut short.

While visiting these places, it's possible to be overcome with a sense of yearning. It is also possible to feel something larger, a sense of finality and rest, and a sense of peace.

The soldiers from World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Iraq and Afghanistan rest in these cemeteries. They live on in the memory of their families and friends and, in a larger sense, in the memory and gratitude of the nation they gave their lives for.

On Memorial Day, Kansans will once again gather in cemeteries in Iola, Valley Falls, Meade, Washington, Hoisington or Grinnell to recall and reassure themselves that the lives and deaths of these young men and women had meaning.

When we think of our liberties, remember that some gave their all. Remember those veterans who died so we could remain free.

Only a handful of those who served in World War I remain, and the number who served in World War II dwindles daily. Vietnam veterans have reached middle age and today's young men and women are the veterans of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

For many, the story remains the same. They grew up as farm kids in the Midwest or some other region of our country. Those from the Midwest grew up with the feel of the prairie earth beneath their feet, the wide-open sky overhead and the rhythm of the seasons in their blood.

At an early age, most of the young men learned to drive a tractor with their dads. Like many farm boys, they understood machinery and the use of tools. They developed self-reliance and initiative.

Soon, many found themselves in another field far from home: a battlefield in Europe, the Far East, Vietnam or the Middle East. These veterans become the unsung heroes of war.

But these young men and women were not repairing a combine in a harvest field or operating a small business on Main Street. Instead, they were patching up a tank under enemy fire, threading their way through the jungles of Vietnam, avoiding anti-personnel mines in Iraq or keeping an eye peeled for snipers in Afghanistan.

This Memorial Day, mothers, fathers, families and friends will travel to cemeteries across Kansas and our country. Once on those hallowed grounds, they will pause to remember and pray for the young men and women who did not return from war and those like my father who have died.

At the same time, let's give thanks and remember those veterans who are still with us. Let's not forget those serving around the world today.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas.

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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

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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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, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

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