



Free Press Viewpoint

'Big First' tough for any candidate

This week, State Sen. Tim Huelskamp, who is running for the U.S. House of Representatives, stopped by the *Free Press* office.

The "Big First," as the Kansas 1st Congressional District is known, can be problematic. From Cheyenne to Morton to Lyon, it encompasses 69 counties, more than 360 miles end to end and is home to more than 670,000 Kansans. It's a whopper of a district, and to think it's only the 11th largest in the country. It takes a special kind of person to even think of running here, just given the sheer size of the area.

The district's makeup is different from the others. It is primarily agricultural, with low population-density counties, a lot like Thomas County. The population centers tend to be only several thousand people, and many outlying towns of a few hundred, places like Rexford and Brewster, dot the landscape.

That's why it is encouraging to see a candidate, any candidate, swing through Colby. Huelskamp lives in Fowler, way down south in Meade County, not an insignificant distance. We can only hope that more of the candidates will follow his example by traveling to the far-flung areas of the Big First.

This really is the best way to connect with voters in areas like ours. Voters here are not best reached by television ads. We respond to the personal approach. We like a candidate to walk up, shake us by the hand and ask us for our vote, or at least we like to feel like that was his or her intention.

Large events are simply not feasible in a district like the First. Sure, you could hold a rally in Salina or Dodge City, but even those towns are far from a lot of the district. You could hold events in the five largest cities in the district and still not reach 90 percent of the population.

What's the answer? Small events. Personal "meet-and-greets" at a high school or a power plant or a car dealership. Hit the county fairs, visit Veterans of Foreign Wars posts and swing by community colleges. Do fifty events that only draw a hundred people and you will reach more voters, provided you hold them in as many counties as you can. Word of mouth will get a candidate farther in this district than elsewhere.

In the end, whoever is elected certainly has big shoes to fill. The seat has been occupied by heavyweights, including the 1996 Republican presidential candidate, Bob Dole, and current Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts. Heady company indeed. Rep. Jerry Moran, who currently holds the seat, has done so for 12 years without a serious challenge.

Moran often ran without a Democratic challenger, and as yet there has not been any announced for 2010. That's not surprising, since the district is overwhelmingly Republican. We can expect that this year, since the field is wide open, there will be a Democratic candidate. He or she will likely be a recognizable face, a populist Democrat on the conservative side with a rural background to give him or her some credibility. He or she will also likely be alone in the primary, easy to distinguish from the current heap of Republican candidates.

Even now, a year and a half out from the election, political blogs and congressional watchdogs are looking at the Big First as one of the few hot races. A few have even declared Huelskamp and State Sen. Jim Barnett of Emporia as the front runners. (Since no polls have been done yet, this is based on money raised and name recognition.)

It is shaping up to be a very interesting election, and with luck, Colby will see more of all of the candidates before it is all said and done. — *Kevin Bottrell*

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.

Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager
jstewart@nwkansas.com

Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales
hwoofter@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design
kballard@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Tammy Withers - Office Manager
twithers@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, 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, 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



Economy needs dose of sociocapitalism

With the recent bailouts of big banks and auto companies, many conservative-leaning Americans are worried that the United States is on its way to becoming a socialist country.

The mere mention of the word socialism provokes fear and rage in many Americans. Most of this stems from the Cold War, where the conflict was painted as a battle between the freedom-loving American capitalists and the evil socialists in the Soviet Union. When looking back on the soulless brutality of the Soviets, it's not hard to see why Americans would fear any policies that remotely resembled the past policies of that Evil Empire.

But to view socialism solely through a Cold War lens will only lead to misleading distortions when it comes to the meaning of the word. In reality, the United States has never been solely based on the principles of free-market capitalism. We are a mixed economy that embraces both socialistic and capitalistic policies, just like every other democracy in the world.

Any sort of tax is a form of socialism. When a city government raises taxes to get a new high school built, that is a form of socialism. When farmers' crops are subsidized, that is a form of socialism. When a city government raises taxes to give a well-deserved pay raise to fire fighters and policeman, that is a form of socialism.

And I admit that I'm a fan of many socialis-



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

tic policies. I'm more afraid of the government wiretapping my phone than I am about them raising taxes to make sure every American gets decent health care. I support government regulation in some circumstances to make sure corporations are not given incentives to engage in risk-taking behavior that could damage our economy. I'm certainly in favor of taxes that provide money for the social programs that keep lower-income citizens from falling into abject poverty.

The question we should be asking is how much socialism we want our government to embrace. I believe socialistic policies should only be embraced in areas where free-market capitalism falls short. Free enterprise should always be supported by the government, because it is the only surefire way to guarantee that businesses will continue to innovate.

When business are allowed to operate in an environment where they can profit handsomely from investing in new technological innovations, the economy will prosper. When

businesses are hamstrung by excessive regulations that prevent them from making money, they will be less likely to put forth the effort needed to transform their companies in a way that benefits everyday Americans. But when the government becomes too lax and allows corporations to do what they please, it often leads to corporate scandals and the majority of the wealth in the hands of a tiny elite.

Whether we like it or not, much of capitalism is based on greed. This greed can lead to some very positive things. The profit motive pushes businesses to work harder and invest in innovations the benefit all Americans. But when businesses are left without any restraints due to the naive belief that they will regulate themselves, they tend to be unable to control their own greed and end up acting in ways that harm all citizens.

Americans should be proud of our history of supporting a capitalistic system that allows everyone to try and achieve their dreams, but we should also be proud of the social programs we have embraced that ensure the vulnerable elements of our society are not entirely at the mercy of the market.

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

Would a bio-lab be safe in Texas?

I had to laugh when I saw that officials from Texas had filed a lawsuit claiming that Manhattan and Kansas had been chosen illegally as the site for the new National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility and that it should have been placed in the Texas Research Park.

What was really funny to me was that some people in Texas are saying that Manhattan is a dangerous place to have the lab because we have tornadoes there.

Actually, Manhattan has had tornadoes, but a lab could be built under the ground in Manhattan and would be relatively safe even if there did happen to be a tornado. If there was an earthquake, such as there have been in Texas, an underground lab wouldn't be safe.

The last time we were in Texas was in April 1995. Jim, my husband, and I, were driving a pickup and pulling a fifth-wheel trailer when we first visited San Antonio. We had found a nice campground close to town to park our trailer, and I must admit that we were have a nice time visiting the usual tourist attractions there for several days — until April 14. I was standing in the kitchen of our trailer and Jim was sitting on the couch watching television when our trailer began to shake as if someone was pushing on it as hard as they could. The salt and pepper shakers I had sitting on the cabinet fell to the floor.

I remember saying, "Who's shaking this trailer?" Jim went to the door and looked out and said, "There's no one out there, and everything is shaking." This only lasted for a matter of seconds. Then I saw on the television that there had been an earthquake in a town in southwest Texas called Alpine, many miles away from San Antonio, and we were feeling the affects of it.



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

The quake, rated at 5.7 on the Richter scale, had done very little damage in San Antonio but had shaken things up pretty good in Alpine. It was reported that no one was injured but a lot of items had fallen off shelves in stores. Officials were checking what damage it might have caused to bridges and dams in the Alpine area.

I read on the Internet, at mysanantonio.com in a report from the University of Texas at Austin Institute for Geophysics, that since 1983 there have been eight earthquakes in a 50 mile radius of that one. In an Internet article entitled, "Earthquake Seismology, Earthquakes in Texas." I found that these are not bad earthquakes, and that Texas has had only 100 earthquakes during the 20th Century that registered between a 5 and a 6, strong enough to do any damage. The article said these earthquakes probably would increase in intensity in years to come. Now, I am asking again, how do you protect a bio-lab in an earthquake?

Before we got out of Texas, we began to feel as if the Devil himself was chasing us. As we left San Antonio on April 19, we were hearing on our radio that the federal building in Oklahoma City had been bombed and the explosion had caused a lot of injuries.

When we arrived in Corpus Christi, the wind was blowing, I'm guessing, about 60 mph, and it continued to blow every day while we were there. The campground we parked in was right

by the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. For me, that wasn't good; I don't particularly like being that close to the water.

We headed into town a day or two later and were stopped at the edge of town and told we couldn't go any farther because there had been a bomb threat and they weren't letting anyone in for safety reasons.

After we finally found a place to have lunch, we started to return to our trailer when we were stopped again. This time we were told that a barge out on the water had been rammed and was leaking a poisonous gas, so we would have to wait several hours to return to our campsite. We did get back to our trailer in time to go to bed, but I imagined all night that I could smell that gas.

Next we went to McAllen, Texas, thinking we would spend a day or two there; however, when we headed into town the next day, again we were stopped, someone had called in a bomb threat to one of the businesses in that downtown area.

That was when we decided to pack up and return to good ol' safe and sound Colby. We have never been back to Texas, but to be truthful, I would like to return to San Antonio some day, because it was beautiful there on the River Walk. I know that no one had any control over people calling in bomb threats — at the time, they were being called in all over the country — but they don't have any control over earthquakes either, so why does Texas want a bio-lab?

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

