



Other Viewpoints

Governor's race needs substance

There is something curious afoot. Visit Sam Brownback's official gubernatorial Web site ... — and you find little of substance regarding the candidate.

There is a picture of the current U.S. senator, a replica of the state flag, the words "Sam Brownback for Governor," a field to make campaign contributions and an e-mail sign-up to "join the team."

That's it. There are no position statements, no biographical information, no lists of endorsements or accomplishments, nothing.

This might not be a problem except he is the only known candidate seeking to succeed Gov. Mark Parkinson. And the election is next year.

A fellow Republican, current Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, had his hat in the ring until last week. He ended his bid ... citing lackluster campaign contributions and general lack of support from the Grand Old Party. With no Democrats, Libertarians, Greens, Reformers or Constitutionalists in sight, Sen. Brownback simply has no competition.

While this likely is great news for the conservative Republican's campaign committee, it can't be good for the state of Kansas.

The Sunflower State is facing too many critical issues not to have spirited debate in both the primary and general election cycles. Kansas voters need to be aware of what the next executive plans to do about education, agriculture, energy, taxes, veterans, senior citizens, city-county funding, transportation, water, tourism, conservation, public safety and disaster recovery to name but a few topics of utmost importance....

We're disappointed Thornburgh captured so little support that he was forced to end his run. Now, not even the GOP primary contest looks like it will generate much debate.

Without competition, there is neither debate nor an informed electorate. Without competition, voters are left with Web sites such as brownback.com — where the only options are to join up or send money.

Kansans deserve much better than that.

— *The Hays Daily News, 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: jmorrison@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

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

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansan.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansan.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansan.com

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

ADVERTISING

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

Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales
hwoofter@nwkansan.com

Marlin Stramel - Advertising Sales
mstramel@nwkansan.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design
kballard@nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Tammy Withers - Office Manager
twithers@nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansan.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



Republicans need to re-invent party

The Republican Party finds itself lacking in youth and diversity in a country that is becoming younger and more diverse. The party is in desperate need of a new direction.

While I have no doubt that the "Grand Old Party" will eventually rise from the ashes of its latest defeats and seize control of the government some day in the distant future, I hope when that day comes, it will be a Republican Party that is more flexible than the lethargic group running the party today. So let me highlight what conservatives should do when the inevitable happens and they are back in power in Washington.

The Republicans claim to be the party of fiscal conservatism and small government. This should work to their advantage, because despite the last two elections, the country is still more conservative than liberal. A recent national Gallup Poll revealed that 40 percent of the people describe themselves as conservatives, while only 21 percent consider themselves liberals.

While I don't consider myself a conservative, I'm a supporter of fiscal conservatism. The problem with Republicans is they have occasionally deviated from their course and pushed policies that are not representative of a small government over the past 30 years.

Two out of the last three Republican presidents have been anything but fiscally conservative. The administrations of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush both ran up record deficits. And the second Bush administration was



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

one of the most intrusive governments America has had in quite some time, as it wire-tapped American citizens without their knowledge, held detainees in jail indefinitely without giving them access to a fair trial, tortured alleged terrorists in defiance of the Geneva conventions and tried to make marriage between law-abiding people illegal because some Americas are uncomfortable with the idea of them tying the knot.

Most of these policies were rubber-stamped by a complacent Republican majority. A return to fiscally conservative principles will need to occur in order for conservatives to retain legitimacy in the eyes of many Americans.

While returning to fiscally conservative politics is essential to the future of the Grand Old Party, it will not be enough if they simply go back to backing policies that enrich the wealthy and ignore the needs of the majority of the population. Conservatives could gain support from many of their current critics if they would support cutting taxes for middle class and low-income Americans instead of giving tax breaks to our country's wealthiest

citizens.

This way they will have supported a policy that strengthens America's middle and working class without abandoning conservative fiscal principles. It may anger some of their corporate allies, but it would go along way toward convincing people that Republicans are no longer the party that peddles populist rhetoric while secretly backing country club politics.

And last but not least, the Republicans should refrain from making religion and patriotism into political issues. In order to appease the religious right and paint their opponents as anti-American, many conservatives have gone out of their way to claim that their party has a monopoly over these two terms.

This tactic has turned off many Americans who understand these two terms can mean one thing to one person, but something totally different to another person. For one person or group to claim that their definitions of these two relativistic terms is more American than someone else's is arrogant.

I'm not sure if these changes in policy would make me vote Republican, but I think they would help breathe some new life into a party that currently lacks vision and direction.

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.

School class size will reflect tight budgets

Many medium and large school districts in Kansas are likely to have larger student-to-teacher ratios this fall. With most of school operating expenses going to salaries, state budget cuts leave administrators few options.

Reportedly, a few districts have notified all non-tenured staff they will not be rehired, but hope to rehire most if it becomes possible. Across Kansas, it appears that the number of "released" teachers, aides and "paraprofessionals" could be substantial.

The Legislative budget that cut base state aid per pupil from \$4,433 to \$4,400 last year, and then to \$4,280 for next year was based on an optimistic budget. Kansas tax revenues in May were dramatically less than predicted—about 60 percent below May 2008.

In this balanced-budget state, the governor will have to cut expenditures even more. Schools will not know how much money they will have until his decision in early July, when another month of tax revenue is known.

For middle- and large-sized school districts, bigger average class sizes are inevitable. Data at the latest state Board of Education meeting showed a sharp decrease in secondary teacher shortages due to "alternate route" teachers and to a contraction in hiring. Larger districts can save a faculty salary line by reducing from six teachers to just five in a field if they increase class sizes from 20-24 to 30.

That poses the question: what is the best size for a class?

I have returned from another lecture tour in China. I often visit their public-school classrooms, where the class minimum is 60 students! This is due not to a lack of money, but to a lack of qualified teachers.

Chinese classes of 60 students are well be-



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

haved and hard working. Their culture is different. There is great respect for teachers. And there is great responsibility on the shoulders of the only child who is ultimately responsible for the "social security" of two parents and four grandparents.

Their system works because each student knows that if he or she does not work hard, or causes any disruption, there is another student ready to take his or her place who will work hard and pay attention.

I would never suggest that one American teacher could handle 60 American students in one class. We come from a different history. But we can move toward slightly larger classes.

There is research that in elementary classrooms, smaller class sizes do give the teacher more time to provide individual attention to children. However, as we move into middle and high school levels and shift away from basic math and reading classes, there is no significant research that supports smaller classes always providing better outcomes. Maintaining discipline in a school with unruly students is a separate issue.

The question is: how many students are too many for involvement in classroom discussion and teacher interaction? A teacher can read eyes and faces in the first five to six seats in

a row; that means of classroom of 30-36 students.

With more students than that, a teacher has difficulty detecting who is following the topic, who understands, and who doesn't. A student further back than six seats is less likely to be involved in classroom discussions. And the higher the number, the lower the percent of time each student gets for participation and interaction.

In the 1980s, my secondary student teachers often had class loads of about 150 students per year; about six thousand students per 40-year career. Today, most of my student teachers will take positions where they teach fewer than 100 students per year, over one-third less "production" per career.

Yes, students have changed. So have the burdens and responsibilities of teachers. Yet America's production of scientists and Nobel prizewinners from those earlier large-class days was greater than international test comparisons suggest we are achieving today.

If students demonstrate responsibility in learning, and schools back off the non-teaching burdens and provide adequate teaching materials, there is no reason that the looming modest increase in class size is a disaster.

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.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

