

Other Viewpoints

Abuse protection can be taken too far

During the last legislative session, Kansas lawmakers added a single paragraph to a law already on the books, which addressed open records.

The addition, which totaled 20 words, sought to protect victims of domestic violence by sheltering the name, address, location and contact information for victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking.

The Hutchinson Police Department interpreted the law liberally, and decided that any information surrounding any domestic violence report would be hidden from public inspection.

That's not the intent behind the law, however, and by applying the law in an overreaching manner, law enforcement is protecting both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

The issue of what should and shouldn't become public surfaced after 39-year-old David Bowen died from injuries suffered Aug. 1.

Because the police bulletin listed the incident as a domestic violence case, no information was made public until after Bowen's death.

While the nature of this particular case may have made it difficult to find a clear course of action, most domestic violence cases are easier to sort out: there's a victim and there's an aggressor.

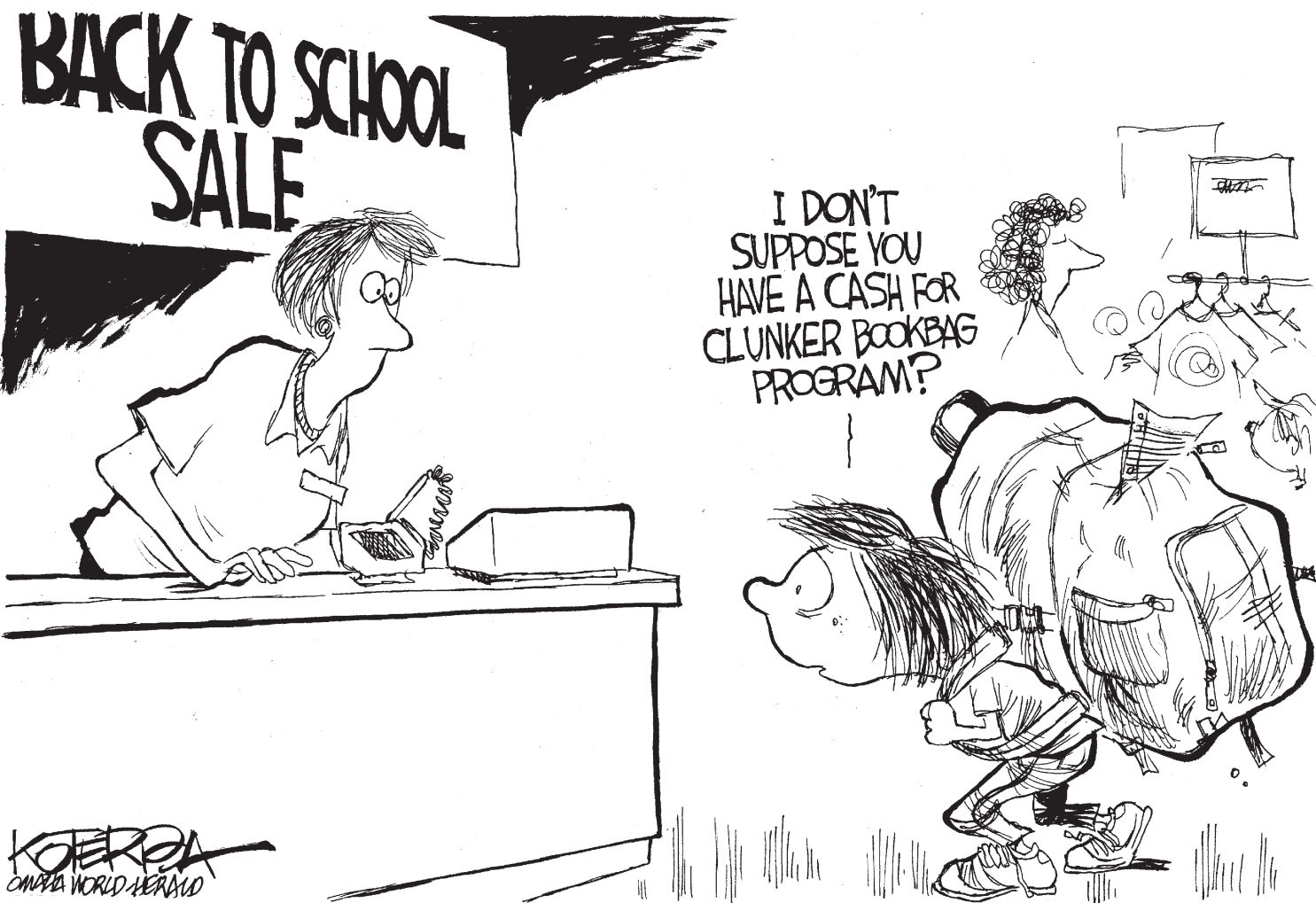
Advocates for domestic violence victims believe that additional secrecy is necessary to protect those victims from their abusers and give them a chance to make a fresh start.

That's the intent behind the change in the laws — not to hide or shelter everyone involved in a domestic violence incident. Certainly, the intent wasn't to protect those who commit domestic or sexual violence — and there's an inherent public safety interest in allowing people at large to know the identities of those who commit such crimes....

In an encouraging move, the leadership at the Hutchinson Police Department has agreed to review its policy of withholding all information from domestic violence cases.

Hopefully they'll realize that a law written to protect victims shouldn't be used to likewise shield those who create victims.

—The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press



Shine a light on domestic violence

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett is out of the hospital after learning the hard way what any police officer can tell you — the most dangerous place in America is between a feuding couple.

The mayor heard a woman cry as he was leaving the Wisconsin State Fair the other day and went to investigate, then began to call 911 on his cell phone. For his trouble, he got a thrashing with a metal pipe that put him in the hospital.

Anthony Peters, 20, was arrested Sunday in the attack. Police say he was drunk and wanted to see his 1-year-old daughter. At that, the mayor may have been lucky; the man reportedly had threatened to shoot anyone who got in his way.

Domestics, as the cops call them, happen day and night, in every town, in every branch of the American culture. They know no boundaries: religion, income, education, job status. Whenever and wherever people join together, some of them will fight.

Tough times tend to create more problems for couples, though, so the recession may be bringing out more violence.

Sometimes one partner in a relationship dominates and abuses the other. Often, but now always, it's the man. Sometimes, it's the



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

woman. Sometimes, both.

Often, the victim will refuse to testify or press charges against a mate who's been hauled off by the police. Sometimes that's just a con; sometimes it's a weird kind of love. Or a little of both.

And sometimes, things go on so long that they get out of hand. Someone is seriously hurt, or killed.

It happens here. We could name names.

It happens everywhere.

Often, society averts its eyes. Many cases of domestic abuse go unreported, even when witnesses could have done something. Even after the police have been called.

Why?

Society used to just condone "wife abuse." It was considered some sort of right for a married person to strike his or her spouse. Nobody else's business.

Sometimes, society feels it's none of anyone else's business. Until a woman is murdered, an innocent child dies, or a police officer answering a call for help is shot.

Then we all ask why nobody did anything. Because we didn't care? Because it was "none of our business."

Domestic cases often go unreported in the press. Many, most perhaps, go unreported to law enforcement. Even of those that are reported, few actually go to court.

There are people out there getting away with rape, assault, even murder.

None of our business?

I think not.

No problem can be solved by ignoring it. Society should shine the light of day on abusers. They should face, not just arrest, but public scorn, if guilty. Their crimes should never be a secret.

We — all of us — pay the price for domestic abuse. Isn't it about time we demanded an end to senseless violence?

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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Texting is not 'gud nuf' for learning

"AFAICT ppl Adctd2txt pebcak" reads the text message.

Translation: "As far as I can tell, people addicted to texting have a problem that exists between chair and keyboard."

There is a particularly egregious cell phone commercial that sings out that youngsters "text" at 70 words-a-minute while their parents can only "text" eight words a minute. This is of course the reverse of the truth. Using a full keyboard, I can easily type 50-words-per-minute, as can any trained secretary. Youngsters with two thumbs on a chiclet keyboard can't "type" but a fraction of that speed, and then only by abbreviating to the edge of comprehension as demonstrated above. The older generation typed fast and precisely. The new generation "texts" slowly and without elegance. Not very fast. But for this brave new teckie world, apparently "gud nuf."

California, similar to a half dozen "paperless" schools in Kansas, has adopted some online textbooks this fall, despite research showing that students read slower on screen. It's gud nuf.

Students also comprehend 30 percent less when they read on screen. That is now gud nuf, too.

Why go to the library when we now have the Internet? The first 10 pages of your web search will be from 60 to 95 percent websites



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

with wrong information. But the Internet is more convenient and therefore, you guessed it: gud nuf.

That 12 megapixel digital camera can really take beautiful high-resolution photos. But you can't send such big files as attachments. Need to drop that resolution down to newsprint halftone level for friends on the Internet. Pretty fuzzy. But gud nuf.

Download your music? Strained through the internet, it is not quite the quality of other media, but after a while, you don't notice the difference. Gud nuf.

Wow, did you see that IMAX movie at the CosmoSphere? Makes us think we are really there! Halloween Part 72 is pretty scary at the theater, too; not so scary on television, though. Can hardly wait to download movies on your cell phone? It won't be anywhere as exciting on that postage-stamp screen, but it will be [yawn] gud nuf.

So the online course only covers half of the

material of a face-to-face course. As long as we get our degrees — and a raise in salary — it's gud nuf.

Even though more people are reading newspapers than ever before, advertisers are moving their ad revenue to online. So who needs local or foreign news and in-depth investigations? Just 140 characters to tweet? No problem. Sound bites are — well — gud nuf.

Strangely, other developed countries are not adopting every new techno-fad at the break-neck speed we are. Boy are they behind! People continue reading books. They keep face-to-face teaching. They read newspapers. They still go to movies.

In the United States, futurists are actually telling us that we will not have to teach our children to read or write. Students will speak into a computer and it will write for them. And of course it will scan texts and read to them too.

When that future generation is dumb as a rock, unable to write or read on their own, and the rest of the world has passed us by, maybe then we will realize that "gud nuf" was not "good enough."

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. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area

should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

