



Other Viewpoints

Clean air coming to Kansas this year

A public smoking ban approved by the Kansas House this week would give the entire state the opportunity to share the same smoke-free environment Lawrence residents already enjoy.

The measure that will ban smoking in restaurants, bars, offices and other public places already had been approved by the Senate and is on its way to the desk of Gov. Mark Parkinson. He called for a statewide smoking ban in his State of the State message and already has promised to sign the bill into law. Kansas will join 24 other states with similar smoking bans, including the nation's top tobacco-producing state, North Carolina.

The ban will apply to retail stores, educational facilities, libraries, courtrooms, theaters, auditoriums and other public places and places of employment as well as public transportation, such as buses, taxis and limousines. The bill obviously doesn't apply to private homes and grants exemptions for smoking areas in nursing homes and long-term care facilities, tobacco shops and private clubs.

It also grants an exemption for gambling facilities — dog or horse tracks or casinos — operated under contract with the Kansas Lottery. Rep. Brenda Landwehr, chairwoman of the House Health and Human Services Committee, focused on that exemption in opposing the bill, which she called "a farce," saying its restrictions didn't go far enough.

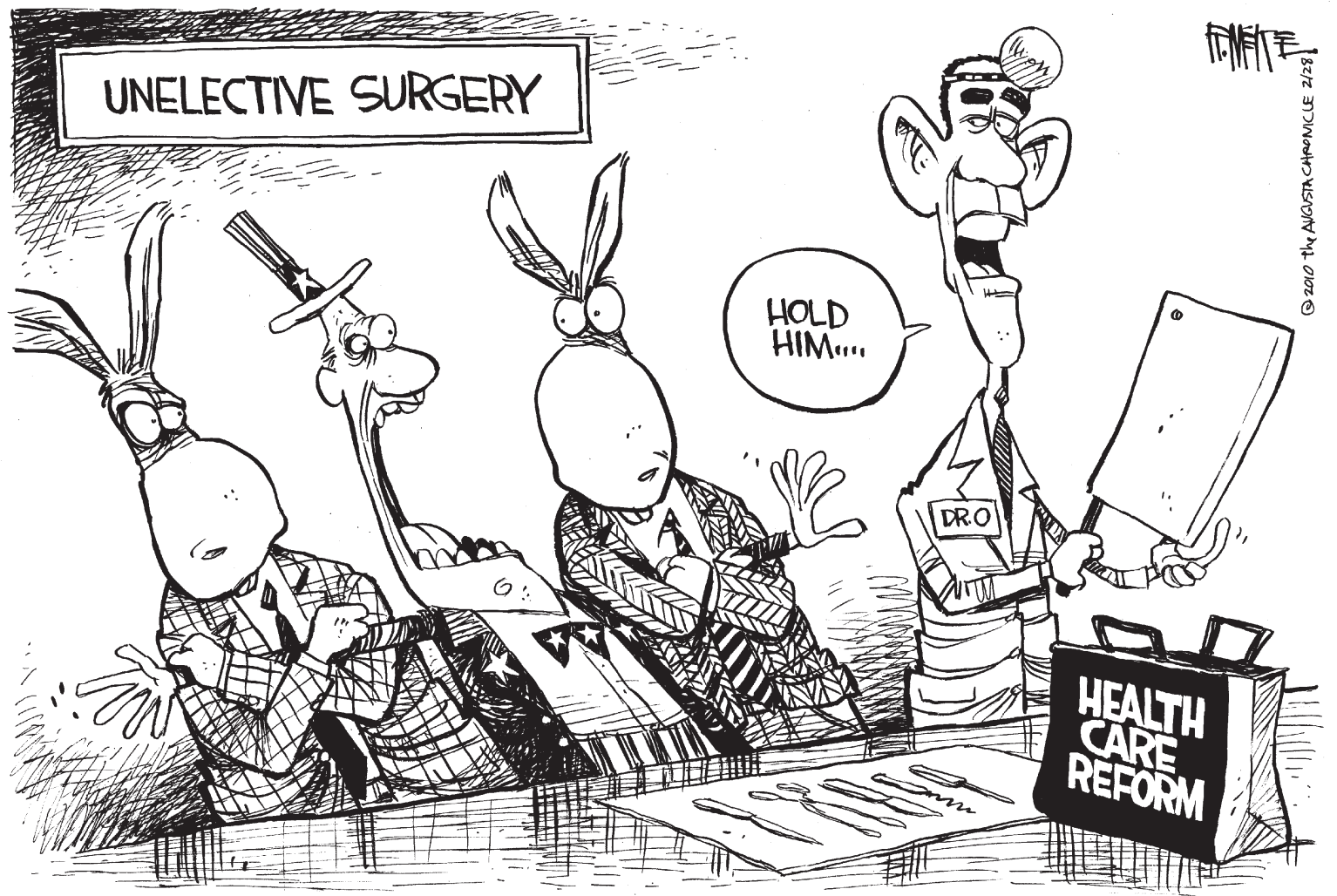
It is a valid point that exempting state gambling facilities could be unfair to some private businesses, but it's hard to take that argument seriously from Landwehr, who had proposed a smoking ban that was far less restrictive than the one that was passed and also would forbid cities, like Lawrence, from passing any local ordinances that were more restrictive than the state law.

Others opposed the measure on the basis it would have a devastating impact on business at small bars and taverns. That fear hasn't been borne out in Lawrence and other cities with local smoking bans. In fact, it seems likely that many such businesses are gaining more trade from people who enjoy a smoke-free environment. Hopefully, those who opposed the measure will find it has little impact on their businesses and the state will soon reconsider the exemption on its own gambling properties.

Secondhand smoke is more than a bother; it's a serious health issue. Health officials estimate that about 4,000 Kansans die each year from smoking-related disease including 300 through exposure to secondhand smoke.

The new restrictions will take effect July 1. It will be an adjustment for some Kansans, but it will be a change for the better.

— Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press



Powerful words take on God

The power words have. One simple little want ad has stirred more complaints than we've had in years.

"God, what is your problem? Are you asleep, deaf, on vacation or dead? Are you incapable, indifferent or just plain cruel?"

Someone paid to put that in the Colby paper and the *Country Advocate* for two weeks. I'm not sure who; I haven't asked, and although I presume the person who took the ad wrote down his or her address and phone number, I don't want to know.

As a Christian, I suppose, I'd like to offer whatever friendship and solace I could. One pastor wrote a column outlining a possible response. Someone else paid to put a "reply from God" in the want ads last week.

As an editor, I've fielded calls from angry readers who wondered why we would print such a thing.

"I don't like it," was a common thread. "I don't think you should print it."

In America, that's a scary sort of demand. I'm glad these people aren't in charge.

In America, we have free speech and freedom to worship because we live under the First Amendment, the first and greatest of the 10 amendments known as the Bill of Rights.

The first is not only the bedrock of our freedom, it's a marvel of spare and ingenious writing, only 44 words and barely a half dozen



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

lines of text:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

There you have the things that make us free, freedom to worship as we please, to speak our minds, to publish as we want, to assemble and to petition our republican government. No other nation has quite the full package.

And many Americans would throw it out the window tomorrow.

"Is it legal to run that?" one caller asked.

"I think it's blasphemy," another shouted.

"You shouldn't run it." But if the only newspaper in town won't print unpopular writings, even an anguished attack on the Lord, then what good is freedom of speech?

No, it's not illegal to rail against the Lord,

your God. Many have done it before; read your Bible.

Yes, it might be blasphemy, but don't you think the writer had some reason to arrive at a place where he or she felt that way?

You callers claim you're Christian, but where is your charity? How would Jesus answer this person?

How did the Lord answer Job? Or his Son, on the cross at the hour of his death:

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mark 16:34, 21st Century King James Version)

I wouldn't pretend to have all the answers for this person — I have enough trouble keeping my own life in line — but I do back his right to his lament.

I'd hate to see America come to the point where someone couldn't print something unpopular, especially about religion. These freedoms are at the very core of what this country stands for.

The Founders left us neither a Christian nation nor a state religion. They made it possible for us to believe and to speak as we wish. No greater gift could have been given.

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.

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.

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Wrestling coach inspires others

To the Editor:

My good friend Rich Epp recently informed me that Steve Lampe is finishing his 33rd and final season as head coach of the Colby Community College wrestling program.

I spent five years as head coach of the men's basketball program, from 1999 to 2004, and one of the first people that I was inspired by in Colby was Steve Lampe. I'm sure Steve didn't realize how important he was in helping me build a winner in basketball.

I was hired in March of 1999 and Steve had just finished winning the National Championship. The 2000 and 2003 seasons brought two national runner-up finishes for his wrestling program.

Steve Lampe showed me that it is possible to have a successful program in a small western Kansas town. While it's tough to compare junior college wrestling to junior college basketball, what is possible is to look at the parallels to success in sports and in life. Steve Lampe, while controversial at times — Lampe and I didn't always see things from the same viewpoint — is one of the premiere "winners" in sports. He built a wrestling empire on the High Plains.

The Ostermann family had five great years in Colby. We built our family, raising three of our four babies in the community. We built friends, at the college, at Sacred Heart Church and in town. We created a winning basketball program, built by the community and for the community in similar ways to those Steve Lampe used to build his wrestling empire.

Steve Lampe, I am sure, has inspired many former players and friends. He has inspired many towards great things. I know he helped inspire me and the players I coached while at Colby. Let us all look at Steve Lampe's career as an inspiration to do great things.

Great things can take place right there in a



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

great community with great people: greatness on the High Plains.

Thanks Steve, and always the best in the future.

Go Trojans,

"Coach O," Brian Ostermann
Women's Associate Head Basketball Coach
Texas Christian University, Fort Worth
GO FROGS!

Census counts

To the Editor:

A special delivery is on its way to every Kansas household. As required by our Constitution, the Census Bureau counts every resident in the U.S. every 10 years. This year, the census forms was to be mailed or delivered to every residence on Monday.

The form has 10 questions about your age, date of birth and whether you rent or own a home. It will not ask for your Social Security number. The information collected by the Census Bureau is used strictly for statistical purposes. By law, personal information cannot be shared with anyone, including other government agencies.

The Census Bureau is an indispensable resource for my work on behalf of the people of Kansas. The bureau provides a picture of the population through the census. The count

is important, as it determines our state's congressional representation. Other surveys conducted by the bureau provide details on trends in consumer spending, household income and health care. These metrics are central for forging policies that ensure the continued growth and prosperity of our state.

Should you have questions, please contact one of my offices in Overland Park, Dodge City, Topeka or Wichita. You can also contact the regional Census Bureau call center in Kansas City at (816) 994-2000. For general information, go to 2010.census.gov/2010census/.

Pat Roberts, Dodge City
U.S. Senator

Where to write, call

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

