

## Other Viewpoints

### Sweet sugar tax not good diet plan

A bill introduced this week in the Kansas Legislature looks to sugar-filled soft drinks to sweeten the state's coffers. The measure was introduced by John Vratil, R-Leawood, and would up the price of a 12-ounce soft drink roughly 10 cents by adding a 1 penny tax for every teaspoon of sugar used in the drink. It would raise approximately \$90 million in the next fiscal year, if approved.

Besides serving as a stop-gap for the state's porous bank account, Vratil said the sugar tax would help fight the epidemic of obesity and diabetes by curbing consumption of syrupy soft drinks.

Such a plan poses several potential pitfalls. In essence, soft drinks would enter a new realm in which they would earn a classification as a "sin." There are excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco, and if this legislation moves ahead, there would be an excise tax on soft drinks.

One has to wonder how government can determine what is so sinful, or harmful, that it warrants its own special tax. Furthermore, where will the line be drawn on this practice? Will candy bars be next? What about birthday cake mixes or a cherry pie with ice cream? Even old-fashioned pancake syrup one day could find itself on a list of high-calorie foods that, directly or indirectly, cause health problems.

The other fatal flaw in this plan is that it is impossible for the state to find success on two fronts — one to increase revenue, the other to reduce consumption of soft drinks.

Like most excise taxes, this proposal hopes to gain public support on the supposed benefits to the public while silently relying on the revenue to finance state operations.

If the state really wanted to curb soft drink consumption, the proposed tax would be much higher than 1 cent per teaspoon of sugar. Instead, it is set at a rate that is tolerable and likely would leave consumption unaffected.

We get it: Kansas is flat broke, and the Legislature is pulling at any thread of untapped revenue it can find. The solution, though, isn't to be found in a special tax for any food or drink that could be harmful to the public.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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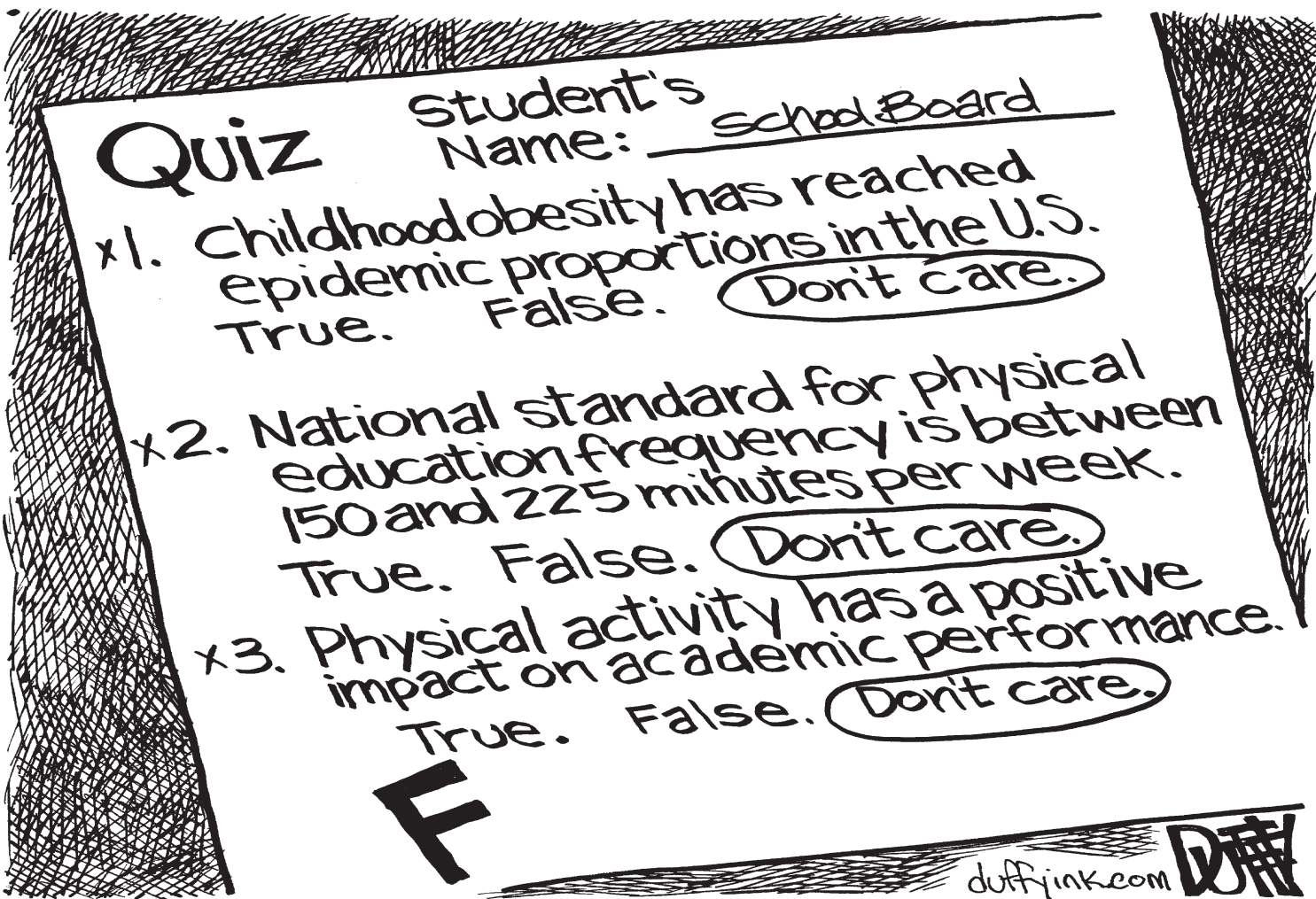
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## Torture is in the eye of the beholder

An excerpt taken from op-ed writers Leonard S. Rubenstein and Stephen N. Xenakis in the *New York Times* for Feb. 20:

"After five years of investigation, the Justice Department has released its findings regarding the government lawyers who authorized waterboarding and other forms of torture during the interrogation of suspected terrorists at Guantánamo Bay and elsewhere. The report's conclusion, that the lawyers exercised poor judgment but were not guilty of professional misconduct, is questionable at best. Still, the review reflects a commitment to a transparent investigation of professional behavior.

"In contrast, the government doctors and psychologists who participated in and authorized the torture of detainees have escaped discipline, accountability or even internal investigation."

What those writers go on to describe in how professionals established means of extracting information from detainees is unbelievable.

Handcuffing and tying to the ceiling while feet were shackled and anchored to the floor, sleep deprivation of up to 180 hours, exposure to cold water until just before hypothermia sets in, waterboarding and a host of other methods were not determined to be over the top and torturous. It appears that as long as the detainee didn't die until after they were returned to their cell, the treatment was not torture.

We now know that the conditions and treatment reported by our own veterans who had been held captive by the enemy were perfectly legitimate, humane treatment. After all, those who are able to describe and show evidence of



**Ken Poland**

• Ken's World

their treatment survived to tell the stories.

It must not have been torture. It was only temporary discomfort and emotional stress. The ones who died? They were just collateral loss associated with war. Both sides accept that as inevitable conditions associated with difference of opinion on who is waging a just war.

I guess all us good Christians who are fearful of being unpatriotic should just play like the monkeys, who cover their, mouths, ears, and eyes. Obviously, those bleeding-heart liberals never saw those little monkeys displayed on the mantle. And, well, even those of you who don't profess Christianity better cover your mouths, ears, and eyes, or you, too, will be run out of town for being unpatriotic. Just don't question our military and political leaders, unless, of course, they are on the wrong side of the partisan aisle.

We now know that those Puritans who fled England and Europe to escape religious persecution were innocent of any persecution or torture after gaining their freedom in the New World. Putting people in stocks in the of town square and chucking tomatoes at them was just enhanced persuasion to bring folks into compliance with their new-found freedom.

Burning at the stake was a perfectly legitimate punishment for noncompliance with local community interpretation of the Scriptures. And, definitely burning on a cross erected in the town square was just punishment for those witches and sorcerers who were questioning authority. If they didn't want to burn, they could just recant and toe the line with the folks who had the power to control the colony.

We can find no evidence that fair trial, equal rights to freedom of thought, and religious freedom were being violated. The treatment of prisoners on both sides of the white man/ native American struggle would have stood the test for today's interpretation of proper human behavior. If the victims died, they obviously deserved to.

Come on folks, let's cut out the blind partisan loyalty and start holding both sides of the aisle to honest and open debate that will eliminate human suffering for all of mankind and not just our immediate friends and family.

No one of us is less valuable than the wealthiest, most powerful individual in the world, and no one of us is more valuable than the poorest and weakest. We all have a ticket that put us on this spinning world and we all are destined to stay on the ride until our ticket is cancelled.

I'm not the conductor, but who hired or elected you to be the conductor who cancels tickets?

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at [rcwinc@cheerful.com](mailto:rcwinc@cheerful.com).

## Tea Partyers protest to inform

To the Editor:

I'd like to help Andy Heintz clear up his opinion of the Tea Party movement.

The people you see on the news in this movement are not much different than the peace and anti-war movements of the '60s, the racial unrest and ensuing riots of the '70s, the farmer's movement in the '80s, the riots in the '90s with the Rodney King case or Cindy Sheehan's anti-war movement in the 2000s. They were all wanting people and/or government to hear them.

Yes, there were segments of each of these that were volatile, even violent, but for the most part they were peaceful protests. If your research history, there were protests in the '30s, '40s and the '50s, too. Anytime there are protests of any kind, there is always a fringe of militancy. Tea Partyers are not trying to overthrow the government; they are trying to curb government's control over the people.

The debt in this country is mind boggling. To go from a \$3.9 trillion debt to over \$12 trillion in little more than a year's time is unreal. To redistribute wealth is not only un-American, it is nothing less than government theft on a grand scale!

Tea Partyers are peaceful for the most part. They are trying to inform the people of what is going on in Washington, because we, as a nation, have ever so slowly and trustingly given our freedom to the government.

The freedoms laid out in the Constitution have been under attack for several generations. The Constitution limits the Federal government's power over us, the people. Yes, limits, government's power!

Tea Partyers are people who are and have



### Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

been fed up with the evisceration of the Constitution. This document is the simplest and most powerful in the world, because it limits government and gives the people immeasurable freedom. Tea Partyers understand it. Tea Partyers do not want to lose that freedom for themselves or their posterity, their children and the generations to follow.

The Tea Party movement is not a political party. They have no formal leader, no one political party. In fact, the movement is made up of disgruntled people from all political spectrums, all walks of life, all races, creeds and colors, the rich, poor, middle class, workers, retired, young, very young, Democrats, Republicans and Independents.

Maybe disgruntled isn't the correct word. Disgusted is possibly a better word. They are disgusted by the loss of jobs coupled with higher taxes. Disgusted by the total disregard for the uncontrolled spending coupled with the United States being monetarily indebted to foreign countries. Disgusted by the outright disdain and contempt with which lawmakers regard — and disregard — their constituents. Disgusted by politics as usual.

That "hope and change" mantra goes out the window with each passing day. They are sick

and tired of the lies that sprout forth like new grass on a nearly daily basis.

The federal government has way overstepped it's bounds. It has taken over many aspects of our lives that it should never have a say in. People are sick and tired of it!

I'm sure I'm not the only one in this city, or this county or even in this state who feels that way! If the Tea Party has awakened the sleeping giant of Freedom, God bless them! They simply want government to leave Americans alone and return to governing by the simplest and easiest document in the world to abide by, the U.S. Constitution.

It's that simple. Not hard to understand, not hard to follow. The Bible gives us the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, easy to understand and follow.

In my humble opinion, most of the senators and congressmen in Washington have either not read or not understood the beautifully simple document that is the Constitution. It says what it means and means what it says. Why else would new countries around the world try to duplicate it in one form or another?

It is a document even the most illiterate can understand when you read it to them, simple enough an eighth grader can understand it.

Keep in mind, of the men who signed the Constitution over 200 years ago, not many were college graduates. Some were rich, some poor, many were farmers and almost all of them lost everything for their freedom.

If it takes a new Tea Party movement to get people to recognize something is wrong with the government, not the governed, today, so be it. I will call myself a Tea Partier with pride.

Jari Skiles, Colby

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

