

Free Press Viewpoint

House race heads into back stretch

An open seat in the U.S. House of Representatives is a tough nut to crack.

In a district like the Kansas First, when there's an open seat, no one likely candidate can step up and fill it. There's no one known across that massive area that everyone will recognize and want to vote for.

There really isn't anyone with statewide name recognition, so what you get is people with a little fame around their home town: state legislators, businessmen and women, city and county government officials, educators and others.

With a district as large as the 69-county First, you'd be hard pressed to find someone who is really known across the district, which is what we've seen this year. Alan Jilka and Monte Shadwick might be well known in Salina, where they've both served on the city commission, but they are less well known or even unknown in Colby, Emporia or Liberal.

This problem was well illustrated at a candidate forum Monday on Smoky Hills Public Television. We had seven candidates in the Republican primary and one in the Democratic primary, all up on stage together. Unless the viewer really followed politics, he or she might recognize one or two of the names, but the rest would blur together.

So each candidate had to work to distinguish himself or herself from the rest. Tim Huelskamp, a state senator from Fowler, in southwest Kansas, even opened with that Monday night, trying to list the ways he is different from his competition.

So was anyone successful? Did any one of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves rise above the rest?

The answer is: not really. The Republicans stuck to their Republican principals. They all talked down the national health care law, advocating health-care reform aimed at affordability and accessibility. Almost all of them put forward the attitude that Kansas knows better than Washington. Shadwick and Sue Boldra came out for term limits. They were against "cap and trade" limits on fossil fuel across the board. Rob Wasinger called that "nonsense."

Jilka, as the sole Democrat, distinguished himself somewhat by default. He portrayed himself as a centrist while the others held to the right. He supported his party's health care bill while opposing cap and trade.

He joined the Republicans in several issues like the national debt and immigration, but said immigration needed to be handled delicately because much of the economy of southwest Kansas depends on immigrant labor. Everyone said they would balance the budget.

Where there any bold proposals? New ideas that make you think? Not many.

But is it a good or bad thing to have many candidates so close in their attitudes? Both.

It's good in that Republican voters have a lot of choice, but instead of coming down to issues it'll come down to the person. Do they want a fighter or a negotiator? Do they want a man or a woman? Do they want someone who lives closer to them?

But when the general election rolls around, the Republicans will be running a candidate who probably got less than 30 percent of the party's votes. More competition lessens the chance that the GOP candidate will have a mandate.

As for the Democrats, having one voice articulating that side of the debate can either set him apart – or allow him to be drowned out. We'll have to wait and see what happens.

—Kevin Bottrell

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Argyle memories remind of school days

While watching a television show recently, I saw that a man who was telling others what to wear was wearing an argyle sweater.

These sweaters, knitted with a pattern of colored diamond shapes, were popular when I was in high school in the early 1950s. This really brought back memories for me, not only because my husband Jim wore an argyle sweater vest in the '50s, but also because I used to have a pair of argyle stockings.

When my friend Pat (Swanson) Young and I were in junior high, now called middle school, we purchased matching knee-high, bright-colored, argyle stockings while we were at a music festival in Norton. We wore a lot of knee-high stockings in those days, rolled our blue jeans up to the middle of our calves, and finished off the look with two-toned saddle ox-fords.

Well, little did Pat and I know, but Pat's dad, Neb, had formed the habit of listening in on our telephone conversations from the upstairs extension when Pat called me from her bedroom in their basement. It so happened, after we had worn our stocking to school for two or three days without bothering to wash them, Pat called me and suggested we wear our stockings again that day. You have to remember that people didn't wash clothes as often in those days, because they washed in ringer washing



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

machines, not automatics, and usually washed only one day a week.

By this time, my stockings were getting pretty smelly and stiff, so I said, "I just can't wear my sox again today, because they need to be washed."

Pat replied, "Well, just beat them against the basement wall; that's what I do."

That's when Neb just couldn't control himself any longer and burst out laughing. His cover was blown and Pat and I were a lot more careful with what we talked about on the phone from that time on.

I called Pat the other day to get her permission to tell this story, and she confessed that she and Mary Laughterbach once had a contest to see who could wear their jeans the longest without washing them. Pat said she used the beating-on-the-wall method to win that contest, too.

Pat and I had a long conversation that day

about some of the things we used to enjoy, and one of the times we talked about was when she and I would go to visit Pat's aunt and uncle, the Homer Wades.

They had a large family and were all musical, just like Pat's family. Pat's mom, Mary, played the piano and Neb played the saxophone. We would all sing together at the Wades. Homer, who had a lot of energy for his age, would jump up in the middle of a song and dance a jig while everyone clapped in time to the music.

Homer was a wiry little man who worked for the city of Colby, driving the city's maintainer (grader) to level the dirt streets. (Colby had a lot of those in those days.) He always dragged a big chain behind the maintainer, and when anyone asked him why he was dragging that chain, his reply would be, "It's a whole lot easier then tryin' to push it."

I'm really looking forward to June and Colby High School's All School Reunion. It will be so much fun to see my old school friends and talk about all of the things we used to do and about what they are doing today. I hope a lot of them come home for the occasion.

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.

Trees help provide drinking water

By John Rosenow

Arbor Day Foundation

When we think of forests, majestic trees, precious wildlife, and clean, fresh air might come to mind. We probably don't think about the water we drink.

We should.

When you turn on your faucet this Arbor Day, take a moment and think about the important role trees play to make sure what comes out of the tap is healthy and clean.

Most people know that trees produce oxygen that we breathe and clean the air by acting as giant filters, removing harmful particles and pollutants. But you may not be aware that trees work just as hard to protect and purify our water sources, including those that provide drinking water for millions of Americans every day.

Trees improve water quality by slowing rain as it falls to the earth and helping it soak into the soil. They also prevent soil from eroding into our waterways, reduce storm-water runoff and lessen flood damage. They serve as natural filters to protect our streams, rivers and lakes.

Forests are the source of drinking water for more than 180 million people, 59 percent of the U.S. population. Forests help protect vital water sources such as sparkling mountain streams filled with melting snow, healthy reservoirs and lakes and our nation's vast web of rivers.

However, our forested areas are shrinking at an alarming rate. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that more than 40 million acres of private forest could be lost in the next 40 years.

Why is that important? As Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said, "While most Americans live in urban areas, most of us depend on rural lands, particularly forest lands, for clean water and a healthy climate."

One example of an urban area that depends

Other Opinions

• John Rosenow
Arbor Day Foundation

on forested land for water is New York. In the late 1990s, city leaders balked at a \$6 billion water treatment system and instead opted to go with natural landscape management to clean the water it receives from the Catskill/Delaware watershed in upstate New York. The focus is on creating conservation easements along streams and reservoirs and protecting forest lands to keep sediment and runoff from entering the water supply.

The watershed provides most of New York's daily supply of drinking water, more than 1 billion gallons each day. New Yorkers enjoy some of the cleanest, healthiest drinking water in the world.

Millions of Californians rely on crystal-clear water flowing from Plumas and other National Forests to quench their thirst. Melting snow and rain water flow from the Plumas into the Feather River and eventually winds up in the Sacramento River. This supply relies on the entire ecosystem, which includes trees, to keep it pristine until it reaches taps throughout central and northern California. This is just one example of how our National Forests help clean the water.

These solutions are an alternative to manufactured water treatment systems and are beneficial in so many ways. Unfortunately, the conventional response is too often to pay for expensive artificial treatment systems rather than rely on natural resources.

One way to protect and clean our water sup-

ply is to plant trees, and the need to replant our nation's forests is vital. The Forest Service has a backlog of 1 million acres in National Forests alone that need replanting because of damage from fire, insects and disease.

There is no substitute for clean water. Water is a vital resource that we rely on every day. We can't create something else to take its place.

But we can plant trees.

We enjoy trees for many reasons – their shade on a warm day, the energy they save when they're planted around our homes, the beautiful food they provide, the songbirds they bring close by.

Remember the role trees play in keeping our drinking water clean. As you celebrate Arbor Day this year, don't take your clean drinking water for granted when you turn on the tap. America's trees worked hard to help deliver that refreshing glass of water.

John Rosenow is the founder and chief executive of the nonprofit Arbor Day Foundation.

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