



## Other Viewpoints

### Southwest Airlines would help Kansas

For decades, talk of landing a low-fare carrier at Wichita Mid-Continent Airport started with Southwest Airlines. And abruptly ended.

"Forget Southwest. Yes, it's the discount airline of choice, but it probably won't be coming to Wichita in any of our lifetimes," an *Eagle* editorial lamented in 2000.

If the problem wasn't the Right Amendment, that antiquated legislation limiting air service at Dallas' Love Field; it was Wichita's market size. Plus, a 2001 study indicated that a third of the people driving to other airports to avoid Mid-Continent's high fares were doing so to fly Southwest, meaning a move to serve Wichita would cannibalize the carrier's own regional passengers.

But according to an article by reporter Molly McMillin in Friday's *Eagle*, conversations have been going on for at least a year and a half about Southwest serving Wichita to Las Vegas, Dallas and to Chicago through St. Louis. According to one source, the carrier has sought \$3 million to offset startup costs and more to cover losses for at least the first two years. One timeline reportedly would have the deal made by September to start service in June 2011.

"This is an opportunity the city CAN'T miss," responded one Kansas.com reader.

It's hard to disagree, putting pursuit of a Southwest deal on a par with ensuring that the state's \$5 million annual commitment to affordable air service survives the Legislature's difficult budget process this month.

Bringing Southwest to Wichita would deliver untold economic benefits to the area. That's not just pie in the sky.

Wichita, Sedgwick County, the state and the region have eight years of proof in the form of the Fair Fares initiative, which has pooled public dollars to variously lure AirTran Airways and Frontier Airlines to Mid-Continent.

The results in leveraging low prices and boosting ridership across the board on the routes served — in a decade that saw two recessions — have been dramatic enough to persuade even some die-hard free marketers that subsidies have their place when it comes to Kansas' largest airport....

Signing Southwest also might reassure taxpayers uneasy about the city's plan to build a new \$150 million terminal at Mid-Continent, perhaps to open in 2013.

These are unbelievably tough budget times for every government. But any political resistance to going deeper into the air-subsidy business should wane at the potential for what Southwest could do for south central Kansas and the state as a whole, especially at a time when every business and job counts.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*  
**mr**

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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

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## Faith deserves broader discussion

Religion and its influence on politics continues to be a hot-button issue. At its worst, the argument of the role of religion in politics is framed as a debate between Bible thumpers and secular liberals.

I recently received a letter from former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich on behalf of some religious group, whose name escapes me at this time, that demonized the American Civil Liberties Union as being anti-God and anti-Christian.

Why this organization thought I was one of its ilk is a mystery to me. I agree with the union on most issues and disagree with them on a couple of things, but I don't think it would be contradictory to be a supporter of the group and a God-fearing Christian at the same time.

There is nothing strange about being simultaneously a religious person and a supporter of the separation of church and state. And if the union is anti-Christian, then it is also anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist, anti-Pagan, anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish.

I would argue our government's refusal to promote one religion over the rest has helped all religions to thrive in this country, and it has also allowed religious minorities to be free of persecution. While it's true that some groups, including Jews, Mormons, Catholics and various Native American tribes, were persecuted by Protestant majorities in our country's past, over the years the United States has made huge strides when it comes to tolerating opposing religions.

Instead of using divisive terms like "Bible Thumpers" and "religious zealots" and polarizing, arrogant terms like "family values," the American public and the news media should look to build bridges of understanding between



**Andy Heintz**

### • Wildcat Ramblings

people who hold different opinions about what role religion should play in public life.

I have never bought into the idea that it's possible to totally erase religion's role in politics. And I'm not convinced that taking religion out of politics would be a good thing. Most Americans are religious, and religion tends to play a role in shaping a person's moral values and world view.

While it's true that people have used religion to promote violence for centuries, it is equally true that religious beliefs have led people to dedicating their lives to helping the less fortunate and creating a more peaceful world. I've always felt how a person interprets any major religion says more about the person than the religion.

Since religion plays a role in shaping people's moral values and viewpoints, and the majority of people in America are religious, the viewpoints of our country's politicians are likely to be influenced by their religious beliefs.

I'm guessing religion plays a role in shaping politicians views on issues that on the surface seem to have no connection with theology. For example, a politician's vote for health-care reform could be influenced by Bible passages that harped on caring for the sick, since one of the major parts of the plan was to stop insur-

ance companies from denying care to people with pre-existing conditions.

Some Christians and Jews who oppose health care reform would object to this idea, which is their right. One person's interpretation of what the Bible is saying can be different from another's.

Many so-called progressives are leery of organized religion's role in politics and in society in general. They think religion creates division and makes people value one group over another.

I understand their worries, but I think they are being overly pessimistic. While I share some of their concerns and agree with them about certain things, I think they underestimate the positive role religion has played in promoting values such as helping the less fortunate and rejecting greed.

While I don't subscribe to any one religion, some influence me more than others. And I think all of the major religions have some positive messages in them that most people would have a hard time disagreeing with. I was raised as a Lutheran and I took some positive things away from reading the Bible, even though I'm open to learning about the beliefs practiced by other major religions.

Religion is and will continue to be an important part of peoples lives. We will never agree on everything, and there is nothing wrong with admitting that there are some areas where major religions differ. But surely we could learn to respect each others beliefs without being hamstrung by artificial political correctness.

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.

## Early childhood money in danger

To the Editor:

Early childhood education programs reach children when their brains are growing the most. Scientists know that 90 percent of a child's brain architecture is established before age 5. Everything they learn is built on the strength of that foundation.

Evidence shows early childhood programs equip at-risk children to succeed in school. The Kansas Legislature recognized the importance of these efforts when it created the Children's Initiative Fund and designated early childhood education as the chief beneficiary of these dollars.

The fund has responsibly funneled these dollars to evidence-based programs, like Early Head Start, Healthy Families and Pre-K services. However, because of the state's budget shortfall, legislators are proposing cutting up to 45 percent of the budget for these programs.

We understand the need to share in solving our budget problems, however, it is unfair for children to take a disproportionate amount.

Parents, grandparents and advocates for children need to contact their state legislators this week to remind them of the commitment Kansas has made to early childhood programs. Children need grown-ups who will speak up on behalf of their future.

We cannot lose a generation of productive Kansans because of poor budget decisions. Time is running out; please take action now.

Karen Griffiths, Norton board chair, Kansas Children's Service League



### Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

### Child care serves invaluable purpose

To the Editor:

The availability of quality child care in a town is essential for a stable workforce. People who do not have dependable care for their kids have more frequent absences from work and less productivity on their job.

According to a 2004 report released by Cornell University, inadequate child care coverage creates a breakdown leading to employee absences which "cost businesses \$3 billion annually in the United States."

The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies states, "over 11 million children under age 5 spend a portion of their day every week in the care of someone other than their mother." The child-care industry is one of the most important and yet most overlooked in the nation.

The U.S. Department of Labor describes the

nature of the work of a child care provider as "Child care workers nurture, teach, and care for children who have not yet entered kindergarten. They also supervise older children before and after school.

"These workers play an important role in children's development by caring for them when their parents are at work or are away for other reasons or when the parents place their children in care to help them socialize with children their age.

"In addition to attending to children's health, safety, and nutrition, child care workers organize activities and implement curricula that stimulate children's physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth. They help children explore individual interests, develop talents and independence, build self-esteem, learn how to get along with others and prepare for more formal schooling."

Today is Provider Appreciation Day. Smart Start Northwest Kansas encourages you to celebrate the day by acknowledging the valuable contribution child care providers make to the economic wellbeing of your community and the future of our next generation of community leaders. For ideas on ways to honor your child care provider, contact the Smart Start office at (785) 465-9103.

Karen Merryman, Colby Professional Development Coordinator Smart Start Northwest Kansas

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

