



Free Press Viewpoint

Campaign attacks don't change record

The Republican race for Senate heated up last week, with the No. 2 candidate showing just how desperate he is by launching attack ads against Rep. Jerry Moran.

How desperate? Some of the "charges" involved votes in the state Senate nearly 15 years ago on tax changes that even Rep. Todd Tiahrt once said he would have supported.

The truth is, as a congressman, Rep. Moran has a nearly unblemished record of conservative thinking. He's voted against every kind of tax and spending increase, even the multi-billion-dollar "bailout" plans promoted in the last Congress by President George W. Bush and the Republican leadership of the time.

Mr. Moran noted that during the Bush years, he'd been one of the few Republicans against the No Child Left Behind Act, basically a multi-billion federal takeover of local schools, and had even voted against the hugely expensive federal "COBRA" rules governing privacy at hospitals and clinics.

But desperate candidates will do desperate things. Mr. Tiahrt has denied that he's the underdog, but more and more polls show him trailing the veteran western Kansas congressman.

It's true that Rep. Moran seems to have a much broader base of support across Kansas, appealing to both conservatives and moderates. His conservatism seems to be based in sound, traditional GOP thinking about spending and taxes. He's never been afraid to buck the White House or the leadership, even when it's his own party.

We can remember talking to Rep. Roy Blunt of Missouri when he was the Republican whip in the House, basically the enforcer for the speaker. Mr. Moran, he said, caused him a lot of trouble because he followed his own conscience, not the party's.

What's wrong with that?

Out here in the Big First district, we know Jerry Moran. We know his record and we know what kind of congressman he's been. He's the guy who's visited every county in the huge district — now 69 of 'em — every year, staying in touch with Main Street. The guy whose family remained in Hays, to keep him in touch with home. The guy who came back nearly every weekend of the year.

And the guy who voted against taxes, spending and outrageous earmarks every chance he got.

That's the guy most of us will be voting for in August, not some fellow from Wichita who puts out shrill attack ads. Our friend, neighbor and representative, Jerry Moran.

We'll be proud to see him advance to the Senate.

— Steve Haynes



Trip to 8,000 feet a step back in spring

We took the Memorial Day weekend off and headed for Colorado for a few days in the mountains.

It's as weird going from grass-green Kansas to the high country as it was going to Georgia in early spring.

Here at home, my garden is growing, the trees are all leafed out and the flowers are blooming.

That's what we saw in Georgia in late March, while we were still struggling to get the garden tilled and most of the trees were bare.

At 8,000 to 9,000 feet, the aspens and cottonwoods (about the only leafy trees up there) are just starting to leaf. Many are still winter bare and there are few flowers except the ubiquitous dandelions.

It's like returning to Kansas in late March or early April.

We did enjoy a day of wild-asparagus gathering. We got enough out of fence rows and ditches along a county road to make four or five meals. That added to the lettuce and spinach we brought with us from our garden made enough greens on our plates to make up for any lack in the trees.



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

For the most part the trip was uneventful. We went for a lot of walks, talked to a lot of old friends and generally kicked back and relaxed.

Then we packed up and headed home through all the wildlife we hadn't seen while walking in the woods.

We weren't five miles into the trip when I spotted the deer right beside the road. She seemed to be looking both ways before deciding to cross the highway.

Which made her a lot smarter than the young mountain sheep ram we had to stop for 20 miles farther along.

He couldn't decide whether he wanted to be on the uphill or the downhill side of the road, so he kept going back and forth, stop-

ping traffic and getting his picture taken in the process.

As we came into the plains, we noted the prairie dogs, hundreds and hundreds of them. It was a beautiful day and the little rodents were all out enjoying it.

Then on the curve of a shortcut I like to take, I spotted some large birds crossing the road. I thought they were turkeys, either wild or tame. Nope; when I got closer I realized that a half dozen peafowl (I think they were all hens) were making their stately way across my path.

We also spotted quail and lots of antelope out on the plains, so we felt that our trip had been an animal-watching success, even if it wasn't until the way home that we saw anything more interesting than a lazy dog and an unidentified orange, black and white bird at the feeder while we were spending time in the mountains.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkans.com

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Education has suffered from 'reform'

In February, U.S. Education Secretary Arnie Duncan unveiled this administration's version of the No Child Left Behind Act. This launches the Washington debate over re-authorization of this law, technically called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

After years of defending No Child against charges from across the nation that it was punitive and burdensome, the secretary revealed his "Blueprint for Reform" that admits that it was punitive and burdensome. While the devil will be in details not yet spelled out, however, Blueprint holds promise of being even more punitive and burdensome.

First, the name "No Child Left Behind" is dropped. Nearly every teacher, administrator and parent has nothing good to say about this law. Only politicians seem oblivious to the damage it has done to the American school system.

The "goal" of every child being proficient by 2014 is gone, to everyone's applause. Instead, we will be "raising standards for all students" to produce "college- and career-ready students."

Blueprint calls on all states to either adopt the common core language and mathematics standards or upgrade existing standards in cooperation with universities. But the only way states can currently get "Race to the Top" money — and future federal grants — is to adopt the common core. Developed by the National Governor's Association and state chief school officers, this common core becomes the national curriculum.

Blueprint calls for "a new generation of assessments." Not detailed in Blueprint, the feds will be requesting proposals to develop a national test for the national common core. Six testing companies are lining up at the feed trough, salivating over this massive testing windfall. The rationale is that state standards are set too low and we need a uniform yardstick to measure kids across the country.

Because No Child narrowed the curriculum to teaching-to-the-test in just language arts and mathematics, Blueprint expands testing to



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

other major disciplines.

Blueprint correctly recognizes the most important factor in student success is having an "effective teacher." But the document ignores the fact that this last generation of high school students saw the extent that No Child de-professionalized teaching. This law is the main reason many of our best college students decide not to enter secondary teaching. Blueprint continues this blame game.

In place of the impossible climb toward 100 percent proficient by 2014, Blueprint implements a "growth model" rejected by previous administrations. Although it lacks details, "growth model" will in effect require individualized education plans, now used in special education programs, to track every student's progress. There is still a deadline — the year 2020 — for all students being college- or career-ready — a measure yet to be defined. So the annual testing will go on, expanded into every major discipline, and with a documentation burden that will make No Child look mild.

Punitive measures are more draconian than under the Bush administration. Federal money for low-performing schools will be based on models of: "transformation" (fire the principal), "turnaround" (fire the principal and half the teachers), "restart" (close the school and start again with new people) and "school closure" (close the school and disperse students to other districts).

Like No Child, Blueprint has an attitude problem. It uses strategies that, if applied to medicine, would destroy morale and drive college students to other careers.

Federal "competitive grants" continue the

enforcement of federal education policy. While the Department of Education has no jurisdiction and cannot promulgate any regulations compelling state and local school policy, it will extort compliance by making federal policy a required "string" to receive federal money.

Providing about 15 percent of each state's education budget, Blueprint will continue in No Child's footsteps toward controlling 100 percent of every state's educational policy. This federal money is nowhere adequate to implement the Blueprint "visions" — it is an "underfunded mandate." But the Feds have found they can nationalize education for 15 cents on the dollar.

With Kansas facing another round of teacher and staff dismissals, much larger classes, painful consolidations and shortages of teaching materials, we cannot afford to reject the federal dollars. But no state can afford to fully implement the Blueprint for Reform.

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.

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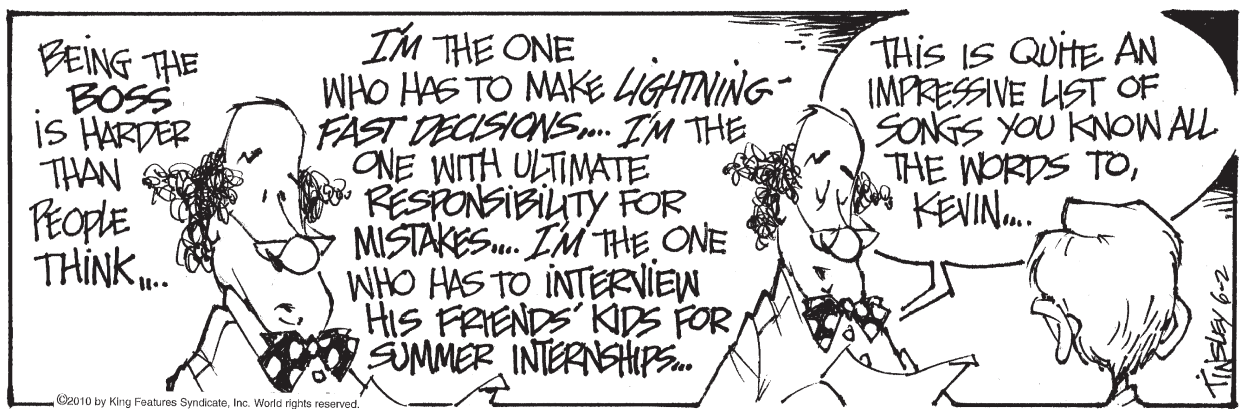
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