

Other Viewpoints

Vending machines misplaced in school

Kansas schools should get the message from the latest state Board of Education directive that soda pop and candy should be banned from school vending machines.

Pop and candy machines have no place in our schools anyway, but too many schools have minimized the message their presence sends when this country is fighting an epidemic of childhood obesity. And too often one loophole or another has been exploited to make pop and candy accessible to kids in schools.

The board last month approved new requirements for school vending machines.

As of Aug. 1, the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value, such as soft drinks, gum and candy, will be prohibited in elementary and middle school vending machines until the end of the school day and in high school machines until one hour after the end of the last lunch period. At least 50 percent of the vended items must fall below limits for fat, sugar and calories.

Effective August next year, no sugary pop or candy will be allowed in elementary and middle school vending machines, and such items will be available in high schools only after the end of the school day. All vended items must meet standards for fat, sugar and calories.

Specifically, the standards will require that snacks contain 35 percent or less fat from calories and 35 percent or less weight from total sugar. Beverages will be limited to water, low-fat milk, soy or rice drinks and 100-percent juice. Some electrolyte replacement drinks such as Gatorade or Powerade will be allowed near athletic centers at high schools.

These appear to be good, solid standards, which is good. And Hutchinson-area school districts say they already have been moving in this direction and won't have to make many adjustments to meet the new requirements, which also is good.

Board research suggests, however, that statewide schools will need to reform their vending policies. In the 2008-09 school year, only 37 percent of schools met what will be the eventual standards.

Despite the new state standards on vending machines in schools making good sense, not all schools have applied good sense since they opened their doors to having pop and snack vending machines in their buildings. For that reason, the new statewide rules and standards are much needed.

- The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press

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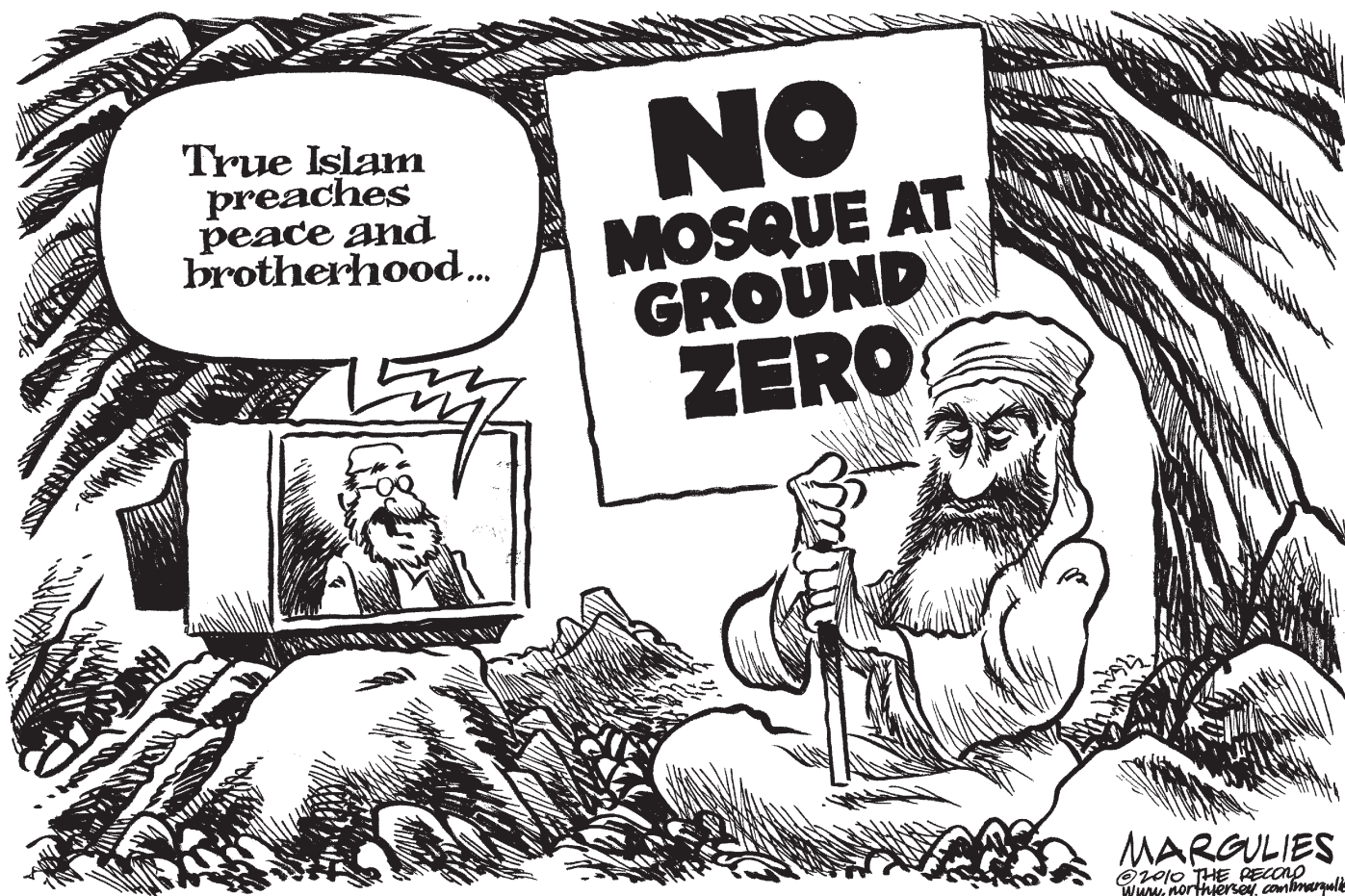
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Blind loyalty weakens arguments

Loyalty is often portrayed as a positive characteristic by today's society.

There are certainly some good reasons why people would see this characteristic in a positive light. A team made up of individuals with a strong sense of loyalty to one another is likely to triumph over a team of individuals solely concerned with their own statistics - unless the individuals have enough talent to make up for their lack of teamwork. Loyal friends and family members are rightfully admired more than fair-weather friends and chronically absent family members who always seem to disappear when times get tough.

Many people tend to see loyalty as unconditional support of something - a cause, group, ideology, family, team, country or specific interpretation of a religion - without questioning whether they are supporting something that is morally acceptable. For example, if a person is brought up to be loyal to his family, should he remain silent if he finds out his brother had murdered or robbed someone?

The implications of declaring an unconditional allegiance to a cause, party or ideology in politics can be especially dangerous. History provides numerous examples of what can happen when people become mindless servants of an ideology. The Nazi Holocaust, Mao Zedong's reign as leader of China, Joseph Stalin's rise to power in the Soviet Union, the Khmer Rouge government's genocide in Cambodia and the Hutu-led genocide in Rwanda are all examples of the dangers of mindless acceptance of ideologies.

While people on the political left like to



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

point out the dictators the U.S. government has supported in the past, many remain quiet about the progressives who defended Maoist China, the Khmer Rouge and Stalin. These moral failures shouldn't be forgotten. Progressives undermine their own arguments when they highlight America's foreign policy blunders, while minimizing the atrocities committed by our country's official enemies.

A book written in 1979 by two leftists about Cambodia exposes progressives' tendency to be overly skeptical of reports about massive crimes committed by our official enemies.

Noam Chomsky, professor of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and political activist, co-authored a book with economist and fellow radical Edward S. Herman called "After the Cataclysm - Postwar Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology," questioning books and media reports accusing the Khmer Rouge of up to 2 million deaths in Cambodia via executions, starvation and forced labor.

From what I've read about the book, the authors admit Pol Pot's regime committed atrocities and concede that once all facts are in it may turn out that genocide took place, but they

spend most of their time criticizing the media for alleged bias against the regime.

They also give a favorable review to a book by George Hildebrand and Gareth Porter titled, "Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution." This book rationalized the regime's actions and denied that massacres had taken place. The authors also criticized other books about the regime that ended up being much more accurate than Porter and Hildebrand's book. While Chomsky eventually concluded that what happened in Cambodia was the worst genocide of the modern period, he was unwilling to apologize for his initial skepticism of reports detailing the Khmer Rouge atrocities and he still estimated the death toll - 750,000 - to be lower than the numbers offered by many other reporters.

I have to disclose that I have read four of Chomsky's books and agree with some of his criticisms of past American foreign policies, but his unwillingness to vilify America's enemies with the same vehemence he uses to criticize atrocities committed by America and our allies is his Achilles' heel. Many others on the left suffer from the same ideological blind spots; the negative effects of their blindness continues to this day.

These people deserve criticism, not loyalty from fellow progressives who may agree with them on other issues.

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.

Transportation program plans for roads

This is the third segment of state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer's session-end report.

HB 2650 - Transportation Works for Kansas - Establishment of a new comprehensive transportation program called the Transportation Works for Kansas (T-Works) Program. The bill dictates legislative intent for the program expenditures for preservation projects; expansion and economic opportunity projects after Feb. 1, 2011, unless funded by Build America Bonds; modernization projects; city and county assistance programs that exchange federal aid funds for state funds; railroad, aviation and public transit programs; and multi-modal economic development programs that provide assistance for economic development opportunities.

The measure authorizes the secretary of transportation to do one demonstration project in Johnson or Wyandotte County using the design-build concept.

The bill adds revenues to the State Highway Fund by increasing registration fees for smaller vehicles, trailers and buses by \$20, for trucks 54,000 pounds and smaller by \$10 and for trucks over 54,000 pounds by \$135. The measure includes a \$10 one-time registration fee for permanent license plates for trailers used in combination with vehicles registered at 54,000 pounds or more, beginning in 2013. Also, the bill increases transfers from the fund to assist with transit, rail and aviation starting in 2013.

Between July 1, 2010, and June 30, 2020, the bill requires that \$8 million be spent in each county for transportation projects and requires the current distribution of motor fuel taxes to



Ralph Ostmeyer

• State Senator

stay at the current ratio of 66.37 percent to the state fund and 34.63 percent into the Special City and County Highway Fund. The bill expands bonding authority to allow the secretary to issue bonds up to 18 percent debt service payments out of projected State Highway Fund revenues for any year. Municipalities can use loans from the Transportation Revolving Fund for projects, community improvement districts or transportation development and may use special district funds to repay the loans.

The bill would take effect upon publication. HB 2650 passed 25 to 13 on May 7.

It was our pleasure to sponsor 19 area students as Senate Pages during the 2010 Legislative Session. Making the trip to Topeka on Monday, Feb. 1, were four students from Hill City, Brandie Poe, James McCullough, Candice Lemon and Travis Williams.

Four students joined us on Monday, Feb. 15: Haylee Eaton, Shields; Shauni Strobel, Dighton; and two students from Goodland, Abigail Jolly and J.J. Farris. St. Francis sent us four students on Monday, March 1: Garrett Brunk, Jude Faulkender, Zach Gienger and Casey Keller.

Thursday, March 18, gave this grandfather

the proud opportunity to have his Grinnell students page: Taylor, Brooke and Chandler Ostmeyer. The final four pages traveled from Oberlin on Monday, March 22: Alex Hissong, Caleb Koerperich, Sierra Lohofener and Tyler Shields.

We are always delighted to have our students join us. If you know of someone of high school age that is interested, please let me know by either an e-mail or calling my Topeka office at the first of the 2011 session (begins on Jan. 10). My session secretary will make contact with all the information and schedule the page date.

This is an excellent time for me to acknowledge and thank my wife Kay and all our family for their unending support. They keep all the loose ends from unraveling while I am in Topeka. Also thank you to my session secretary, Judy Crasper.

It has always been an honor and privilege to serve the people of Kansas. Your concerns and comments are important to me and I welcome your contact. I may be reached at home now that the 2010 legislative session is adjourned. E-mail, Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov, or (785) 824-3773.

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.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

