

Free Press Viewpoint

Kansas problems don't include voters

Voter fraud in Kansas? Not that anybody ever heard of. But one candidate for secretary of state has made rooting out voter fraud the centerpiece of his campaign. Kris Kobach, a law-school professor from Wyandotte County, wants new rules for registration and requiring photo identification for each voter, similar to laws he helped write for Arizona.

Never mind that no one, including apparently Mr. Kobach, has any proof of widespread voter fraud in Kansas. This guy is on a mission.

Candidate Kobach, a former Republican state chairman who's considered a national expert on immigration law, helped to write the controversial Arizona law that requires police to question those suspected of being illegal immigrants. The voter-fraud rap apparently relates to his immigration phobia.

But if illegal immigrants are voting as Kansas citizens, no one seems to have caught them. Few, if any, criminal complaints have been filed. No one is complaining to the county attorneys across the state, or the attorney general.

There's just no evidence that illegal immigrants are trying to vote in Kansas, or that any other kind of election fraud is happening.

It's like the complaint that immigrants don't pay taxes. If they are on somebody's payroll, they're paying income and Social Security taxes, even if it's for a fake number. If they shop, they pay sales taxes. If they rent, the landlord pays their property taxes.

We're all for making people prove who they are when they register to vote. Citizenship is a requirement for voting.

But what about the idea of showing a photo ID every time you vote? What's next? A law saying that citizens must carry papers to travel around the state, like in some communist dictatorship?

Kansas is a small, still largely rural state. Our election judges know their voters and should be able to spot fraud when they see it. We don't need insulting laws that threaten our basic freedoms.

We can and should enforce our election laws. The current secretary of state and the last one both say that's being done. The incumbent, Democrat Chris Biggs, a former prosecutor, says he knows of no problem.

"There's no suggestion in the evidence that we have a major voter fraud problem," Biggs said, "and certainly not one connected to illegal immigration."

Every candidate has to have a platform, a theme to hang his campaign on. But the record suggests that Mr. Kobach is overly concerned with supposed effects of illegal immigration. It's as if he's trying to create an issue where no problem exists.

Our immigration laws could use some reform, but that's mostly a federal issue. Kansas has no need to get involved.

As for Mr. Kobach and his cries of voter fraud, we think it's a case of a solution looking for a problem.

And while Kansas has a lot of problems, this just isn't one of them. It's a phony.

— Steve Haynes

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Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Heather Woofter - Advertising Representative
hwoofter@nwkansas.com

Andrea Miller - Advertising Representative
a.miller@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design
kballard@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

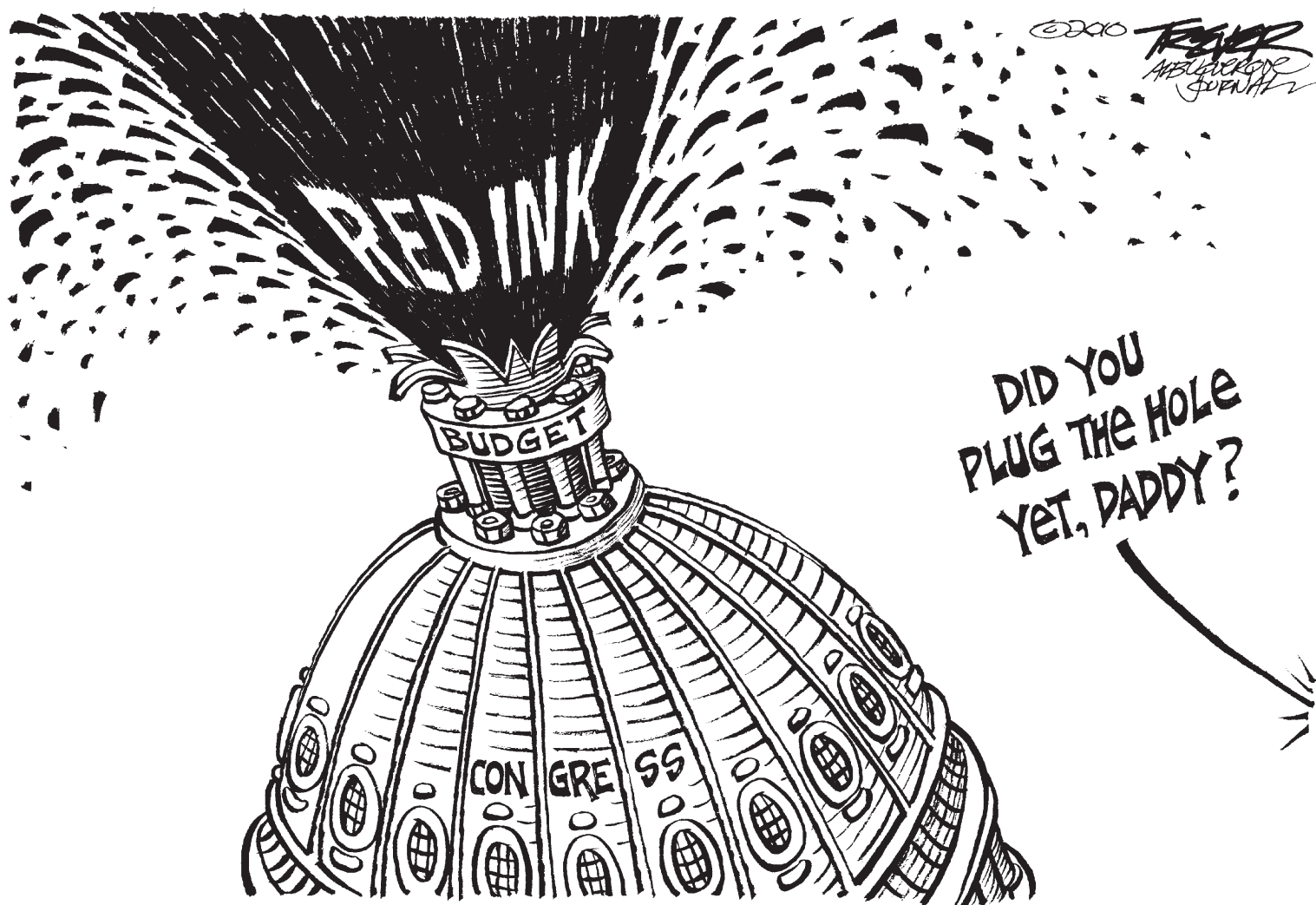
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Devil's work is never done

God must be a man, because after working hard for six days on the seventh, he rested.

Which makes woman the devil, because she never rests.

This isn't the gospel according to Cynthia. It's just a general observation about everyday life in most American homes.

Now, my husband Steve is a hard worker. He puts in five long days at the office most weeks. On Sundays, he mows the yard and edits copy for two papers.

However, after mowing he sits down with his weekly beer and relaxes. And on Saturdays, he takes the day to read, relax and enjoy his favorite hobby — train watching.

He and the dog load up and head for McCook, where they find a nice tree and settle down for a nap between trains. Then Steve reads and the dog protects him from errant squirrels, rabid rabbits and pesky chipmunks.

While Steve is checking out the trains, I'm usually at the office catching up on the book work or dealing drugs at the corner store.



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

(For those of you who don't know, I was in pharmacy school when I met that cute young reporter. My wedding and my pharmacy license came through the same year — 1971.)

My Mondays through Fridays are about the same — do book work for the papers, sports for *The Oberlin Herald* or fill prescriptions in any one of a dozen stores that need occasional pharmacy help.

On Sunday, while Steve is mowing, I weed the gardens and yard, spread the clippings and fight the ever-present elm seedlings.

While Steve has his beer, I go into the house to finish the laundry and start supper. Then it's

time to clean up and do the dishes, fold the laundry and put it away, clean the cat boxes and get the trash ready for its Monday pickup and write sports for the paper.

Sometimes I wonder about this, but I figure that I've made my decision. I'd rather have the household chores halfway done than have a beer, especially since I'm not very fond of beer.

And Steve. Well, he says he'll be glad to help me. But, it's the Sabbath, you know, the day of rest.

I think I ought to give him a quick jab with my pitchfork!

Editor's note: I guess you have to give the Devil her due.

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@nwkansas.com

High-stakes exit exams not for Kansas

Kansas high school graduates march across the stage to receive their diplomas based on having passed the state and local school course requirements. But in 21 states, they receive their diploma based on having passed state exit exams.

Twenty years ago, only New York required an exit exam. Under the outcomes-based education craze, trust was pulled away from the quizzes and tests administered by teachers in their classwork (internal assessments) and only standardized external assessments were valued. Two additional reasons drove half the states to adopt these exit exams, called "high stakes" because the student could not graduate without passing them.

In many states, more and more teachers were teaching out-of-field. That meant they did not know the subject they were teaching and could not be relied on to give meaningful grades. The states with the most out-of-field teachers were coastal and southern states. The Midwest and Great Plains states have far fewer out-of-field teachers. Their teacher's grades are reliable and remain a better predictor of college success than other measures.

And a few states added exit exams because it was a way to "motivate" students to put effort into the all-important No Child Left Behind assessments.

The effect of state exit exams on teaching professionalism was immediate. Students stopped paying attention to the teacher and only paid attention to the test. "Will this be on the test?" went from being a pesky question from some students to being the only question.



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

For instance, in Texas, when students complete their exit exam in March, the rest of the school year is irrelevant playtime. This total focus on the test makes creative classwork and discussion irrelevant and good teachers helpless.

This downside has become evident. States are gradually dropping exit exams. In June 2009, the Alabama State Board of Education voted to phase out their five-section high school graduation exam and instead require end-of-course tests in the same subjects. They also voted to have all juniors take the ACT college entrance exam at state cost, and added the eighth grade EXPLORE test for career planning and the Work Keys exam for seniors.

Meanwhile Ohio, facing deep budget cuts, saved \$9 million dollars dropping the writing test for fourth- and seventh-graders and the social studies test for fifth- and eighth-graders. According to the Plain Dealer, new tests are being developed to replace the high school graduation test with end-of-course tests, a college entrance exam, and a senior project.

Even in New York, where the "Regents exams" have been given since 1878, money is short. In March, the Regents estimated they would save \$13.7 million by eliminating 13

of 17 tests including: three of the four science exams, two of the three math exams, all high school foreign language exams, social studies in fifth and eighth grades, and two high school social studies tests. They are awaiting the New York Governor's budget before they decide whether they too will eliminate the testing.

There is no faster way to deprofessionalize teaching than by substituting an external assessment for course grades. Kansans know the wise saying: "If it isn't broken, don't fix it."

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.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

