



Other Viewpoints

Guns and alcohol remain a bad duo

Even the president of the Kansas Rifle Association acknowledged to a *Lawrence Journal-World* reporter last week that guns and alcohol generally are a bad combination.

It just seems like common sense that the state shouldn't make it harder to enforce laws against someone carrying a concealed firearm while under the influence of alcohol. Nonetheless, changes enacted by the Kansas Legislature this year have done just that.

Lawmakers eliminated several factors from the law that could disqualify someone from receiving a "concealed carry" license in the first place.

Before this year's action, someone could be denied a permit if he or she had two misdemeanor drunk-driving or drug convictions in five years or had been convicted of carrying a gun while under the influence.

Now, those and a number of other factors no longer disqualify someone from receiving a permit.

A more significant step, however, seems to be new restrictions placed on enforcing laws against carrying a concealed gun while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Now, a law enforcement officer can compel someone carrying a concealed weapon to submit to a breath test only after that person has shot someone. If no shooting has occurred, a person can refuse a breath test without penalty.

It seems the equivalent of letting drivers avoid breath tests and possible prosecution until they have an accident and perhaps kill someone else.

The new law goes on to say that people with concealed-carry permits can be found in violation of the law only if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol "to such a degree as to render such licensee incapable of safely operating a handgun." Since they can't force breath tests, are law enforcement officers supposed to take suspects to a firing range to test their shooting skills?

As Rep. Paul Davis, a Lawrence Democrat, pointed out ... changes in the concealed-carry law are slowly eroding provisions that were placed there for a reason. Some Kansans support that trend, but those who were uneasy about the original concealed-carry law have even more reason to be concerned now.

— *Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press*

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What's a parade without music?

Once again, we had a lovely fair parade. Lots of candy was thrown, flags were waved and the fire trucks tooted their horns and ran their sirens.

I grew up on lots of parades. My grandmother's house was right on the parade route, so it was handy to be there, with a front porch for shade, a fridge for cold drinks and a bathroom. (The *Free Press* office was able to help out on that front this week, as well.)

We had homecoming parades and fair parades. A town down the road had a Fourth of July parade.

My favorite parade every year was probably Band Day, when the college had a marching competition in conjunction with their homecoming. And I also loved those labor-intensive and anti-conservation floats made with shaped chicken wire and stuffed with spray-painted napkins. Haven't seen one of those for years.

The hardest parades to pull off in a small town, of course, are those in the summer. School marching bands have scattered to the four winds, and a band director has to be pretty creative to pull together a group to march in the heat.

It was disappointing, though, to see — and hear — that Colby didn't manage to find a drummer, a trumpet player, or a kazoo chorus for its summer parade. It was a great parade,



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

but a very quiet one, overall.

We need a challenge, perhaps. This year is the 125th Anniversary celebration, but next year, after all, starts a new 25 years.

Colby is a town with lots of great musicians. We just had the Bluegrass Festival. Picnic in the Park features different area musicians every week, and has just finished up for the summer. The high school band marched in Washington only three weeks before the fair parade. And there are always kazooos.

Let's not forget, either, the parade of tractors. I remember pictures in textbooks and elsewhere of parades in Moscow featuring dozens of tanks. The propaganda message was clear: Moscow and the Soviet Union had tanks and missiles galore, both to polish up for a parade and to put to use.

Colby's parades also have a show of force: tractors and combines and cultivators and planters. The message is equally clear: we've

got the farm equipment and we know how to use it! It's a great answer to the military parades we've seen, and a living embodiment of the concept of "beating swords into plowshares."

Back to parade music: those tractors, for the most part, have some pretty good stereos or radios in their air-conditioned cabs. I'm never likely to drive one, but I wouldn't mind hearing one play some good country music while driving down the street.

No parade is perfect, I'm sure. There were other problems with this year's fair parade. Many people I've talked to worried about the danger of kids being injured while running out in the street for candy. The heat was practically strong enough to march down the street on its own.

But a little music would give it all a little lift. A bluegrass band on a flatbed, or a middle-aged community marching band, or a self-recruited kazoo choir, would give a boost to the start of Thomas County's next 25 years.

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

Amnesty won't work: secure our border

Albert Einstein defined insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

While the great scientist was himself a legal immigrant to, and later a citizen of, the United States, it doesn't take a genius to know that America's immigration policy over the last several decades has been broken and the federal government has been derelict in its responsibility to fix it.

While the Obama administration says it's committed to "immigration reform," Americans are rightly concerned that this reform is merely a euphemism for amnesty. When President Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., said, "This amnesty will give citizenship to only 1.3 million illegal aliens. We will secure the borders henceforth. We will never again bring forth an amnesty bill like this."

The senator was right. Today's amnesty proposals are even worse. They are worse because the population of illegal aliens has skyrocketed to between 10 million and 20 million, depending on whose figures you choose to believe. Moreover, America has since been struck by a major terrorist attack inflicted by illegal aliens, not to mention numerous failed attacks by those who managed to flout our immigration or entry laws.

The American Legion offers a common-sense strategy to address illegal immigration without offering amnesty or other loopholes that endanger America's national security and

Other Opinions

• Clarence E. Hill American Legion

threaten our economic well-being.

First, America needs to secure its borders and other points of entry. That means complete the fence, beef up border patrol and deport those who have already been identified as illegal aliens. Deportation does not require a mass round-up as the open-borders lobby would have you believe, but simply processing those who already enter our legal system through other violations.

Additionally, we need to eliminate the jobs magnet by enforcing no-nonsense penalties on employers who hire illegal workers. Likewise, all taxpayer-funded social service benefits — with the exception of emergency medical care — must be denied.

Finally, and most importantly for our national security, we must effectively screen and track all foreign visitors to the United States. Three of the convicted terrorists who plotted to kill innocent soldiers at Fort Dix, N.J., were illegal aliens. A man accused of assisting the would-be Times Square bomber was also here illegally.

Americans have grown accustomed to increased security measures when boarding airplanes. We should expect the increased scrutiny to continue for foreign nationals staying in the United States.

The administration has given strong indications that it does not grasp the problem. While Phoenix is second only to Mexico City in kidnappings, and the Mexican border has seen a recent rise in violence by drug cartels, the Justice Department succeeded in getting a court to temporarily hinder Arizona's attempts to deal with an issue that the federal government has neglected for years.

Moreover, the U.S. Department of Labor produced a video in which its secretary incredibly states, "Every worker in America has a right to be paid fairly — whether documented or not."

The Obama administration is not alone in its misguided approach to this issue. Democratic and Republican administrations have allowed the problem to fester for decades. The issue will not be solved until leaders from all political parties put electoral considerations aside and start putting America's interests first.

Clarence E. Hill, of Jacksonville, Fla., is national commander of the 2.5 million-member American Legion, the nation's largest organization for wartime veterans. The Legion's "Strategy to Address Illegal Immigration in the United States" is available at www.legion.org/publications.

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.

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.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read

and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

