



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Polls don't always cover fine points

The preliminary results from Tuesday's primary election just go to show that the polls don't tell the whole story – or do they?

The KWCH polls, done by Survey USA for a Wichita television station, predicted Sen. Sam Brownback's win in the gubernatorial primary and Rep. Jerry Moran's win over Rep. Todd Tiahrt for Brownback's seat in the senate.

Where things got a little fuzzy was the 1st District congressional race. The latest poll on July 27 put Jim Barnett, Tim Huelskamp and Tracey Mann in a dead heat with 24 percent of the vote. These things aren't ever certain, though, and you have to take every poll with a grain of salt. The preliminary results have Huelskamp winning with 35 percent of the vote, quite a bit off from the poll, well outside its margin of error.

Huelskamp had a good thing going for him in northwest Kansas, the endorsement of fellow state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer. Ostmeyer is a well-respected state legislator and a familiar face in the region.

The two campaigned together all over Ostmeyer's district, which has a whopping 18 counties. That's a good chunk of the Big First, and according to the secretary of state's office, Huelskamp won most of those 18 counties.

Out of Ostmeyer's district, only five counties went for someone else. It's hard to say why Tracey Mann had more appeal in Sheridan, Gove, Trego and Lane counties, or why Sue Bol-dra had more appeal in Graham County; elections are funny things. In any case Huelskamp took most of the district, all of southwest and south central Kansas and a few scattered central counties.

It's hard to tell the character of the voters who went with a certain candidate. They usually come from all walks of life and gravitate towards a candidate for different reasons. During the primary Huelskamp courted the far right of the Republican party, speaking to their issues such as health care and immigration and saying he had a more consistently conservative record than Barnett. He largely ignored Mann in his television ads and interviews.

What Huelskamp will do next will be interesting. He's now facing Alan Jilka, a man who has repeatedly said he's a centrist rather than a liberal. A moderate viewpoint may resonate with undecided voters.

The fact is, though, that Huelskamp only captured 35 percent of his own party. Will the remaining 65 percent who voted for someone else fall in line or was there something about Huelskamp they didn't like. He shouldn't think he has it in the bag just because he's a Republican. He'll have to do some fence-mending, or Jilka may have a decent chance of winning.

– Kevin Bottrell

### 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. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

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### Summer goes faster these days

Where has the summer disappeared to?

Think about it. The county fair is the height of summer. Hot sun and bugs and sno-cones are the epitome of fair week, along with the mixed aromas of barbecue booths and livestock barns.

Chattering teens and shrieking toddlers punctuate the background noise of the crowds. One county-fair noise I don't hear in Colby, and can't say I really miss, is the constant roar of generators brought in by traveling carnivals.

Swimming is another highlight of summer. Kids fill hot days by flocking to the pool to cool off. While the pool seems to be as busy as ever, the swim club finished up its competitions weeks ago.

All of that sums up the height of summertime. I can't really count things like gardening and lawn mowing, because we have yet to invent a yard that conforms to the school calendar. And the school calendar seems to be what drives our definition of summer.

Summer starts when school gets out. It ends when school starts. If you are not in a home with school-age children, you substitute Memorial Day and Labor Day as the end points of the season. Whichever system you follow,



Marian Ballard

#### Collection Connections

summer in some ways is a state of mind.

In my mind, summer is that ideal season I experienced when I was 10. It was not just three months long; it went on forever. I swam, I read library books, I rode my bike, I worked at enjoying every minute of every day.

Summer today is different. Memorial Day comes, and three days later it's already Labor Day. In between is not only the fair, but keeping up with grass that must be on growth hormones, wishing there was time for all the fun gatherings other people seem to find time to plan and execute, getting in regular hours at work and trying to keep cool.

Underneath it all is that nagging question: how did summer manage to get shortened from forever to about three days?

"They" say that time goes by faster as you get older. Something about how big a chunk

of your whole life is involved. After all, for a one-day-old baby, a day is half a lifetime; for a 100-year-old the percentage is a bit less. I guess that makes sense, but it doesn't mean I have to like it.

"They" also say, after all, that time flies when you're having fun. If that's true, why were fun, childhood summers endlessly long? And why are busy, work-filled, tedious adult summers so short?

We have trouble finding time to do what we want to do in the summer, because our days fill up with all the things we have to do. And there are a lot of things available to do in the summer. Events like family and school reunions and fairs and music festivals and antique car shows and bike rallies and marathons and camps and ...

Well, you get the picture.

But, to be honest, what I really miss about summer is endless days of swimming, reading library books and riding my bike.

Go figure.

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.

### County spending shows discrepancies

A new study, "Kansas County Budget Analysis – In Search of Efficient Government," from the Kansas Policy Institute compares 2009 per-resident spending across all 105 counties and creates a benchmarking tool for county officials and Kansas citizens.

The findings suggest hundreds of millions of dollars in potential savings from improved efficiency and transparency.

"Benchmarking is standard practice in the business world," said the study's author, KPI President Dave Trabert. "From the corner grocery store to the largest manufacturer, employers do their very best to know how much it costs their competitors to build a widget, deliver a service or conduct back-office support. Governments also need to know what their competitors charge."

The study groups counties by population to provide better comparisons. Spending is broken out into nine categories, including general government, law enforcement, court services and emergency services. Stevens County bud-

#### Other Opinions

James Franko  
Kansas Policy Institute

geted \$5,416 per-resident for the highest total while Wyandotte spent the least per resident at \$450; median spending per-resident was \$1,263. Some additional findings:

Johnson County spent \$4.42 per-resident on county commissioners, or nearly three times the \$1.50 spent by Sedgwick County;

The high total spender among counties with less than 5,000 residents was four times greater than the low spender;

The high law enforcement spender among counties with population between 5,000 and 10,000 was six times greater than the low

spender.

"There may be good reason for certain cost variances, but some of these numbers beg further analysis," Trabert said. "Why does it cost one county \$259 per resident to pay for county commissioners, but the four counties with the closest population only spend \$13?"

"Certainly, there are differences in quality, demographics and other factors, but that cost difference is absolutely worth exploring. More transparency and clearer reporting will only give taxpayers and officials better information on which to base decisions.

"This study should be viewed as a tool to address government budget challenges without raising taxes or unnecessarily eliminating services. The state and local tax burden is already costing jobs and prompting people to leave Kansas; we must find creative ways to lower the tax burden and reverse those trends."

"Bottom line, benchmarking allows for better decision making."

### Traveler questions speeding ticket

To the Editor:

Late on the night of July 10, while driving through Kansas on Interstate 70 with my family, I was stopped in Thomas County for speeding. When the officer approached my vehicle, he informed me I was "clocked" by radar at the speed of 87 mph.

Since my cruise control was set at 80, I questioned the speed and asked to see the radar gun display. At 80 miles per hour I was over the posted speed of 70 mph, but was being passed by every other vehicle and had not reset the speed after leaving my home state of Colorado, where the speed limit was 75 mph.

When the officer returned to my vehicle with the violation, he informed me he had misread the speed and that the actual speed was 86 mph. At this point I asked again to see the ra-



#### Free Press Letter Drop

Our readers sound off

dar gun display and was permitted to view the gun through the side window of the patrol car.

I read the display at 83 mph, still above the posted speed limit but under the plus-15 mph threshold that maximizes the points and fine. The officer refused to permit a closer look at the display and stated "that he read it at 86 mph." I refused to sign the ticket until the ac-

tual speed could be determined. Given that the cruise control was set at 80 mph the speed of 86 mph seemed to be an incorrect reading.

While I understand most jurisdictions are seeking maximum revenues in today's economy, this seems to be little more than revenue-generation targeted at out-of-state drivers who would find it impractical to return to Kansas for a court hearing.

At the age of 68, and with a very clean driving record, this fine and the associated points will not affect my ability to drive. However, I would appreciate it if you would evaluate this situation and make the appropriate decisions to correct this abuse of the enforcement of law.

David V. Puerta  
Colorado Springs

#### Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

