



## Other Viewpoints

### Governor's race needs more debates

Good news came this past week when the two major-party candidates for governor finally agreed to appear in a televised debate.

But if that is the only televised debate that happens between the two between now and the November election, Kansas voters will be shortchanged.

The debate, scheduled for 6:30 p.m. tonight on KWCH-TV Channel 12 in Wichita, will last half an hour and feature not only Republican candidate Sam Brownback and Democrat Tom Holland, but also the Reform Party's Ken Cannon and Libertarian Andrew Gray.

If each man gets an equal say, that's only seven minutes and change per candidate.

That's not much time to really dig into the issues. Actually, to be perfectly frank, it's grossly inadequate at a time when Kansas is continuing to reel from the recession and voters deserve to know how the candidates plan to maneuver the state out of trouble.

Granted, Brownback is touring all 105 counties and taking his message directly to voters. Holland also is making plenty of appearances.

But it would be nice to see how the candidates handle tough questions and think on their feet.

None of this should be considered a knock on KWCH. To the contrary, the station deserves credit for staging the debate and successfully bringing all four candidates to the table. (It should be noted that *The Capital-Journal* co-sponsored a proposed hour-long televised debate, but it's doubtful the event will be held because Brownback has not accepted an invitation to appear.) But the fact remains that 30 minutes of debate among four candidates isn't enough. It's a shame there isn't at least one more televised debate involving at least the big two on the schedule, and the blame for that shortcoming goes to both camps.

Each candidate has declined invitations. Holland balked at appearing on a debate scheduled for broadcast at noon Oct. 13 on the WIBW-AM 580 talk show "On the Other Hand," with his camp noting that the original invitation mentioned nothing about television.

That's true, but Holland still wouldn't go on after WIBW-AM made arrangements for WIBW-TV 13 to broadcast the debate. His camp also claimed "On the Other Hand" is biased toward the right, an assessment the show's co-hosts dispute.

Brownback has cited his county-to-county tour and Senate schedule in declining some events, but it's hard to believe he couldn't have freed up a little more time for debating.

Whatever the case, Kansas voters are the losers.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

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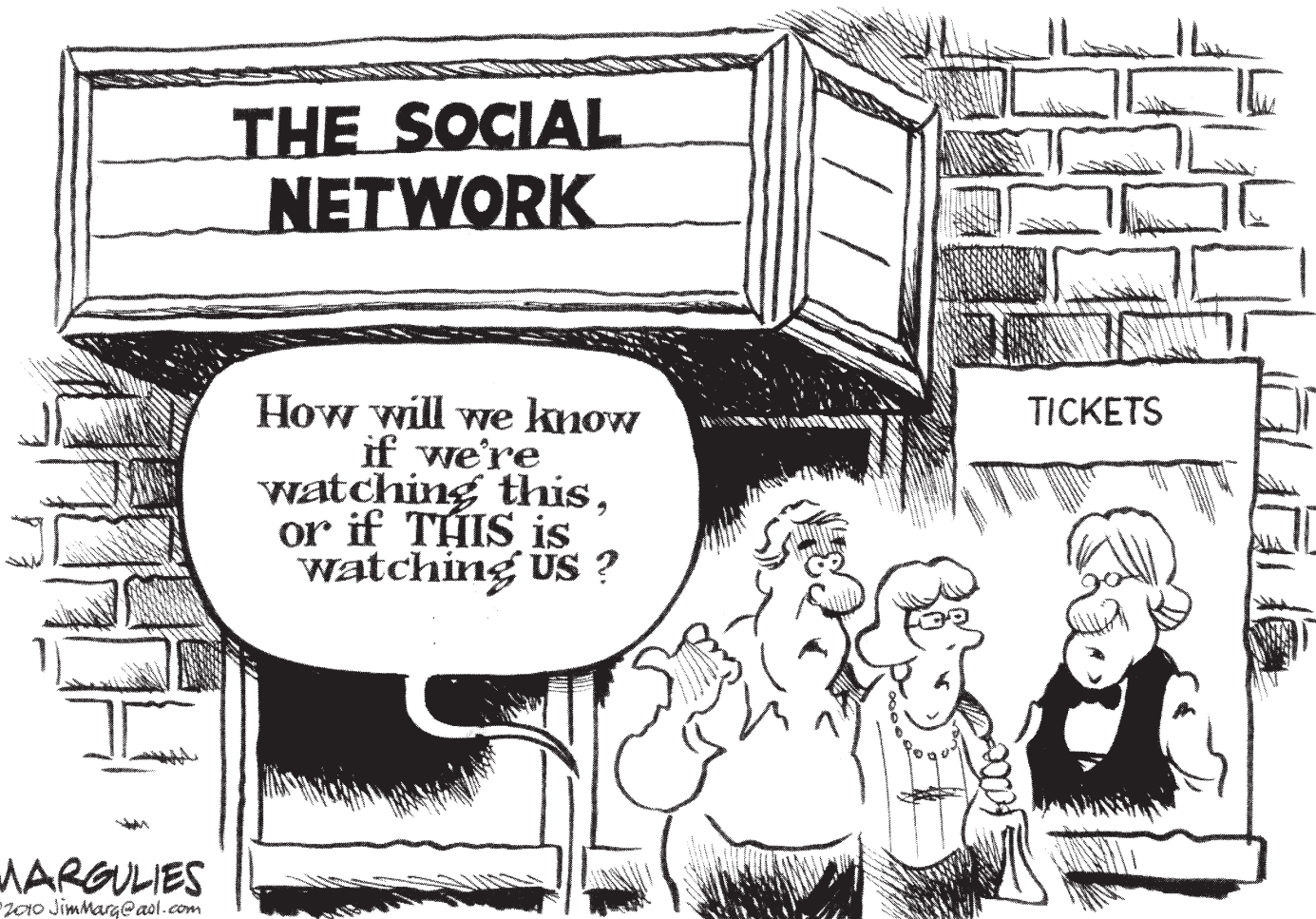
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### Watch for 'Robo-Teacher,' coming soon

Could Arnold Schwarzenegger be stepping down as California Governor in time to star in "Terminator Five: Machines Conquer the Classroom?"

Don't expect a cute sequel to "Kindergarten Cop." It will be no laughing matter when machines take over our children's education.

Testing will become so pervasive that the student will not even be aware of it! This statement from a Kansas Department of Education staffer at August's state board meeting draws a picture of the future as seen by futurists. Continuous computerized assessment — all-testing-all-the-time — is the next reform in the centralized curriculum movement.

This is not just talk. In August, assessment surveys, studies and implementations made up half of the board's "consent" agenda. Major money was allocated to move assessment forward.

The staffer described the continuous-assessment vision, where student performances would be uploaded to be compared and analyzed against state or national standards. Tons of data, along with a diagnosis, would then come back to the teacher for individualized remediation.

Several board members asked, isn't this what a good teacher already does in direct interaction with students? Seeing a student does not understand in the moment of the lessons? Re-teaching immediately?

The reply was that this vision of continuous assessment would ensure that it happened for everyone. Under the proposed "growth model,"



**John Richard Schrock**

#### Education Frontlines

we will move from evaluating a school on the proficiency rates of its students, to evaluating the progress made by each student. It is a return to the individualized and diagnostic teaching of the 1970s, a failed reform that survived only in the IEP's (individualized educational programs) of special education students.

This threatens a dark age for the quality teachers still left in Kansas classrooms. The professional's rich and immediate interactions with students will be replaced by machinery that will reduce all student performance to numbers and all teachers to technicians present only to carry out mechanized prescriptions.

Such robo-teaching is not supported by any research. Before 1990, there were no high-stakes, class-specific assessments given outside the teacher's classroom. Under Quality Performance Accreditation and No Child Left Behind, there has been no research showing that external testing has improved overall student learning.

The questionable increases in narrow reading and math scores have been bought at a far greater cost of narrowing the curriculum and discarding a much fuller education. Dropout

rates have accelerated.

Fewer students in the 20-25 range are completing college; this is the cohort that is the direct product of No Child. And most of today's students won't do anything without asking, "Is this on the test?" External testing has been a disaster.

This new super-assessment reform is about test and computer companies making landfill profits. Continuous testing has been chosen by the governors rich businessmen, virtually none of whom have been teachers. They are enamored with "data." They have a blind faith that the solution to all educational problems is "more data" and their orders to the robo-teachers are "drill, baby, drill!"

This reduces teachers to mere technicians, only present in the classroom to receive pre-digested data and diagnoses from above. It dictates the remediation they must teach each student in order to make them all the same. Teachers and students become cogs in one big educational machine.

Kansas and most of the Great Plains have been a holdout to many disastrous reforms. We have not yet completely committed to all-assessment all-the-time. But if we do, we will see the last shreds of teacher professionalism disappear.

"Hasta la vista, Baby!"

*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.*

### Aftermarket parts good for consumers

A forthcoming report from the Heartland Institute finds consumers benefit from access to automobile parts that many government agencies and some auto manufacturers want to limit or even ban.

The parts, known as "recycled," "remanufactured" or "aftermarket" parts, may be parts that were original equipment when the vehicle rolled off the assembly line, salvaged and re-used after testing and certification, or they may be functionally equivalent parts manufactured to the same specifications by a firm other than the car company.

Alan Smith, a Heartland Institute senior fellow and author of the report, contends these parts bring real consumer benefits, among them:

- Cost savings: Aftermarket and recycled parts cost far less than originally manufactured components. In addition, the competition from these parts pushes down prices for replacement parts made by manufacturers, giving consumers millions of dollars of savings every year.
- Environmental benefits: The use of after-

### Other Opinions

#### Heartland Institute

market and recycled parts saves significant energy for consumers and producers alike.

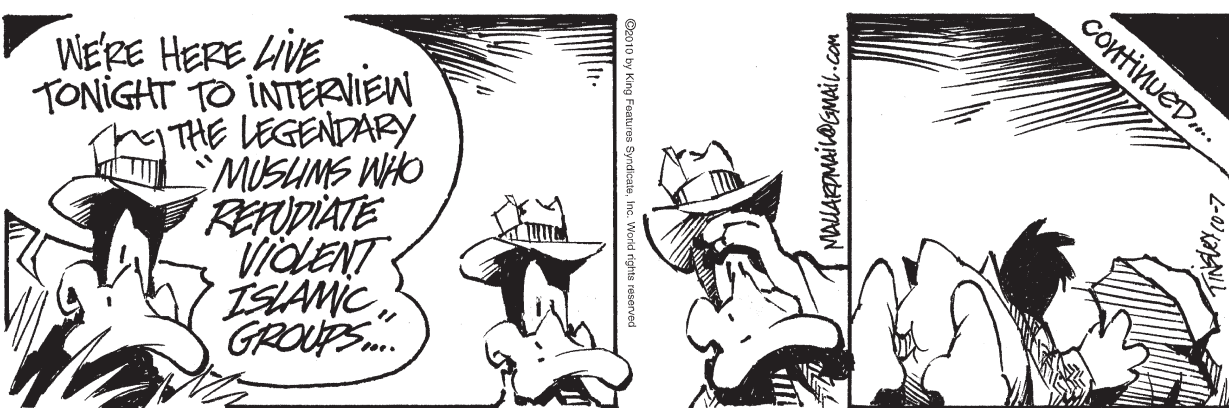
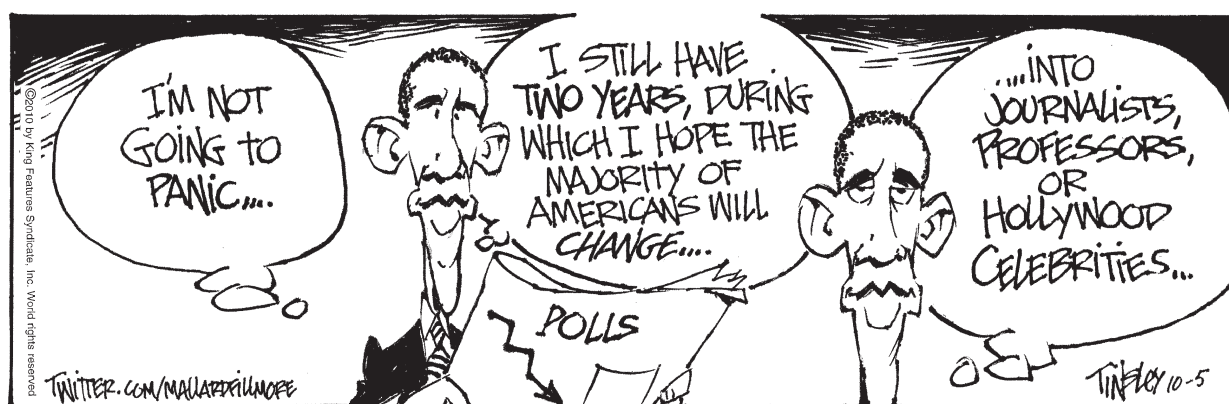
• Safety: Even safety-sensitive salvage parts such as undeployed airbags, when properly reinstalled, have been tested to operate at the same specifications as when new, saving enough in repair costs to possibly make the difference between a repairable vehicle and one that is "totaled" for insurance purposes.

• Quality: According to government reports and rigorous testing by private certification associations, there is no evidence that alternative parts, on balance, are of lower quality than new original equipment parts.

Smith concludes government efforts to limit the use of the parts are likely to hurt consumers. Those efforts include limitations on the use of undeployed airbags and scrap tires that have until now been used as a fuel supplement for several key manufacturing processes. This lowers their carbon emissions from coal use while keeping more than 250 million scrapped tires a year from being stockpiled or dumped in the environment.

"Certainly, consumers should and generally already do have the right to know when alternative parts are being used," said Smith. "Nearly all of the federal and state-level efforts to limit or eliminate the use of alternative parts serve to line the pockets of automakers while bringing no benefits to consumers. The government needs to keep its focus on safety, and not side with particular commercial interests to the detriment of vehicle owners."

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### Mallard Fillmore

#### Bruce Tinsley