



## Other Viewpoints

### Audit points out our duty to colleges

A legislative audit released last Thursday should be a wake-up call for Kansas lawmakers. The Legislative Division of Post Audit was asked to look at how many excess credit hours were earned by graduates of state universities in Kansas. The audit was requested after legislators became aware of a Florida study that indicated excess credit hours cost that state about \$62 million a year.

Not only did the audit show that lawmakers had no reason to be concerned about excess credit hours at Kansas universities, it revealed an embarrassing shift in the state's financial commitment to higher education.

In just four years, Kansas legislators have tipped the funding balance at state universities so much that students' tuition, for the first time, is paying for a larger percentage of state university budgets than is the state. In 2005, state appropriations made up 56 percent of higher education expenditures while tuition contributed 44 percent. By 2009, the state was paying 49 percent of those costs and tuition was paying 51 percent....

On the credit-hour issue, the audit showed that one in six graduates of state universities had more than the required credit hours (defined, as it was in Florida, as 115 percent of the hours required for a degree). However, those hours represented only 1.5 percent of attempted credit hours, and the state would have realized no savings from reducing them because the budget for Kansas universities isn't tied to the number of credit hours being taught, as it is in Florida.

University officials in Kansas already have an incentive to reduce excess hours and are taking steps, such as stronger advising systems, to achieve that goal.

Far more important than any concerns legislators had about excess credit hours are the financial figures revealed by the audit. From 2005 to 2009, tuition income at the state's six universities increased by 41 percent. The higher tuition rates that produced that increase were a direct result of state allocations to universities that failed to even keep up with the rate of inflation.

State universities drive the state economy by conducting research and providing a well-educated work force. They also are intended to be a place where Kansas taxpayers can afford to send their sons and daughters to obtain a degree. The audit clearly shows that the state is backtracking on that responsibility by placing a greater financial burden on students and their families.

It's true that the economic challenges of the last year or two forced state lawmakers to make some difficult spending choices. Nonetheless, the audit figures released last week should force legislators and our next governor to face the consequences those spending decisions are having on the quality and affordability of higher education in Kansas.

—Lawrence Journal World, via the Associated Press

### 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.

### COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963  
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

**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 Shelby Pulkrabek - Society Editors**  
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

#### ADVERTISING

**Heather Woofter - Advertising Representative**  
hwoofter @ nwkansas.com

**Andrea Bowers - Advertising Representative**  
abowers @ nwkansas.com

**Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative**  
kballard @ nwkansas.com

**Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design**  
khunter @ 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**  
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowler, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



### You can't leave home behind

Lots of the crew at Colby Free Press have been on the road last week and this week, traveling a little for fun, a little for work. Meanwhile, I sit here listening to stories about places I've not been to for a while — or at all.

Those places are not so different, after all, from this place.

Omaha, for example. Several on the staff were there for the National Newspaper Association awards presentation last weekend. It's been a few years since I was in Omaha, but as I recall, it's pretty much a town like any other town. It has homes and stores and churches and schools. It has a really great zoo, which my kids loved to visit when they were small. It has an Air Force base for a next-door neighbor, which has been a great economic stabilizer and employer over the years. It has an Interstate highway.

Colby's a lot like Omaha, with homes and stores and churches and schools — and an interstate. Zoos and military bases are farther away, but how many city kids get to pet a horse at the county fair?

We've been looking at trends in the towns and counties around Colby recently, and I keep noticing more things with a familiar ring. Sheridan County, for example. It's just to the east of us here in Thomas County, Kansas. It's also just to the east of Dawes County, Nebraska, where I grew up. To add to the confusion, there are also Sheridan counties in Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota. Guess Phil Sheri-



**Marian Ballard**

#### • Collection Connections

dan had a lot of fans when those areas were being settled and acquiring their names.

Gen. William T. Sherman also had a large collection of fans, with counties sporting his name in — besides Kansas — Texas, Oregon and Nebraska.

Then there is Hill City. You may think you know where that is, but what about Hill City, S.D., or Hill City, Minn.

Colby has Pine Street, Hill Street, Lincoln Avenue — just a few examples of the local street names that take me to other towns — if I let my mind wander just a little.

All these matching place names have a strange effect on me, as I start looking for similarities in the landscapes of counties sharing a name, or matches in the character of streets sharing names.

Places have always been my anchor, anyway. I can still describe the layout of my mother's flower garden 30 years after the house was sold. I also know which books were kept on which bookshelves in that house. (Just don't ask me to find that book today, even if I hap-

pen to have it. I may know where it went when I was a kid, but it's been moved too many times since.)

But when I drive down the road, I watch for landmarks. I had the perfect spot for my dream house picked out when I was a kid — right in the middle of the highway, as it happened — where you could see 40 miles in every direction over the valley of the North Platte River. That particular view is not one that's common in this corner of Kansas, though there are some places I've seen in Scott County that come close.

I am reminded, though, of the high tableland I grew up with every time I drive out of Colby. (It took me years to understand that "the table" was high, flat farm ground, and not some weird rock formation.)

And if I head up K-25, I'm reminded of several county roads that seemed to mostly follow section lines rather than the contours of the land. It's on those roads, with my big brother driving a little too fast, that I learned what a "thank-you ma'am" was. Not wanting to encourage that kind of driving, I'll just say think "Dukes of Hazzard."

The farther you get from home, it seems, the more places begin to look like home after all.

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.

### Are there Muslim moderates?

To the Editor:

Reading a Sept. 27 editorial viewpoint which referred to "Islamophobia" gives reason to reply about this "branding" applied to those who have a concern about the philosophy and ideology of the religion.

First of all, our nation, as we know under the Bill of Rights, Amendment 1, gives us the right to freedom of religion. As quoted from the amendment, it says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right to peaceably assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Is this religion a peaceful religion? Historically, since its conception, there have been few countries, if any, that have lived in peaceful co-existence with the Muslims when the Muslims were in the majority or in control. Today, the world is in turmoil because of what is labeled as Muslim extremist activity, even among fellow Muslims.

In the countries that have a majority who are non-Muslim, we hear that the Muslims are moderate. Does this mean that the only reason they are moderate is because the government of the country they are in still has control? And if that form of government would lose control, would they remain moderate if they were in



#### Free Press Letter Drop

#### • Our readers sound off

control?

I would encourage everyone to educate yourselves on the issues that are before us concerning Islam, because it's not going away. History is a great teacher, and the saying is "He who can censor the past molds the future."

Pastor Mike Pinkelman  
Brewster Community Church

### Candidate valued

To the Editor:

For the past six years, I have served in the Senate with our Republican majority leader, Derek Schmidt of Independence. Derek has been a respectful leader who has brought Republicans together. Coming from south-east Kansas, he understands rural community needs and issues and has been a real friend to

western Kansas and to agriculture.

When Kansas needed a law to protect agriculture after the Sept. 11 attacks, Derek wrote it. When our area needed support in dealing with prairie dogs, Derek stood with us. When veterans needed help, Derek and I worked together to support them.

Derek was the chief Senate author of Jessica's Law, which protects our children from violent sex offenders. He wrote the law that reduced the number of meth labs in Kansas by 70 percent. Derek led the effort to enact a funeral privacy law to keep hateful protesters away from mourning families during a funeral.

Now, Derek Schmidt is our Republican nominee for attorney general. He would be the kind of strong, common-sense leader we need in that office, committed to local control and working with local law enforcement officials and prosecutors to get the job done professionally and without being flashy. He's willing to stand up and fight against the unconstitutional agenda of the Obama administration, by challenging the constitutionality of Obamacare, for example.

I'm voting for Derek Schmidt for attorney general. I hope you will, too.

Ralph Ostmeyer, Grinnell  
State Senator, District 40

### 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

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorrison@ink.org

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley

