



## Other Viewpoints

### School bullies getting meaner

Has bullying changed? Children and teens picking on their peers is nothing new. People of all ages can remember being the victim or the perpetrator of such abuse. It was hurtful, even cruel, but it happened.

What gives us cause of pause today is the number of youngsters who apparently have been so distraught over bullying that they have chosen to take their own lives. A story in the Oct. 10 *Lawrence Journal-World* documented four cases of suicide within two years in one small Cleveland suburb: a girl who hanged herself, two students who shot themselves to death and another who took a fatal overdose of pills. One was an immigrant with a heavy accent, one a boy who liked to wear pink and sing soprano in the school choir. One girl thought she might be gay and another had a learning disability and hearing problem.

They were all different, the favorite target of young bullies, who will go to about any lengths to prove they are superior, even if it means they have to destroy someone else.

Another notable recent case in New York City involved a young man who had been taped making out with another young man. After the tape was posted on Facebook, he jumped to his death from the George Washington bridge.

The Internet certainly offers new opportunities for bullies to deliver the ultimate humiliation, but the cases in the Cleveland suburb didn't involve the Internet; they were just a matter of good old-fashioned cruelty.

Remember that old saying, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me"? The old standby advice of parents isn't working any more. Is today's abuse more cruel, or are children and teens under stress just reacting to it more strongly? Has suicide become romanticized as an escape from the pains of life?

It seems clear that the dialog needs to change. We can't just look at bullying as a normal rite of passage for our youngsters. We can look to schools to address the issue, but it also demands the attention of parents, grandparents and even other youngsters willing to take a stand and rein in the bullies.

It's fine to try to get youngsters to toughen up and ignore the teasing of others, but that's easier for some kids than it is for others. Even when youngsters are in the depths of despair, we need to help them understand that things can get better. At the same time, we need to make would-be bullies understand that there's nothing funny or uplifting about driving another youngster to suicide.

What used to be viewed as a rite of passage has become a deadly game. We need to try to change the rules.

—Lawrence Journal World, via the Associated Press

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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

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Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

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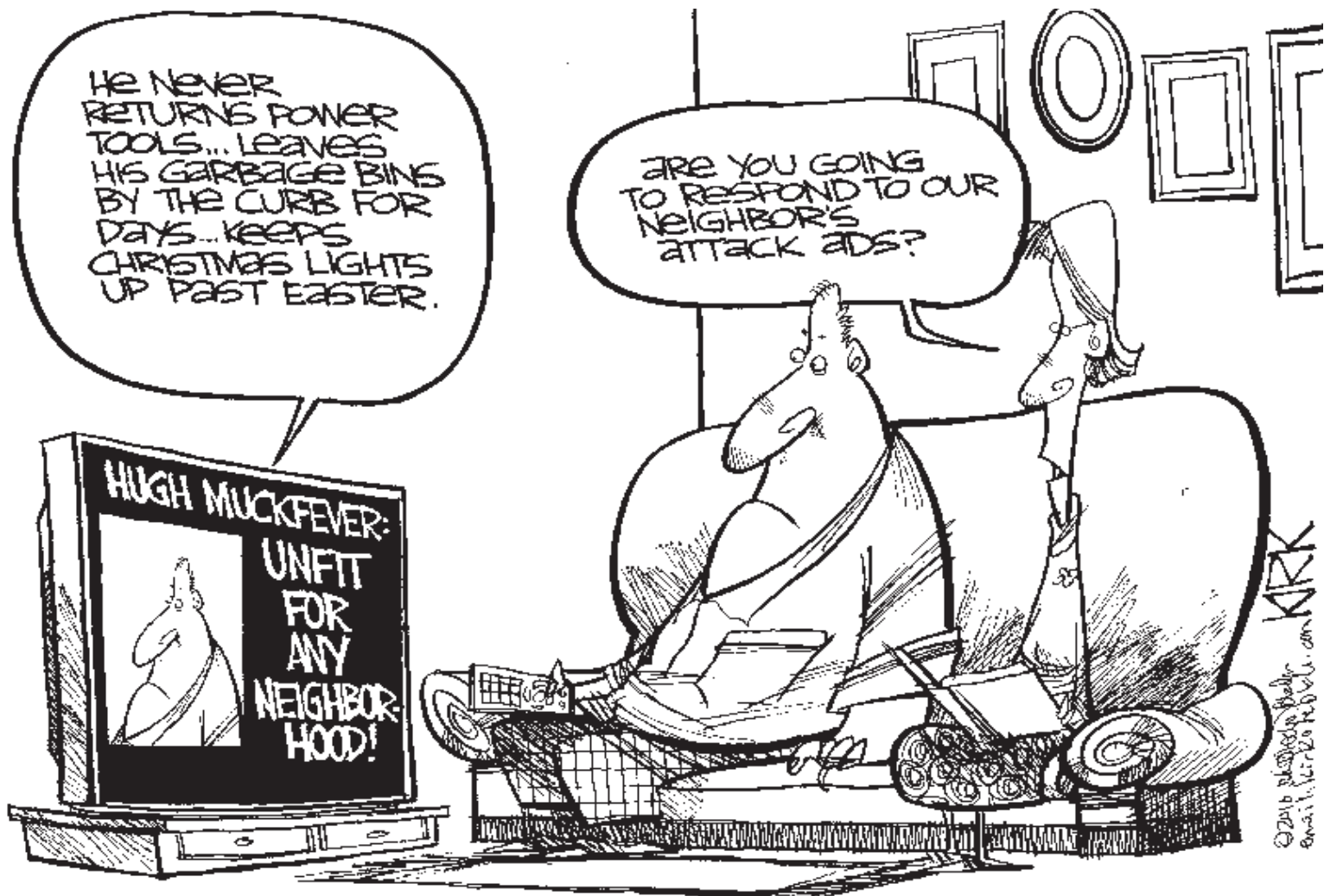
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by NorWest Newspaper, 155 W. 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.

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### October adjournment carries big risks

The majority that controls Congress has left much to chance in adjourning until after the elections – and I fear that Kansans may have to pay the price.

The Senate, led by Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and the House, led by Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), have done nothing to protect Americans and our fragile economy from what will be the biggest tax hike in history in less than 90 days. The risk is that bipartisan, popular tax relief will fail to be extended when Congress returns for a lame duck session on Nov. 15.

I am disappointed that we did not give Kansas small businesses, employers and families the certainty of knowing what their tax obligation will be next year before we adjourned. Much to my dismay, Congress left without settling this question, which is too important to be relegated to a controversial and unpopular lame duck session.

Over the past two years, the majority controlling the Congress has spent billions of dollars in so-called stimulus bills, tried to enact (thankfully without success) Cap and Tax legislation that would threaten small businesses and farms, and enacted such a large overhaul of health care reform that many people have no idea what health care options will be available to them in a few years.

Taken together, the sweeping effects of this out-of-control deficit spending won't be fully realized until our grandchildren have to pay the bill. And still the national unemployment rate hovers near 10 percent.

Extending bipartisan tax relief, put in place in 2001, is the right thing to do. This is not the



### U.S. Senator Pat Roberts

From the Senate

time to raise taxes on any taxpayer. Fortunately, there is growing bipartisan agreement on this in the Congress – despite the Reid-Pelosi objections.

With fewer than 90 days left, the majority and the president still have not yet put forth a bill to prevent a tax hike on all taxpayers. If they do not, individual income tax rates will increase, the child tax credit will be cut in half, dividend and capital gains taxes will increase and the estate tax will return to its pre-2001 level.

If tax relief is not extended, a family of four earning an average of \$50,000 will pay more than \$2,100 in higher taxes.

The president and some of his supporters in Congress propose to extend tax relief to some, but not all, taxpayers. They want to extend current income tax rates and dividend and capital gains rates only to individuals earning less than \$200,000 or families earning less than \$250,000. They want to raise tax rates on those earning above these amounts – and that means higher taxes on small businesses, because many small businesses report their income on individual income tax returns.

Allowing this tax relief to expire means higher income taxes for nearly 750,000 small

businesses, subjects \$500 billion – half a trillion dollars – in small business income to higher taxes, and increases the marginal effective tax rate by at least 17 percent on small businesses.

The president acknowledges that small businesses create 70 percent of the jobs in the country. Small business employ about 25 percent of the workforce. By one estimate, an increase in the top tax rates could cost jobs by reducing small business hiring by as much as 18 percent.

These tax hikes would have a significant impact on the economy here in our state, most notably in the number of jobs and change in personal income. By one estimate, over the next 10 years, Kansas would lose, on average, 6,841 jobs a year, lose, per household, \$2,440 in total disposable personal income, and see total individual income taxes increase by \$3.95 million.

We should not be raising taxes on hard-working families and small businesses – the leading job creators in the country – at a time when we are trying to get our economy back on track and encourage job creation.

Small business and Kansas families are frustrated at the way government is spending their hard-earned dollars. They deserve to keep their money in their own pocket rather than handing more over to Uncle Sam to spend.

Pat Roberts has been the junior U.S. Senator from Kansas since 1997. He currently serves on four senate committees including finance, ethics and agriculture.

### Farmers deserve thanks for their work

As Kansas farmers are reaping another fall harvest and planting another wheat crop, it is appropriate to take a few minutes to recognize and thank them for their efforts.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual Farm Week highlights agriculture's contribution of providing food, feed, fiber and energy, preserving our environment and boosting our national economy.

One out of every 12 jobs in America is driven by agriculture. The agriculture trade surplus is expected to exceed \$30 billion, contributing positively to the nation's overall trade deficit. By embracing science and utilizing technology, American farmers are growing products for our population and exporting to the world on the same number of acres of total cropland in use 50 years ago.

American food is inexpensive compared to food in most of the world, making it possible for our families to spend more of their income on a home, save for retirement or pay for a college education.

### Other Opinions

Adrian J. Polansky  
Farm Service Agency

America's farmers are also working to take care of our nation's environment. For example, in the last 30 years, farmers have reduced soil erosion by 40 percent and are leading the way on wetland restoration.

We should also reflect on the the successful relationship between the department and independent Kansas farmers. Safety-net support, disaster assistance, crop insurance and access to credit are important programs for farmers.

My son and possibly my grandsons would not have had the opportunity to continue our family's farm tradition if I had not benefited from these programs.

The Farm Service Agency distributed \$174 million stimulus dollars (\$6 million in Kansas) in two days last year. This year, the agency has provided \$25 million in stimulus disaster aid for crop losses in 2008.

Because of the resilience of American farmers and the contribution of many federal and state policies and programs, America's net farm income is projected to increase 25 percent this year.

For generations, America's farmers and ranchers have helped our nation stay strong. They've given America the highest-quality food and clothing and supported our economy.

So next time you visit a grocery, restaurant or farmers' market, when you fill up your gas tank with ethanol-blended fuel or put on a cotton shirt, take a moment to thank our nation's farmers and ranchers who make it possible.

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