

## Other Viewpoints

### Legislature should decide school issue

School budgets are best handled by the Legislature and local school boards, not by lawyers and judges. So it was depressing to see that 63 districts in the Schools for Fair Funding group, including Wichita, file suit against the state this month last in Shawnee County, arguing that \$300 million in recent funding cuts mean "schools do not have enough money to fund the education that state and federal laws require them to provide."

Kansas schools' money problems are real. Their costs are increasing along with their enrollments and their testing targets under the federal No Child Left Behind law, yet they face a \$50 million shortfall in the current fiscal year, the loss of \$200 million in federal stimulus money for next fiscal year, and a pledge by Gov.-elect Sam Brownback to freeze state spending.

When the Kansas Supreme Court resolved a similar case in 2006, it did so with the expectation that the Legislature would increase spending by at least \$755.6 million by 2008-09 and as needed after that to fulfill its constitutional duty.

But districts could and should have given the economy more chance to recover after the devastating recession, and allowed the Legislature and new governor time to restore money as the revenue picture improved.

Instead, school finance is back in court, aggravating the adversarial relationship between lawmakers and local districts.

The case will be in the hands of a three-judge panel assigned to oversee it: District Court judges Franklin Theis of Topeka and Robert Fleming of Parsons and retired Judge Jack Burr of Goodland. A trial could be a year away.

That means there's still time for the parties to come together on a legislative solution – something that should get easier as the economy improves and revenues rebound. The last thing Kansas needs is a replay of the earlier lawsuit, which took seven years, two legislative studies, a special session and lots of legal bills to conclude.

– *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

### 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 or Fax (202) 225-5124

**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](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) web: [www.morrisonfamily.com](http://www.morrisonfamily.com)

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 [ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail [colby.editor@nwkans.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkans.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

### 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@nwkans.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkans.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@nwkans.com](mailto:s.haynes@nwkans.com)

#### NEWS

**Kevin Bottrell - News Editor**  
[kbottrell@nwkans.com](mailto:kbottrell@nwkans.com)

**Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter**  
[aheintz@nwkans.com](mailto:aheintz@nwkans.com)

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**  
[mballard@nwkans.com](mailto:mballard@nwkans.com)

**Vera Sloan and Shelby Pulkrabek - Society Editors**  
[colby.society@nwkans.com](mailto:colby.society@nwkans.com)

#### ADVERTISING

**Andrea Bowers - Advertising Representative**  
[abowers@nwkans.com](mailto:abowers@nwkans.com)

**Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative**  
[kballard@nwkans.com](mailto:kballard@nwkans.com)

**Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design**  
[khunter@nwkans.com](mailto:khunter@nwkans.com)

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

**Robin Tubbs - Office Manager**  
[rtubbs@nwkans.com](mailto:rtubbs@nwkans.com)

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
[support@nwkans.com](mailto:support@nwkans.com)

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**

Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, 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.



### Drug arrests have far-reaching effects

The arrests of eight people, including six players from Colby Community College's baseball team, on Oct. 21 for allegedly using and/or selling marijuana has led me to reflect on America's drug culture and the policies the government has used in its attempt to suppress drug use.

While what these eight individuals did was wrong, I'm not going to act holier than thou about drug usage. I used marijuana on five or six occasions when I was younger, and I have several friends who drank a lot or abused drugs worse than pot.

While I worried about them and occasionally tried to persuade them to stop, it didn't stop me from recognizing the positive aspects of their personalities.

While no one has been found guilty of any wrongdoing to date, it appears the people arrested in October made a selfish, thoughtless decision that not only reflects badly on them, but also the baseball program and the college. The incident will also hurt the future sports career of the baseball players. Given the stricter steroids policy in Major League Baseball, athletes need to get used to stricter anti-drug policies at every level.

That said, I'm not going to be somebody who dismisses these folks as losers and drugies without knowing them.

Looking back, I realize smoking pot was not one of the smartest decisions I've ever made. While I think marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol, it's still illegal.

Some will argue that the law is unjust, which



**Andy Heintz**

• Wildcat Ramblings

makes it morally OK to break. Criminalizing marijuana and other drugs has led to horrific drug-fueled gang violence in poorer countries and created bloated jails and crime-ridden inner cities at home. America's drug consumption has promoted drug-related violence in Mexico that led to 30,000 deaths and counting.

A far more logical way to protest America's drug laws is to drum up grass-roots support for alternatives.

Former Latin American presidents whose countries have endured tragic violence partly caused by America's anti-drug policies have voiced support for more liberal drug laws. Former Mexican President Vicente Fox wrote on his blog, "We should consider legalizing the production, sale and distribution of drugs."

"Legalization does not mean that drugs are good, but we have to see it as a strategy to weaken and break the economic system that allows cartels to make huge profits, which in turn increases their power and capacity to corrupt."

Former Colombian President Cesar Gaviria, who held office as his country endured car

bombs and murders orchestrated by cocaine kingpin Pablo Escobar, told *Time Magazine*, "U.S. drug policy has failed. So please change it. Don't force us to sacrifice thousands of lives for a strategy that doesn't work simply because American politicians lack the courage to change course."

Many critics point to a singular lack of success as a reason to liberalize our drug laws. Despite our strict policies, America has the highest rates of cocaine and marijuana use in the world, and our prisons our home to 25 percent of the world's prisoners.

Ironically, Portugal has seen a drop in drug use after the government there abolished all criminal penalties for personal possession of drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines, according to the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. The study found that new HIV infections in drug users fell by 17 percent between 1999 and 2003, and deaths related to heroin and similar drugs were cut by more than half.

Hopefully, our government will one day decriminalize drugs in a way to similar to what has happened in Portugal, but until then people ought to think about the brutal violence in Mexico before they roll another joint.

*Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.*

### Hazards rest in the most innocent foods

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and it's the perfect time to give thanks for the food we eat. That means all sorts of goodies – roast turkey, pork loin, ham, stuffing, fresh-baked bread, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes, wine and pumpkin pie topped with whipped cream.

Now that you're chomping at the bit to sit down at the holiday table, let me throw a monkey wrench into the menu. That's right, scientists with the American Council on Science and Health continue to analyze the foods that make up a traditional holiday dinner and have found them loaded with carcinogens. You know, chemicals that in large doses can cause cancer in laboratory animals.

But are those carcinogens food additives?

No.

Residues of synthetic pesticides?

No. All those carcinogens occur naturally in foods and pose no hazard to human health.

This abundance of natural animal carcinogens is clear evidence why trace levels of man-made chemicals that cause cancer in lab animals should not be a concern when you sit down to give thanks for the wonderful food served up this Thanksgiving.

Take mushrooms for example. They contain hydrazines that are potent animal carcinogens. A fresh vegetable tray is full of nitrates. The main entrée, roast turkey with stuffing and cranberry sauce, contains heterocyclic amines and malonaldehyde, eugenol and furan derivatives, according to the council.

While many of these suspicious-sounding names may be a little scary to read about, it's time Americans stop acting on the presumption that natural is safe and man made is always suspect. While both can be toxic in excess, present scientific knowledge indicates nei-



**John Schlageck**

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

ther man-made nor natural food chemicals are hazardous in the quantities we consume daily, monthly or yearly, the council emphasizes.

If you're interested, toxins, carcinogens and mutagens can be found everywhere in Mother Nature's kitchen. Don't panic about minute levels of man-made chemicals such as the traces of pesticide residues occasionally detected.

According to the council, one mushroom has an estimated relative cancer hazard 167 times greater than the daily dietary intake of the chemicals PCB and EDB. The relative cancer hazards of alcohol in 8.45 ounces of wine is 78 times that of saccharin in diet cola and 1,175 times the hazard from trichloroethylene in one liter of water from the most contaminated well in Silicon Valley, Calif.

If there is a health problem we should be concerned about during the upcoming holiday season, it may be overeating. If you don't watch yourself, you could gobble down more than 2,000 calories in one setting.

It doesn't take a food scientist to figure out you'll wind up stuffed like a turkey if you overindulge during the holidays.

Overeating has been labeled the most striking carcinogen ever discovered in studies of rodents, according to the council. In other words, "Fat rats get cancer." Fat people do the

same.

Remember, when you sit down at the holiday table this season, leave that last turkey leg for someone else. You don't have to eat every roll on the plate. And yes, the family cat might enjoy those last three spoons of gravy.

Eat moderate quantities of a wide variety of foods. The foods on our menu are healthy and wholesome. Despite the presence of Mother Nature's toxins, they are not dangerous when consumed in moderation as part of a balanced, varied diet.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

### 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.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

