

## Our Viewpoint

### Governor's success may stun pundits

The commentators seem to be quite worried about how Gov.-elect Sam Brownback will be able to balance his campaign promise to focus on jobs and the economy with demands from the religious right for tougher abortion laws, from gun advocates for new laws and from other conservative groups.

John Hanna, the Associated Press' long-time statehouse correspondent, said the big GOP victories could be setting the dominant party up for infighting the likes of which it has seldom seen.

And, to be fair, the party has such big majorities in the House (92-33) and Senate (31-9) – that's nearly three-fourths – that some disputes do seem likely. When one party gets that big, it's just natural for it to split into wings. The Kansas GOP has had two distinct, not always harmonious groups, for years.

One reason for this may be that many who might otherwise be Democrats learned early on that they need to be Republicans to get elected in this state. The party is where the action – and the power – are.

Some years, competition between these two groups is more than the limited fight the state's impoverished Democrats can put up. And in politics, maybe it just has to be that way. Too much unity might actually be dangerous, with a happy majority running roughshod over a weak and powerless minority.

Dr. Ed Flentje, a political scientist at Wichita State University, writing in a regular column, says the new governor may find he has little power to reform the state's education establishment, though he wishes him luck.

There's some truth to that. In Kansas, while public schools take fully half the state budget, the governor and Legislature have little say. The elected state Board of Education hires the commissioner, who runs the Department of Education.

And while the Legislature is supposed to set the budget, balancing schools with other needs, in practice, state courts and the power of the education lobby have stripped even that influence away. Education does as education wishes.

Yet we have faith in the new governor. In 14 years in the U.S. Senate and in years as a state legislator and cabinet member, he's proven he can handle himself. He's a popular and likable candidate, and he has proven himself an effective leader.

Running the state, if that's the right term, should prove to be within his powers. He knows how to work with the Legislature, and his campaign platform apparently resounded with voters. He left the Democrats in the dust.

Sure, as a conservative Republican, Mr. Brownback will have to deal with those who focus on abortion, gun rights, drugs and other issues. He can afford to toss each of these dogs a bone, and he will.

That shouldn't detract from his mission to boost the economy and shrink the government, and in that, he'll be helped by a general upward trend in business and state revenue. Where for the last three years, the "experts" who project state income consistently ran behind the dropoff in taxes, in a recovery, typically, income will run ahead of projections.

There will be problems. The state has to deal with the loss of millions in federal "stimulus" money and in the projected end two years out of the "temporary" 20 percent increase in the state sales tax.

There will be no "extra" money to spend, but as a conservative, the governor-elect should be comfortable with tight budgets. If he seeks to prove his mettle, he'll make the system work with the money the state has.

And we think he'll do just that, surprising the commentators, but not everyone. – *Steve Haynes*

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### Palin campaigning outside the box

OK, so I'm going to wave the white flag! Sort of.

I read Sarah Palin's first book and looking forward to doing the same with her second. And I've been watching "Sarah Palin's Alaska" on the Learning Channel. I'm beginning to see a side of Palin that's been ignored by part of my brain.

Palin isn't the smartest person in the political mix. But she's far from being the most stupid. How many of the 2012 presidential hopefuls gave a thought to seeking the office in the fashion she's using? She knows she will need to climb out of the box if she wants to match the publicity President Barack Obama enjoys by virtue of his office.

Her eight-week reality series, "Sarah Palin's Alaska," is more of a political advertisement than an introduction to that marvelous state. Alaska hasn't exactly been starving for publicity.

While the other Republican presidential hopefuls are out there doing it the old-fashioned way, Palin is busy writing books, holding down a television slot on Fox News, doing her thing on a two-month television reality show, and even sitting down with *The New York Times* for an interview. Yes, you read that right, *The New York Times*.

If Palin decides she's now ripe to give the White House a shot, that isn't necessarily going to set well with some of the older, moldier GOP'ers like Sen. Mitch McConnell. Her nomination would be their worst nightmare. They feel a Palin presidential candidacy would guarantee Obama a shoo-in for a second term.



#### Tom Dreiling

#### • A View From the West

I would bet there are very few people out there who could name the dozen or more Republican presidential hopefuls. Quietly, they are campaigning like it's supposed to be done. But they are so quiet you neither hear nor see them at all. Cameras, reporters, photographers, television networks and newspapers and magazines are featuring and following Palin.

You call her stupid? I think she's going to run, but I am yet not convinced she's qualified. That issue will need to be addressed in a deeper sense than it has so far.

Airport pat-downs. That seems to be the controversy of the moment. I don't know how many folks are opposed, but it seems that not everybody is herded into the pat-down stable. The old saying, "Many are called but few are chosen" could sum up the latest outcry. And I am waiting for the next big love story that makes the Breaking News category to be the direct result of an airport pat-down. Sweet!

The Nov. 2 election results in Kansas once again underscored the two things that the state raises most: wheat and Republicans!

I can well remember when I was a high school student at St. Joseph's Military Academy in Hays, Kan., and some of us would decide to cut class. The principal, Father Anselm Martin, knew exactly where to call when Dreiling and Drees and Bollig and Walters and Wasinger and Evans and Leiker and Spies and Gabel and Rome and Staab and Depperschmidt and Ross, etc., etc. came up missing.

Ah, yes, he would call the good old Playmore, a really good place to study if you were into pool, cards, bowling and pinball machines. The Playmore was in the 100 block of East 11th.

Comments to [milehitom@hotmail.com](mailto:milehitom@hotmail.com) are appreciated.

I might mention that nephew Sean Dreiling made the headlines when he popped in 16 points for the Fort Hays State University Tigers in a basketball game last week. Talk about being proud! He is the son of Curt and Patti Dreiling, Estes Park, Colo., and the grandson of Donna Jean (Jeanie) Dreiling of Hays.

Take care.

*Tom Dreiling of Aurora, Colo., is a former publisher of the Colby Free Press and The Norton Telegram, and a former long-time editor of the old Goodland Daily News. He is a life-long Democrat, a curmudgeon come lately and a newly minted Coloradan.*

### 'Creative insubordination' beats fads

"Talking back to your parents or teacher" may be a common definition of "insubordination," but "failure to perform duties as directed" is the professional definition.

A teacher can be as pleasant and polite as possible and still be insubordinate. When teachers sign a contract, they agree to carry out all the professional duties and policies specified by the local and state school boards. Failure to carry out such duties is insubordination.

For example, taking daily attendance is a critical duty that is the basis for state aid per pupil as well as knowing where children are while we are "in the place of parents." Accidentally skipping attendance is an "oops" – not a big problem if the teacher gets back to it the next day. But a teacher who will not take attendance would be insubordinate and could be fired.

In contrast, "creative insubordination" is a strategy that teachers quietly use (although this term has probably never appeared in print until now). It is a tactic used by teachers to continue teaching their students effectively when faced with questionable education fads.

Oppressive education "reforms" accelerated in the early 1970s.

"Individualized instruction" was the well-intentioned theory that everyone could independently "learn at their own rate." It ignored the reality that nearly all students learn more efficiently studying together in the rich context of a classroom.

Teachers who tried individualized instruc-



#### John Richard Schrock

#### • Education Frontlines

tion saw its problems within a semester and brought their classes back to the same task while keeping a few projects to convince administrators they were still individualizing. That was "creative insubordination."

"Open classrooms" was another ivory-tower fad, building schools without walls for reasons few can remember today. Teachers quietly added portable blackboards and file cabinets to restore walls and regain their students' attention – more "creative insubordination."

Under "cooperative learning," all lessons were to be group projects assigned one group grade, a system that promoted cheating: the motivated student did the work and the slackers shared that same grade. When strategies for forcing other team members to work and learn were mostly ineffective, many teachers kept a few token projects but returned to grading student's work separately – "creative insubordination."

In response to over two dozen recent reforms, veteran teachers have smiled and said "yes" to administrators imposing the fad, and then closed their classroom door and (to the extent possible) continued with effective

teaching practices that they know work.

Many veteran teachers will smile at my description of their strategy. But university educationists and curriculum specialists in public schools complain that such teachers have been subverting their reforms.

"Open classrooms or cooperative learning would have worked if only teachers had believed in it," they assert. So it is now more difficult for teachers to exercise any professional discretion or make an end-run around bad reforms.

Today, if a teacher continues to teach what is relevant to students' backgrounds and unique career aspirations rather than the standardized cookie-cutter curriculum, this failure to teach-to-the-test could result in not making "adequate yearly progress" under No Child Left Behind. The whole school would fail, and it will be this teacher's fault!

Today's system forces teachers who are in the pre-assessment curriculum to toe-the-line. More and more, the only happy teachers I see are those teaching outside or above the assessment tracks.

Just as many of today's reforms suppress creativity in students, we are also making it difficult for teachers to be "creatively insubordinate."

*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.*

### Mallard Fillmore

#### • Bruce Tinsley

