

Free Press Viewpoint

College board faces tough choices

It looks as if Colby Community College will have some tough financial decisions to make this spring. Alan Waites, vice president of business affairs, predicts the college will fall \$400,000 short of its \$12.76 million budget for the year ending June 30.

The causes of the shaky budget include a 7.5 percent drop in enrollment through the fall semester, including summer enrollment, and having 50 fewer students than expected living in the dorms.

The painful decisions the college will eventually have to make could include pay cuts for salaried employees, cuts in important programs, even people getting laid off (though that has not been discussed at college board meetings).

Waites recommended the 2011-2012 budget be based on \$1.2 million to \$1.4 million less revenue.

Whatever one thinks of the college, you can hear both positive and negative opinions around town, it remains an integral part of this community and its employees deserve our support during these rocky times.

Talking with members of the college trustees, teachers and other employees, we know no one is going to be thrilled with the options available to offset the revenue loss. No one will enjoy cutting programs or salaries for faculty and employees, even if the board decides to approve these actions. While the college certainly needs to come up with plans aimed at increasing enrollment and dorm occupancy, it would be unfair to blame a few people for the current money situation.

Keeping enrollment high in a region with a declining population is no easy task. And the college doesn't have the advantage of living next to attractive geographical features such as beautiful rivers, picturesque mountains, rolling foothills, oceans or seas that are a natural draw for students. The college isn't near a city that might draw others.

The biggest strength it has lies in the neighborliness of the people at the college and in the area. One of the best things the public can do for the college is provide a welcoming environment to the students who move there to go to school. Whether they be athletes, student council members or just average students, locals should go out of their way to make these people feel like they are welcome. The college should not be treated like an island unto itself, separated from the rest of Colby.

You meet some of the nicest people in this town. We all need to embrace and support the college, its students, its faculty and its leadership, as it tries to deal with these tough times.

— Andy Heintz

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building Room C-4, Washington, D.C. 20002 (202) 224-6521 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

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

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 www.rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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

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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 - Society Editor

Shelby Pulkrabek - Society Reporter
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Andrea Bowers, Kathryn Ballard, Tammy Withers

Advertising Representatives
abowers@nwkansas.com kballard@nwkansas.com twithers@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

NORWEST PRESS

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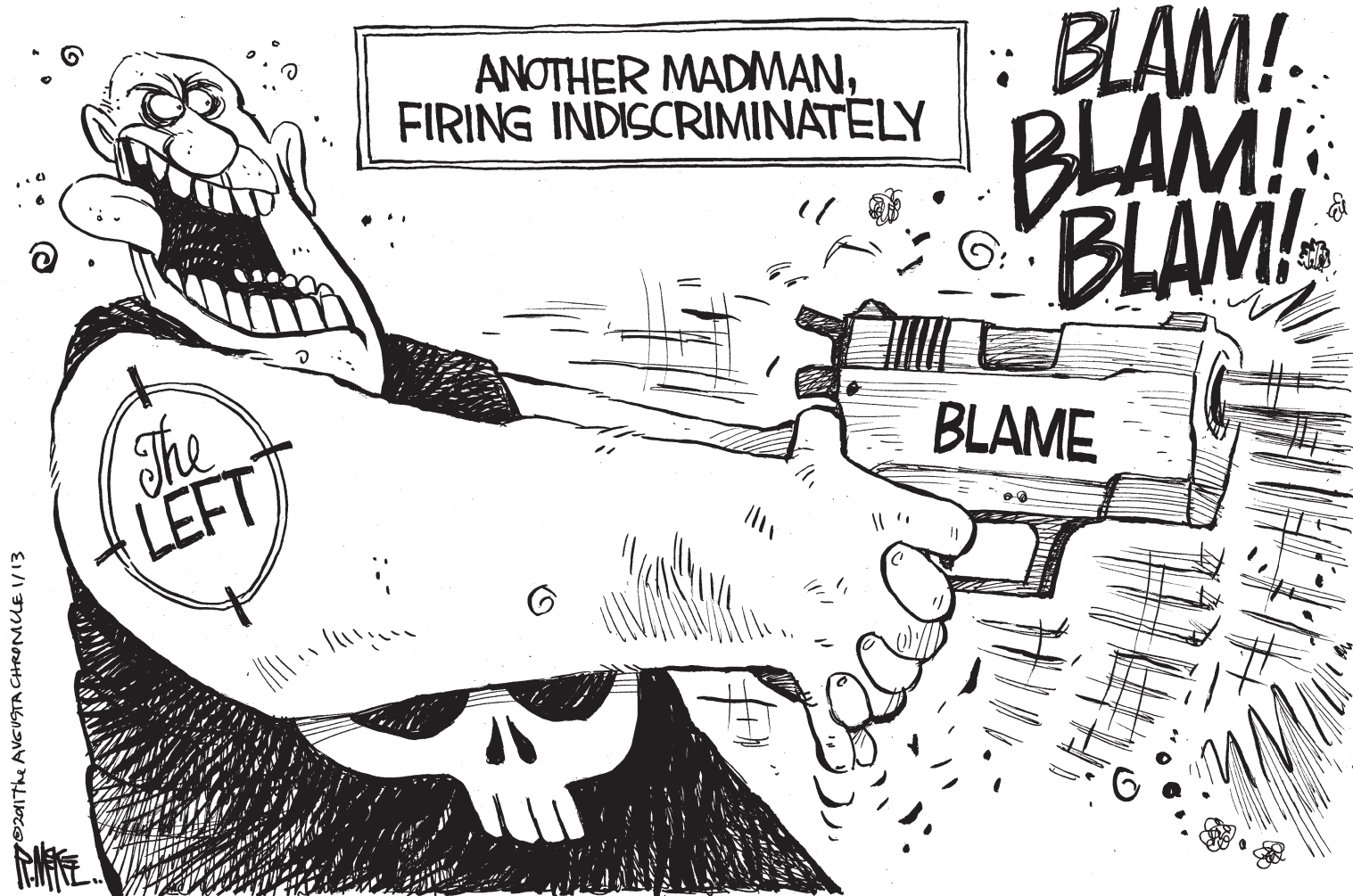
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Scene reminds of a gift from childhood

Christmas week I saw a little girl in a snowy-white stocking cap. It had a yarn ball on the top and a tiny bill on the front. The sides of the cap were knitted down so long that they could be wrapped around her neck like a scarf.

I had to smile when I saw it, because I once had a cap just like that. I bought it when I was in the fifth grade and we lived in Bethany, Okla.

That was the year when my two sisters, my brother and I woke up on Christmas morning and didn't find any gifts under the tree. You might think my memories of that Christmas would be sad, but they are among some of my best.

That December, my dad, a construction worker, was working out of town and money was really short. We all knew that Mom had only enough money to keep the household going and to buy groceries. She was hoping Dad would get home with his pay a day or two before Christmas so they could go shopping. As it was, Dad didn't get home until late on Christmas Eve.

We didn't have any presents, but we did have something in our stockings. There was a nice crisp \$5 bill in each with a note that Mom would take us to Oklahoma City to spend our money the day after Christmas.

I don't know how my little brother felt about the whole thing — he was only about 5 at the time — but all of us girls were excited about going shopping.

It was amazing the amount of things we



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

were able to buy with that one \$5 bill each in those days, especially since it was the day after Christmas and everything was on sale. That's when I bought the white stocking cap. I know I was able to buy several other items, too, because we all remarked that we got so much more than we would have been able to buy before Christmas. That cap is the only thing I remember. In those days, I probably got it on sale for around a dollar.

The fact is that I really don't remember many of the items I received for Christmas through the years. We girls got dolls until we were too old to play with them any more. We would go through the Sears catalogue as soon as it arrived in the mail and pick out the doll we wanted.

We usually chose the most expensive one in the book. Most of the time, we got a similar doll that wasn't nearly as expensive.

Then there was the year I chose a darling little doll called a Cuppie Doll. It was a small rubber doll with no clothes that was supposed to be a little child angel. It even had tiny wings on its back. It was an inexpensive doll, but I

fell in love with it the moment I saw it, and because it cost so little, it was the very one I got.

Other gifts I remember include a chemistry set that I mixed up smelly concoctions with, a lighted baton when I was a majorette in the Colby High band, and especially a diamond engagement ring I received from my high school boyfriend, Jim Brown, who has now been my husband for 57 years.

Every once in a while, someone will say something, or I will see something like the stocking cap that brings back memories of another gift, but for the most part, toys were just toys.

What I really remember best are the years when our children were small and we were all together for Christmas and all the fun we had getting ready for Christmas Day, watching them open their presents and all the laughter and excitement. Now the fun is watching the grandchildren and great-grandchildren as they enjoy their gifts.

Many people believe that all the excitement of Christmas is for the young, but I think it is for the parents and grandparents, the enjoyment they receive watching the children and having them around.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

How can we prevent the next tragedy?

The Tucson massacre will soon be off the front pages and 6 o'clock news. But will we be any closer to finding how to prevent the next similar event?

We can't blame the handgun for the terrorism that Tucson experienced. Does that mean some kind of regulations concerning ownership and design of handguns are not appropriate?

Hunting regulations require plugs in shotguns to limit the chances a hunter has to harvest too many birds, but we can't limit the number of shots in a semi-automatic handgun to lessen the number of victims of a deranged killer?

What is the justifiable need to have a 30-shot clip for a civilian handgun? What need does a civilian have for a loaded AK-47 loaded rifle? Why shouldn't we have strict enforcement of permits to own firearms? We don't have any problem with strict enforcement of driver's license requirements, or restrictions if the applicant has any known impairment.

The state of Arizona doesn't seem to have any problem with requiring proof of citizenship to be in a person's possession at all times, and certainly most state have no problem with requiring some kind of verification for eligibility to vote. But we shouldn't have restrictive laws concerning the right to own or carry weapons?

The argument that a killer will find some other means if they can't get a gun is ridiculous. Of course they can. But what is the most efficient and reliable weapon, the easiest and most powerful weapon available?

Could this man have killed and wounded that many people with a stick? Could he have been sure to take out his primary target in that parking lot with an automobile?



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

To argue a constitutional right to own weapons of mass destruction, whether they be handguns, long rifles or bazookas, is ridiculous. The Constitution doesn't say anything about a gallon of acid, so we can restrict where you should be toting a gallon of acid? The Constitution doesn't say you can't own an atomic bomb, so it that OK?

Where does common sense come into play? Technology has changed the environment we live in. Weapons have become far more powerful and far more accurate than was imaginable when the Constitution was written. Few, if any, communities had police protection in 1790. The overwhelming majority of the population had need of some kind of firepower to protect themselves from aggressive neighbors or wild animals, and to harvest their meat supply from nature.

An organized militia wasn't a small band of renegades, a gang that could terrorize a community. A hunting party of a dozen fellows doesn't equate to a militia. A posse of local men, carrying their privately owned guns, surely wasn't what was meant by militia.

With just a little bit of intelligent reasoning, we must interpret the definition of a "well-organized militia" as being some kind of group operating under government supervision. In the case of the new United States federal government, that clause most likely was address-

ing the need of the individual states to maintain an armed militia to meet the challenges to maintain law and order.

Anyone who thinks the civilian population should carry firearms to enforce laws governing society is not being realistic. Anyone who thinks unrestricted ownership of any kind of ballistic weaponry is the best way to prevent a small group of powerful politicians, military commanders or foreign armies from overthrowing our government has not read history.

Do you call the neighbor down the road when an unwelcome party is invading your house, or do you call the sheriff or police?

I don't think we want to go back to the feudal system, where survival of the fittest ruled.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

