



Other Viewpoints

Low-priority issue faces big crackdown

From a massive budget deficit to a struggling economy to a broken system for punishing drunken drivers, the state of Kansas is facing no shortage of critical problems here in the early stages of the 2011 legislative session.

Yet there's talk that lawmakers will make another attempt at cracking down on stripping.

Come on, really?

Are nude dance clubs truly such a menace that they require attention at a time when the state is facing a \$550 million budget shortfall and unemployment is stuck at just under 7 percent? When public schools, universities and providers of services to the elderly and disabled are already contending with budget cuts and face yet more? When the state's public pension system has ballooned into a \$7 billion unfunded liability?

It's hard to believe nudie bars would be among the state's most pressing concerns right now, especially since the issue is one that can be addressed at the local level.

Proponents of legislation to restrict adult-oriented businesses would argue otherwise, of course. They contend that city and county governments need help from the state to control dance clubs and adult video stores, particularly in rural areas where governments might not be able to afford drawn-out legal battles to keep developers from moving in.

Should legislators make another run on statewide restrictions, supporters will likely point to a controversial proposal for a strip club in Jefferson County as proof that locals need a hand.

There, a developer is poised to take the county to court should he be denied a permit to open the establishment in Meriden, northeast of Topeka. A lawyer for the developer claims the county's zoning requirements contained no provision that could be used to justifiably block the project.

But that hasn't stopped Jefferson County residents from pressuring public officials to prevent the club from being built and making plans to oppose it if a permit is approved. Among the tactics that have been discussed are picketing the establishment and posting on the Internet the license plate numbers of vehicles in the parking lot....

So, Meriden and Jefferson County residents do have the means to resist the club – if not through zoning regulations, then through community based methods. The same is true elsewhere. ...

While members have voiced valid concerns about adult-oriented establishments, Gov. Sam Brownback has correctly identified job creation and energizing the economy as the areas that should draw most of the Legislature's efforts this session.

In a year when lawmakers face more than enough challenges in keeping the state afloat, going after strippers would be a curious use of their time.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press*

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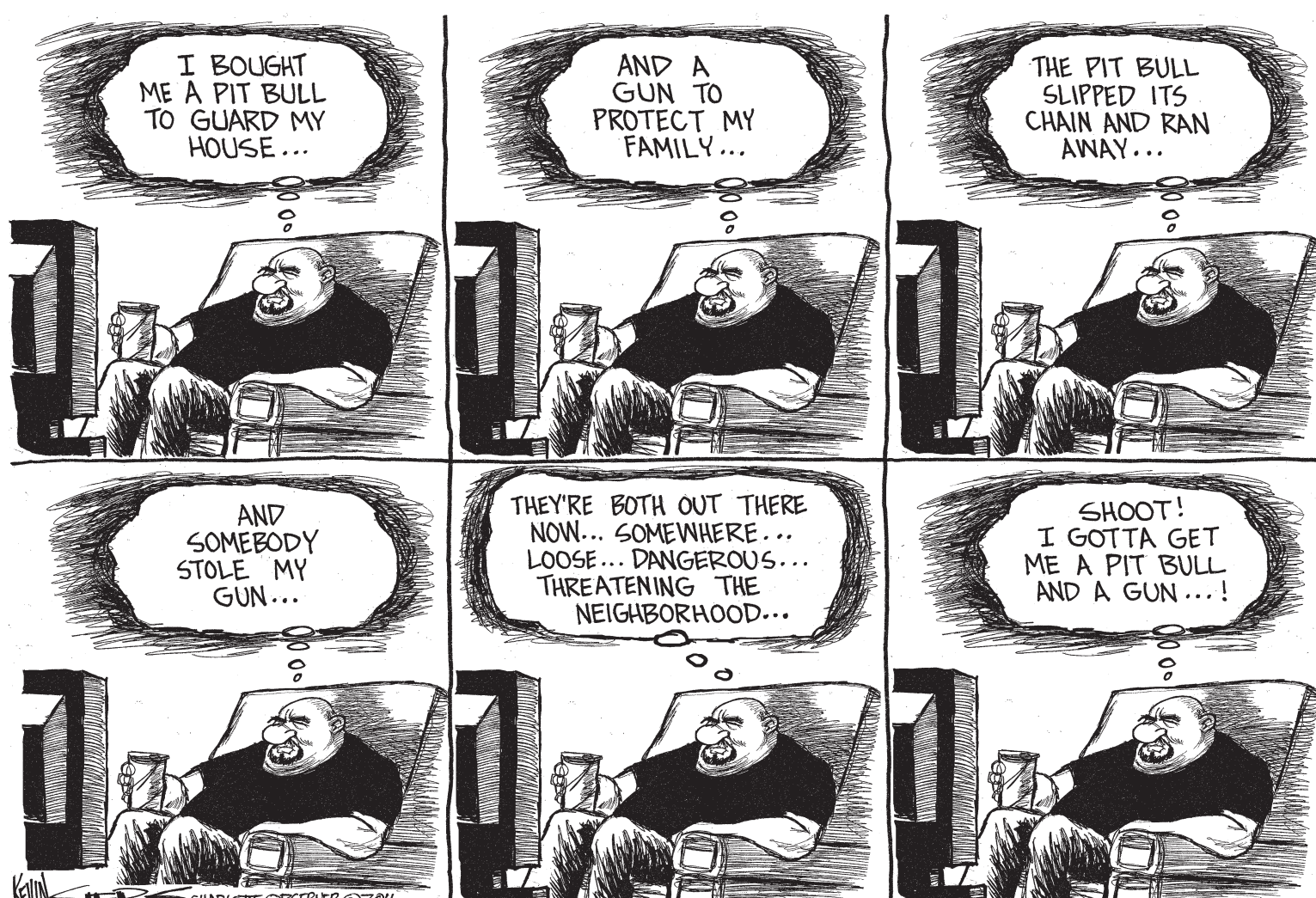
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Defeat still hard to live with

Well, my ego is still recovering from the Harlem Ambassadors' game on Thursday.

For those of you who didn't attend the game at the Community Building, the Ambassadors put on quite a show, full of comedy, acrobatic jams and fancy ball handling. They certainly lived up to their billing.

The Thomas County Chamber Challenger team I played on did pretty well considering it was the first time we had played together. I don't think anyone on the team was surprised or embarrassed that we lost by a substantial margin. But the competitor in me was unable to refrain from moping around a little after the contest.

It wasn't the losing that bothered me. I fully expected my team to lose. The possibility of us winning never crossed mind with the exception of a few times in the first half when I briefly caught severe cases of irrational optimism.

No, what bothered me was my own performance. If I would have gone into the game determined to play as bad as humanly possible, it probably wouldn't have been much worse than how I did. Despite constantly telling myself that it's only a game, the three air balls I shot kept nudging out any more productive thoughts rolling around in brain.

Every time it seemed like my mind had shifted gears to another subject, the air balls would appear out of nowhere like an uninvited guest at a party.

"Three air balls," I kept muttering to no one in particular, like a drunk reminiscing about what drove him to first pick up the bottle.



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

Every time anyone talked to me about the game that night or Friday, I felt the need to give them an elaborate analysis of how badly I'd played. The detail I put into explaining all the ways I messed up would have impressed my boss, Steve Haynes, who always wants my writing to be loaded with specifics.

If the first drafts of my City Council articles had been as specific as my game analysis my boss, City Manager Carolyn Armstrong and the members of the Council would have been spared the minutes they dedicated to slowly explaining to Andy the intricacies of complex bond and loan deals.

I'm not sure why I felt it was my duty to tell people how badly I played, but I think it was mostly self defense, a way to preempt potentially sarcastic comments. No one was going to be able to point out my numerous mistakes because I was going to beat them to the punch.

Looking back on my adolescent response to what was nothing more than an entertaining event put on for a good cause, I couldn't help but laugh at how some things never change. During my sports career, I was notoriously grumpy after a loss. A three-hour retreat to the solace of my room was my typical mature

response to most. Laying in bed after those games, re-enacting all the things that had gone wrong and all the things that would have gone right if I would have done this or that always made me wonder how I was going to cope until the next game.

This bitter taste of nostalgia made me more sympathetic to coaches and players, as well as their significant others who have to put up with them after losses.

I have no doubt that the coaches and players at Colby High School and the community college are just as competitive, if not more competitive, than I am. After getting a chance to get to know some of them, I always feel for them after a loss. While it's true that sports are just a game, this doesn't make it any easier on coaches and players, who are way too competitive to simply shrug off a loss.

One of the worst parts of my job is interviewing coaches and players after a loss. I know from personal experience that the last thing anyone wants to do after a defeat is enter into a detailed conversation about why their team was unable to pick up a victory.

Anyone who doesn't understand why people get so worked up over what should be nothing more than kids' games probably never will understand. It's just the way some of us are. Our moods eventually brighten, and we secretly appreciate your willingness to put up with us.

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.

Winter kill confronts wheat farmers

There's a whole lot of wheat in the western third of Kansas that looks mighty tough. Some of the crop is barely out of the ground. Other fields have a bit of green but little growth.

More alarming are quarters and half sections with no wheat visible at all.

One thing is certain: this year's crop is low on moisture, has little if any root growth and is fragile and vulnerable to winter kill.

Travel west of Dodge City to Ingalls in Gray County, and most of the better wheat has received less than an inch of rain since the seed was "dusted in" last September. That's not nearly enough to send this year's crop into the traditionally dry months of January and February in a vigorous condition.

While some of the crop received about two inches of snow New Year's Eve and a dusting a week later, this moisture was hardly enough.

"So far, our wheat crop is not looking good," says long-time Gray County farmer Joe Jury. "This country always blows this time of the year, and that also spells problems."

Most farmers chem-fallow, minimum till or no till in this part of Kansas, which builds crop residue on their soil to prevent wind erosion and save moisture. Valuable lessons were learned during the five-year drought between 2001 and 2005, when many didn't harvest a wheat crop.

"Today, we try to save every bit of moisture," Jury says. "We attempt to manage our crop residue and moisture much better than we did 10, 15 or even 20 years ago. With the new biogenetics, we can raise so much more on less moisture."

In spite of the rough-looking winter wheat



John Schlageck

• Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

crop, Jury still hopes to get enough moisture to raise an average crop. The Gray County farmer isn't ready to give up yet.

Further west in Stanton and Morton counties, a couple of miles from the Colorado border, Jim Sipes rates the wheat crop below average. Sipes says much of this entire region of the state wasn't able to establish a good stand, with some of the wheat acreage yet to sprout.

As of the first week of January, he rated his crop below average and the entire region as "poor." Being a certified dealer, Sipes sells seed wheat to growers across this entire area of Kansas. He talks to many more.

To date, the moisture pattern has been extremely dry. For the wheat crop to turn around, weather in southwestern Kansas is going to have to change.

The southwestern Kansas farmer believes the continued lack of moisture could be devastating for yields in this part of the state.

"While no one can predict what will happen to this year's crop, my fear is now that temperatures are dropping and nights have dipped below zero, this wheat crop is not protected. I'm afraid we're probably going to see a lot of winter kill this year."

Sipes foresees many acres being destroyed,

with farmers looking to plant summer crops on failed acres. On the remaining acres, he believes many are looking at a wheat crop of less than half of a normal yield for this region.

If there is a bright side to this grim picture, it's this – if there's ever a good time to be dry, it's this time of year. That's because the wheat is dormant and isn't using moisture.

That could change quickly if the dusting of snow vacates this part of the state and temperatures climb back into the 40s or above. Then the crop will start growing again.

Should this occur, and the weather continues with a warming trend, insects begin to show up – especially in February. That will mean scouting fields and the possibility of spraying to control pests that have the potential to lower yields even more.

"The problem then becomes, can I afford to drop more money into an already sinking ship?" Sipes explains. "It's always a difficult decision."

Both men are hoping and praying for more snow to insulate the fragile crop and rain later. And while winter wheat prospects look bleak today, they know this crop is resilient.

"There's an old saying that you have to kill wheat at least nine times before you really kill it," Jury says with a chuckle. "If we receive timely spring moisture ... we may still grow some average wheat – and that's better than no wheat at all."

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.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

