



Other Viewpoints

Transportation cuts must be weighed

Politicians riding a wave of "tea party" sentiment have had plenty to say about spending cuts and not so much about sensible ways to invest in the future.

Rep. Tim Huelskamp, the Fowler Republican who relied on tea-party support to become representative of the 1st Congressional District, which covers all of western Kansas, is among those eyeing drastic spending cuts.

Transportation programs such as Essential Air Service and Amtrak, in particular, are among areas in House Republicans' sights, which understandably has sounded alarms in places like Garden City.

Questioned recently about possible cuts to transportation programs that smaller communities depend on, Huelskamp said all spending is on the table.

Considering the climbing federal debt, no one should expect more spending. The danger, however, is in that transportation cuts might not only hinder towns' ability to grow, but also diminish their chances of sustaining what they have.

Congress launched air-service subsidies after deregulation as a way for smaller communities to maintain commercial air service, which has been an economic boost to Finney County. Amtrak has remained an affordable option that helps many in this part of the state connect to other destinations.

Western Kansas already has significant transportation challenges. The region cannot afford to lose more ground when it comes to economic development.

Our representatives have to acknowledge as much.

While there's no doubt that a long-term strategy for lowering the federal debt is in order, it's also necessary to pursue ways to get people working and re-energizing the nation's economy. This should include investing in programs that promise to pay off in the long run.

As easy as it may sound to some, the nation cannot simply cut its way to prosperity.

When they eye future spending cuts, lawmakers have a responsibility to consider the impact on the most vulnerable among us. With transportation programs, that means communities most vulnerable.

Western Kansas is dotted with cities that depend on their transportation links to stay viable. Anyone interested in curbing such services needs to slow down and weigh the long-term consequences.

— *The Garden City Telegram, 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. 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

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@nwkansans.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@nwkansans.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell@nwkansans.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz@nwkansans.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansans.com

Vera Sloan - Society Editor

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

ADVERTISING

Andrea Bowers, Kathryn Ballard, Tammy Withers

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

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansans.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Robin Tubbs - Office Manager
rtubbs@nwkansans.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansans.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

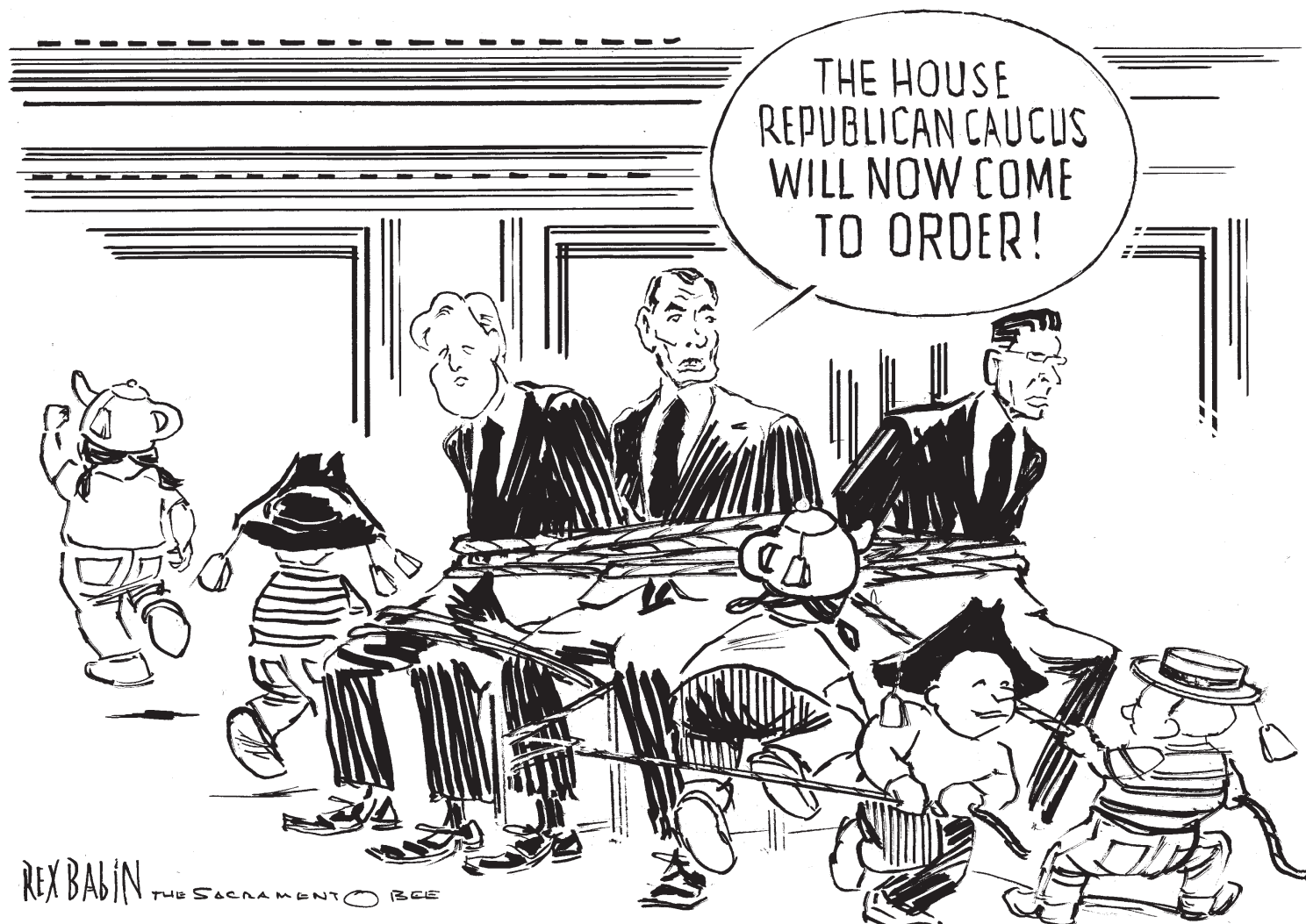
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool

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



Fairness demands an open mind

In an effort to prevent myself from indulging in the kind of intentional self-denial that allows people to hide from "inconvenient truths" — things that challenge their predetermined ideas — I always read articles online by writers for conservative magazines such as the *Weekly Standard* and *National Review*.

I analyze the opinions of the people I tend to disagree with more often than not. It is sometimes a painful experience, because it carries the risk of seeing the logic in a way of thinking that I have more or less opposed since I first became interested in politics as a student at Kansas State.

I'm not above admitting that there is a selfish part of my personality that is tempted to cling to long-held theories even if they have been shown to be seriously flawed. There is something comforting about accepting one creed while hanging an invisible "do not disturb sign" in my mind to ward off any and all alternative theories.

That temptation always collides with a deeply held belief that no philosophy is perfect, and I know if I ever blindly adhered to one creed, I would end up feeling like I had forfeited my freedom for comfort.

While I'm generally opposed to the "tea-party" movement's positions on most issues, I don't think it is fair to try to tie this massive, disorganized group to Jared Loughner's murderous shooting rampage Jan. 8 in Tucson, Ariz., that left six people dead.

Some liberals, including former MSNBC talk show host Keith Olbermann and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, criticized



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

prominent right-wing voices such as Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly and Sarah Palin for engaging in what they considered hateful rhetoric likely to make make tragedies like the one in Tucson more commonplace.

While there is a chance that hostile rhetoric will lead mentally unstable people, as well as folks many had previously considered rational, to do awful things, there is also a chance that a television series, a movie or simply a paranoid illusion festering in a badly wired brain could lead to the same tragic results.

There is no doubt that propaganda and incendiary rhetoric can lead to violence; the horrors of the Holocaust proved this. But if certain speech is deemed to be too likely to provoke violence to be protected, who gets to decide what kind of speech is acceptable?

One person's truth can be another's hate speech. One of the hardest things to accept about free speech is that it means all speech is protected, not just speech we agree with. While there are certainly consequences to allowing unrestrained free speech, they pale in comparison to the dangers of censorship.

The idea that the tea party can be solely defined as either a group of fanatics who will

believe any conspiracy theory about President Barack Obama, no matter how ridiculous, or a group of liberty-loving patriots trying to save the country from the rest of us scoundrels is a divisive way to look at this group.

While many conservatives conveniently ignored the more radical elements of the tea-party who have, among other things, compared Obama to Adolph Hitler and Vladimir Lenin and insisted that he is not a natural-born citizen of the U.S., too many liberals, myself included, have refused to look closely at the party to see which tea party members are fanatics and which are principled libertarians.

The way the media and the two political parties have pigeonholed this scattered group, comprising millions of Americans, into two categories undermines reality, degrades the individual and promotes group think.

I admit that my own criticisms of the tea party have been a little unfair at times. While I stand by most of my comments, I was too willing to categorize the whole group. The tea-party movement consists of diverse elements that don't all neatly fit under one umbrella.

This coverage of the tea-party by its supporters and detractors makes for compelling television, but it's not leading to more civil discourse in our nation.

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.

In hard times, celebrate bountiful food

As many Americans continue to face economic hard times, there is no reason to compromise the quality of your family's diet. The cost of eating healthy hasn't changed as much as some less-healthy alternatives, though it does require strategic shopping.

Helping Americans learn how to stretch their grocery dollars with healthy, nutritious food is the theme of Farm Bureau's "Food Check-Out Week" next week <f20-26>. America's farmers and ranchers are committed to producing safe, healthy and abundant food. And they share a common concern with consumers when it comes to putting nutritious meals on the table while sticking to a tight budget.

Recent U.S. Department of Agriculture food price data show that prices for unprepared, readily available fresh fruits and vegetables have remained stable relative to dessert and snack foods, such as chips, ice cream and cola. Translation — the price of a healthier diet has not changed compared to an unhealthy one.

Food Check-Out Week is aimed at helping American consumers learn how to shop wisely while putting nutritious meals on the table with fewer dollars.

Learning to use your grocery dollars wisely



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

helps ensure nutrition isn't neglected. Fruits and vegetables — along with whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, fish, beans, eggs and nuts — are an important part of a healthy diet.

Buying fresh produce when it's in season and costs less, while buying frozen fruits and vegetables when they're not in season, is a smart way to stretch that dollar.

Consumers in Kansas and across this country share in this wealth of food every time they step foot in their favorite supermarket. Today's shopper is fortunate to reap the benefits provided by America's farmers and ranchers.

Crop and livestock producers are proud of their profession. Nowhere is this more visible than the Midwest, our home state of Kansas in particular.

Farmers and ranchers take great pride in producing the cleanest, most abundant crops, including wheat, corn, milo, sunflowers and soybeans. In addition, Kansas ranchers produce some of the best cattle, hogs and sheep.

Kansans are also proud that Food Check-Out Week is an idea that originated with Kansas Farm Bureau in 1997 and has since gone national. Neosho County Farm Bureau member Linda Reinhart, former chair of the Kansas committee of Farm Bureau Women and the American Farm Bureau Women's Committee, thought the concept was important and saw it through to completion.

The saga of the American farmer and rancher is truly a success story. Our farmers are the most productive in the world. Remember to help celebrate this story and the healthiest, safest food anywhere on the planet next week.

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.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

