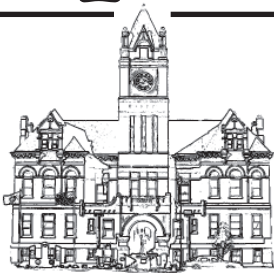




# Opinion

Volume 122, Number 57 Monday, April 11, 2011



## Other Viewpoints

### It's time to toughen laws on metal theft

It is no secret copper theft has been a problem in Kansas. But how to apprehend the thieves has not been as clear. A measure that recently passed the state Senate should make some inroads toward addressing the concern. It's an effort that is long overdue.

News reports have shown that farmers have been hit by metal thefts, as have construction crews and utility companies. In early March, copper corner pieces were stolen off a building on South Main Street that had a just0restored 100-year-old awning.

Creating a paper trail that can lead from the sales of stolen metal to the thief is probably the best way to catch criminals and deter the crime, and that is mainly how the Senate measure approaches the problem. A bill in the state House also would stiffen the penalties for metal theft. The cost of the crime has been based on the value of stolen metal, but under the bill it would be based on the cost of restoring the damaged property.

A House bill also pushes requirements for scrap dealers and specifies scrap yards cannot accept the type of wire used by utilities if the identifying sheathing is burned or stripped off.

The versions moving through both chambers have their advantages. Combined, the bills come dangerously close to creating requirements dealers might not follow, however. It is important to strike a balance that requires steps that will create the necessary paper trail to the thief without over-tasking the scrap dealers to the point of ignoring the law.

What penalty a dealer would face for not cooperating is unclear at this point.

It is reasonable to ask dealers to record name, address and driver's license or other official ID from sellers when buying more than \$50 in scrap. Requirements to get sellers' thumbprints in some cases might be a stretch, but probably still manageable.

Asking dealers to use an electronic payment system that photographs the seller when buying more than \$35 in copper might hit some resistance.

Regardless of the fine-tuning needed on these bills and the inconvenience they may create for scrap dealers, it is well past time that we find ways to deter metal thefts and prosecute these elusive thieves.

— The Hutchinson News, 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  
roberts.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521. Fax (202) 225-5124 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 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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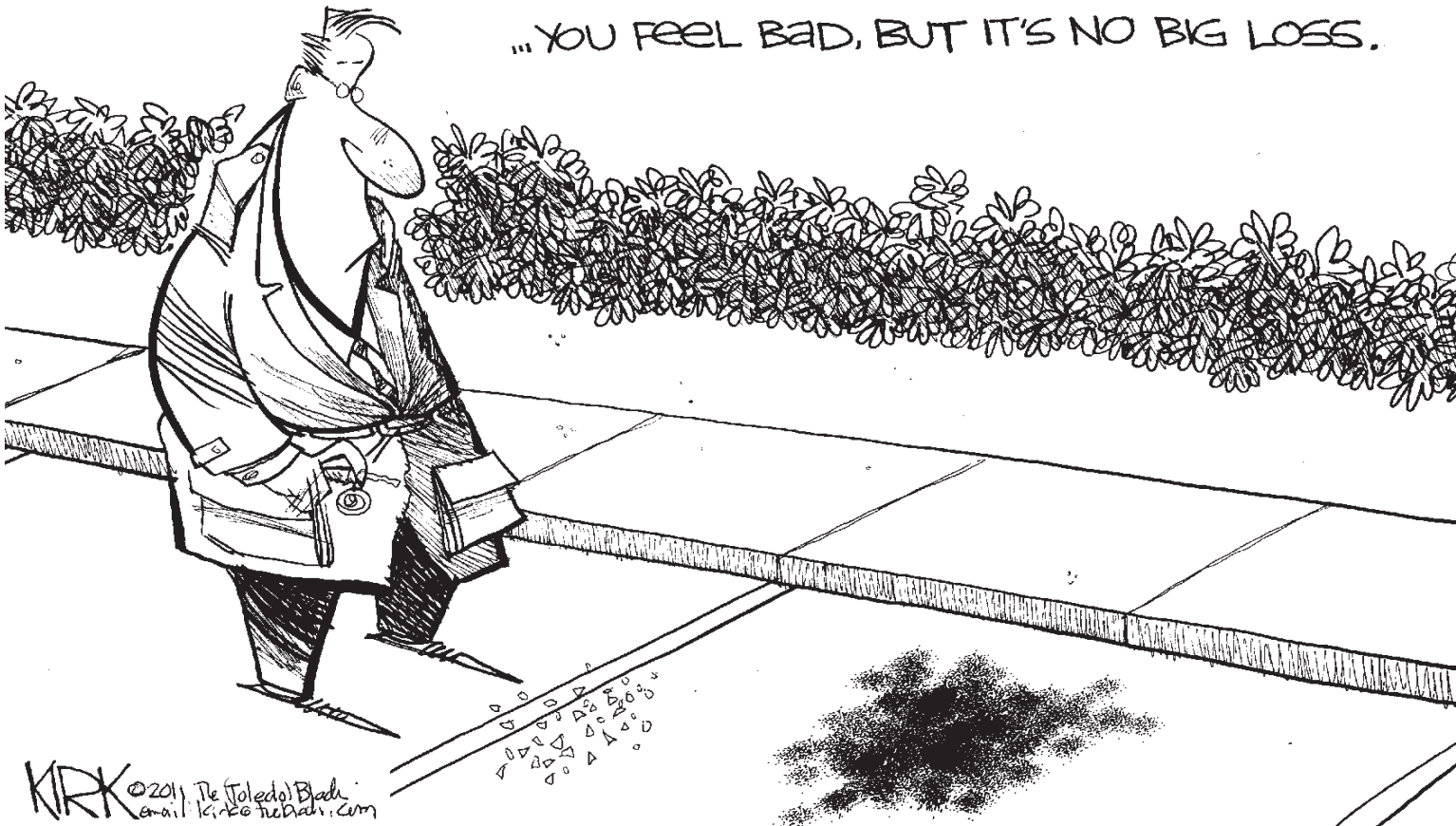
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DISCOVERING THE GOVERNMENT'S BEEN SHUT DOWN IS LIKE FINDING OUT YOUR YUGO HAS BEEN STOLEN...



### What does the broke fool lose?

Someone once said, "A fool and his money are soon parted." What I want to know is what can the fool without money be parted from?

The best response to that question will be highlighted in my next column. Get those thinking caps on.

Also, many have been wondering about the Snippets. Well, today I've picked out some that cover several of my columns. If yours is not among those today, don't give up.

I will also be talking in today's column about what I learn from watching daytime television with a reporter's note pad on my lap.

#### The Snippets!

Re: My move to Colorado – "You ought to move back to Kansas now that we have a REAL, as in Republican, governor!"

Re: Obama's spending – "...Seems like Obama is still on a spending spree and is spending money we don't even have. ...a little fiscal responsibility in the House now after four years, but stymied with a Democrat Senate and vetoing pres."

Re: Addiction – "I love to listen to C-SPAN Radio, sure beats the other drivel out there, and I learn lots."

Re: Addiction – "To be so fortunate with your (television) addiction; if I could get my 40- something unmarried son off his problem, I'd buy him the biggest television set I could find and let him watch FOX, MSNBC and CNN and all the sports he wants, forever!"

Not attributed to any column – "I still have not seen nor read anything ... by the Republicans that makes me want to change my vote."



#### Tom Dreiling

##### • A View From the West

Re: Term Limits – "Term limits would eliminate ... running for re-election before they even know where the men's room is."

Reminder: Letters to the editor need to be sent to the newspaper and require a signature, address, etc. When I mentioned that no signature is required for Snippets, some readers thought they could sneak in a letter unsigned; doesn't work that way. Send your Snippets (up to four sentences) to my e-mail, which appears at the bottom of this column.

In retirement I find time to watch television. But I also read and spend considerable time on my computer. All the while I jot down things that catch my eye or ear. To wit:

1) A company is now making padded bikini tops for 7-year-old girls. Come on, moms, where are your voices?

2) A homeowners association is trying to shut down a lemonade stand kids are operating to help a project at their school. Rules are rules, even when kids are involved.

3) A sign in a demonstrating crowd read, "God Hates You!" I was unaware that God was in need of a spokesperson.

4) Rutgers will begin allowing guys and gals

to share the same dorm rooms. I bet there will be a mad dash of new enrollees!

5) Lindsay Lohan is reportedly dropping her last name. That sounds like defeat, because that's the way jail personnel refer to inmates.

6) Someone in Iowa, I believe, won the recent \$319 million Powerball jackpot. Who needs \$319 million? This winner should talk with past winners and find out how something so big can end up being a terrible nightmare.

7) If you leave your ground floor bedroom window open (minus a screen) to allow Lunesta to fly in, you just might find something else crawling into that open window. Better to be safe than sorry.

8) Then there's the couple whose car breaks down in what looks like a remote area of nowhere. He goes to the trunk and pulls out a new car. The couple jumps in and drives off, leaving their broken down mess blocking the roadway. Nothing like reality, huh?

9) Have you noticed that the people who get fired by Donald Trump on "The Apprentice" never buckle their seat belt when driven off in that long black car? An opportunity missed.

10) The newest book is now on the shelves, "Clinton, President of the World." No wonder President Obama feels uncomfortable around him!

That'll do it. Later!  
*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.*

### Food safety brings peace of mind

Food is deeply entrenched in family values. While most people don't acknowledge it, a recent nationwide survey reveals people value the joy and pleasure that come from eating.

Without question, emotions are also tied with what we're eating for lunch or dinner. Emotional connections to our food sometimes make potential risks within our food supply appear frightening to some.

How people look at risks provides an understanding of why consumers react strongly to food safety issues. People often perceive unfamiliar things as risky if they can't control the outcome, if their exposure is involuntary, if the effects are irreversible and if it's caused by human actions or failures. Food-borne illnesses are an example of the results of actions uncontrollable and unforeseeable by the consumer.

Depending on where you look for figures, about 5 million illnesses each year and 4,000 deaths can be attributable to meat and poultry products, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. In all, about 9,000 people die and at least 6 million become sick each year from food-borne infections.

Today, more livestock producers are doing their part to ensure a quality, safe and healthy product. With each passing generation, consumers are further removed from the farm and ranch that provide the food they eat. As these consumers become more detached from the farm, they've decided to look for and buy "brand name" products, including food that often implies great quality, safety and taste.

Ranchers today are participating in cattle identification programs, including the Beef Verification Solution. These allow a stockman



#### John Schlageck

##### • Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

to track cattle from the cows to the calves to the processing plant as the marketplace demands traceability to satisfy consumers.

The main reason for traceability or an animal identification program is to know exactly where each and every animal comes from. With the new programs, an animal can be traced throughout the life cycle to determine it is healthy and disease free.

And while beef from such programs must meet strict U.S. Department of Agriculture standards to ensure safety, like the food industry and our government, we all have an obligation to keep food healthy and safe. The way we handle, store and cook food can mean the difference between a satisfying meal or a bout with E. coli or salmonella.

Purchasing, storing and preparing food, especially meat and poultry products, may present challenges. As safety-conscious shoppers, it is our responsibility to keep food safe once it leaves the store or meat market.

Always buy food from a reputable dealer, with a known record for safe handling. If you don't know if the meat is fresh, ask a neighbor or friend who's shopped there before.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture advises shoppers to buy dated products only if the "sell

by" or "use by" date has not expired. While these dates are helpful, they are reliable only if the food has been stored at the proper temperature. Dating is not a federal requirement.

Buy products labeled "keep refrigerated" only if they are stored in a refrigerated case and cold to the touch, the department advises. Buy frozen products only if they are frozen solid. Never buy something that feels mushy.

Buy packaged precooked foods only if the package is sound – not damaged or torn.

Avoid cross contamination. To prevent raw meat and poultry from contaminating foods that will be eaten without cooking, enclose individual packages of raw meat or poultry in plastic bags. Position packages of raw meat or poultry in your shopping cart so their juices cannot drip on other food.

Always shop for perishables last. Keep refrigerated and frozen items together so they will remain cold. Place perishables in the coolest part of your car during the trip home. Pack them in an ice chest if the time from store to home refrigerator will be more than an hour.

When it comes to making sure the beef and other food on your family's table is healthy safe and tastes great – it's a team effort. Everyone from the stockman, packer and retailer to the family who buys and prepares the finished product has an obligation to follow sound, tried-and-true steps to ensure that each every one of us eats healthy food.

*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

