



## Rural areas depend on Kan-ed access

As Kansas lawmakers whittle away at spending, a communications link for hospitals, schools and libraries is in jeopardy. Proposed legislation would kill funding for Kan-ed, a pro-

gram that provides high-speed, broadband Internet access to 400 schools, colleges, libraries and hospitals in Kansas.

Kan-ed video-conference technology aids in distance learning services to school districts; educational and research databases to libraries; hospital information sharing; and homework tutorial services for all education levels.

Among examples of its use locally, Garden City Community College joined other area community colleges in expanding course offerings in advanced mathematics with interactive distance learning over the Kan-ed network, while rotating the teaching of the courses between the colleges.

Kan-ed video conferences also have allowed Lee Richardson Zoo, through a partnership with Garden City schools, to offer distance learning programming on wildlife, conservation, animal science and more to students in Kansas and beyond.

By eliminating Kan-ed, hospitals, libraries, and schools would be left to negotiate new deals to maintain statewide connections, and could find future access costs prohibitive, especially in poorer, rural parts of Kansas.

Kan-ed, budgeted at \$10 million a year, relies on tax dollars generated through the Kansas Universal Service Fund, which shows up on phone bills as a 25-cent charge for each phone. Private telecom companies have used the same funding.

It's not as if Kan-ed will put private companies out of business. But critics argue that Kan-ed is obsolete, and has failed to become self-sufficient since its inception in 2001.

Rather than pull the plug on Kan-ed, the program should be allowed to evolve in services to meet future needs of cashstrapped entities that must consider all affordable options.

Unfortunately, local and area representatives joined in a House vote against Kan-ed, even as hospital and school officials lauded the program's ability to keep people in underserved, rural parts of Kansas connected.

While it's vital to use tax dollars as wisely as possible, lawmakers - especially those in a rural region already at a disadvantage when it comes to growth and progress - should consider the negative fallout as they weigh Kan-ed's future.

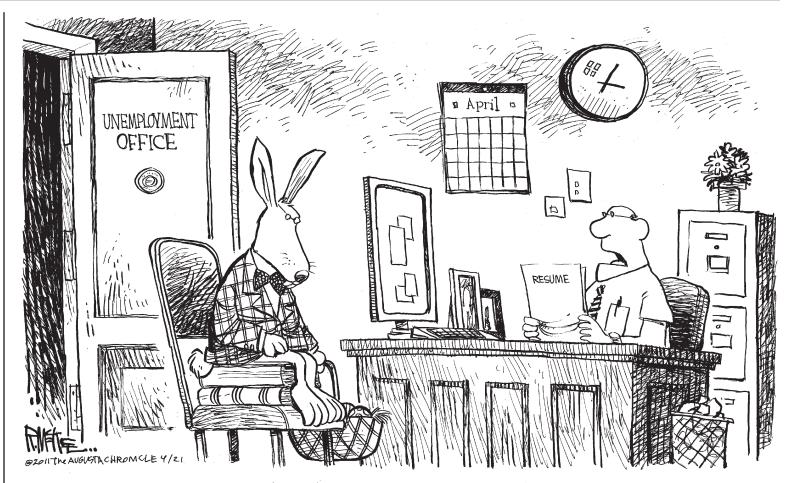
- The Garden City Telegram, via The Associated Press

### Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774 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



# "IN THIS JOB MARKET YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BE FLEXIBLE AND OPEN TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES ..., DON'T PUT ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET."

# Colorado cheers at higher speed limits

Well, here's some good news for Colorado thanks to Kansas!

And that good news will probably generate a chant from the Colorado folks, something to the effect, "About time!"

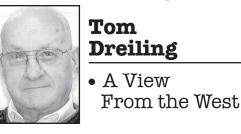
It all has to do with Kansas on the verge of raising its speed limits on Interstate and state super highways from 70 mph to 75. Those heavy-footed Rocky Mountain folks will soon be able to venture into Kansas on I-70 without having to toss an anchor out the window to slow 'em down!

Well, that's an exaggeration, for sure, because few drop their 75 mph speed to Kansas' 70 anyway. Blame those strong Kansas tailwinds.

I can remember when the speed limit on the nation's highways was cut some years ago to 55 mph to help with a gas shortage and other concerns that escape memory. That was booed loudly, but it did decrease the number of fatalities on the nation's roadways.

Reports are beginning to surface that the Memorial holiday weekend will usher in that much talked-about "magic number" - \$5-pergallon gas in this region! Maybe Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback can sign the new law in advance of Memorial Day so motorists can drive even faster to the gas pumps to take advantage of the "lower" priced fuel.

Seventy-five is a bit too fast for this Man of the Plains. When I was still driving, I would keep my speed at 68-70 in Kansas and when window, he looked over at me and raised both causes doesn't mean we have to stop eating I entered another state with a speed limit in the coffee and sandwich in my direction as if natural foods. That tip came my way from a



sional district covers 500 miles from one end to the other, and with little or no air service, he must travel the highways to meet with his constituents. As if he didn't know that before he ran for Congress! Poor excuse to up the speed.

Speed limits really have little influence on the way people operate their cars and pickups and trucks. I recall a few years ago when I was publishing the newspaper in Norton, I was going to Denver over a weekend to see my kids and grandkids and drove a couple of secondary roadways to connect with Interstate-70 at Colby. I wasn't on the Interstate more than 10 minutes before one of those big Ford extended-cab pickups, silver in color and bearing an SG license tag (from Sedgwick County, Wichita), moved over to the left lane to pass me. It was being driven by a young man probably in his 20s. He was doing breakfast, a large cup of coffee in one hand and a sandwich in the other!

As he moved up even with my driver's-side excess of 70 (like Colorado's 75), I would be to say, "Hey, wanna taste?" I could only sur- nephew "deep in the heart of Texas." content to let my machine roll along at, you mise that his knees were controlling the steering wheel. That was a recipe for disaster, but you know the old saying, "That'll never happen to me."

thought to be right on the line of being able to control a vehicle. Yes, recent reports show highway fatalities are down, but this is due to more and more people using seat belts.

But will raising the speed limit be pushing things a bit too far?

"What can a fool without money be parted from?" That was the question I asked in my last column. The best of the lot came from a Kansas City reader, who wrote: "Friends! Who in their right mind would hang around with a fool without money, anyway?"

Several readers weighed in on the possibility of Donald Trump getting into the presidential race with these Snippets:

"He'd have no problem putting together a Cabinet. His two sons and daughter who appear on 'The Apprentice' reality show would fit the bill perfectly. Dad's always right!"

"President Donald Trump? Afraid I'd have to vote Obama, whom I can't stand. But President Donald Trump? That's got to be a joke."

"Donald Trump just might fit the bill. He definitely can make decisions without any problem. That would be different."

Again, Snippets are not letters to the editor; they are simply two or three sentences summing up a thought on a timely topic.

Just because most of us will die of natural

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I watched a television reporter talking with a Texas congressman the other evening who was in full support of that state hiking its speed limit to 80. He pointed out that his congres-

No, I am not an advocate of increasing highway speed limits. Experts will tell you that at 70 mph, no driver has control of his or her vehicle. In fact, the 55 mph speed limit was

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.

## Bad students cost good students

"Look to the left. Look to the Right. One student won't pass this class." This fictitious comment supposedly was made by college professors weeding out a freshman class. The real situation is different.

"Look to the left. Look to the Right. Wait a minute. There is an empty seat. Some student should be in it. But they aren't coming to class.'

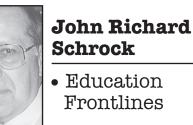
They are wasting their money or their parent's money. So what?

They are pulling state tuition support money away from good students, and contributing to a cheapening of the American college degree.

In the 1980s, just over 40 percent of our high school graduates went on to a "tertiary" school. Today more than 70 percent do. As a result, the Kansas budget supporting higher education is spread thinner.

In the 1980s, Kansas provided two dollars for each one dollar a student paid in tuition to support the instructional costs at Kansas public universities. Today, with dramatically more students, state dollars are spread over far more students. Kansas now underwrites less than a dollar for each tuition dollar paid by students.

So the student who rarely shows up in class is not only costing the Kansas taxpayer who is subsidizing that cost, but also results in good students paying substantially more in tuition.



ACT estimates that only one-fourth of the students who take the ACT test in Kansas are college-ready. The study, "Beyond the Rhetoric..." by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, finds that 60 percent of incoming college students need remedial coursework. At community colleges, the rate is 75 percent, explaining why their graduation rates (for students pursuing a 2-year degree) are only 25 percent nationwide. And the American Institute for Research estimates that Kansas taxpayers spent more than \$93 million on students who dropped out after just one year of college between 2003 and 2008.

Private and research schools have higher retention and graduation rates because they are selective. Nevertheless, across the United States, higher education commissions and boards of regents are pressing faculty to increase retention and graduation rates. Much of this is in response to political calls for the U.S.

to turn out more college graduates.

Faculty, supposedly the gatekeepers of academic rigor, are in a difficult economic situation to openly resist such "orders from above." And many states are imposing financial penalties on public universities if they fail to graduate a higher quota. The more we depend on tuition, the more we recruit every warm body.

College-able students should be concerned, and not just because the missing students that should be sitting beside them in class are costing them money in higher tuition. When they look to the left and look to the right at graduation ceremonies, the scholarly student may find that the absent student is standing beside them to receive a degree, too.

Whether it is higher tuition for the good student today, or cheapened degrees tomorrow, the time is overdue for enforcing a "hard-21" ACT requirement for undergraduates entering Kansas public universities, both for entering freshmen and community college transfers.

Neither Kansas nor our college-able students can afford higher tuition costs and cheapened degrees.

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.

SURELY YOU

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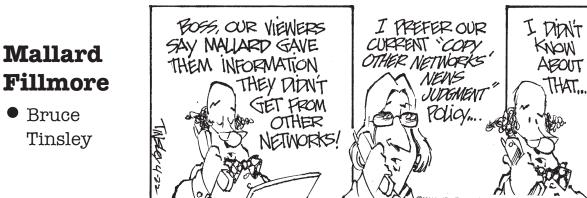
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