



Other Viewpoints

Both parties fail on immigration

Lawmakers from both parties fail in fixing immigration. When it comes to immigration reform, Republicans and Democrats alike in the nation's capital have come up short. Most everyone would agree that immigration reform is in order. A lack of meaningful action in that direction in Congress has compelled some states to consider their own ways to address those who entered the country illegally. The best example would be Arizona, where lawmakers crafted legislation that would require police to check the legal status of people they suspect of being here illegally. Sadly, some Kansas lawmakers also were tempted by the kind of law that would allow police to demand proof of citizenship if there is "reasonable suspicion" a person is here illegally – which could be based on appearance. No community, state or nation should encourage racial profiling. Fortunately, the notion was scuttled in Kansas, at least for now.

But such clumsy attempts to solve the problem of illegal immigration are more proof of why Congress must get its act together.

In a speech Tuesday, President Obama took up immigration and singled out Republicans for failing to get on board with steps toward comprehensive federal reform that would tighten border security while giving those here illegally a path to citizenship if they meet certain demands.

Naturally, Obama later was called out by Republicans who criticized the president's finger-pointing.

The GOP isn't completely off-base. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have indeed failed to make immigration reform a top priority.

The issue is so divisive that it's become easier from a political standpoint to steer clear of taking a stand that may be right, but unpopular with some Americans yearning for a more heavy-handed approach.

And too many Republicans embrace an enforcement-only strategy, instead of an enforcement-first strategy.

Border enforcement has been strengthened, and there have been more deportations since Obama took office. The challenge is in what to do with those already here illegally.

Illegal immigration and its fallout aren't Republican or Democratic problems. They're national problems.

Congress needs to acknowledge as much, and move more quickly toward a realistic solution before some states make a bad situation even worse.

— *The Garden City Telegram, via The Associated Press*

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sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

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"GREAT... NOW WHAT DO WE DO FOR COMIC RELIEF?"

Two needs meet head on

Let's just call this a little story about two categories of need, meeting head on.

It's a true story. I happen to know that because I'm the character involved.

The two categories of need are (1) groceries, the stuff that keeps us alive, and (2) prescription medication, the stuff that, well, keeps us alive.

And both of these were purchased by this Man of the Plains in the very same building on the very same day just a few days ago.

The groceries, 32 items in all, totaled \$81.10.

The prescriptions, two only, totaled \$82.46.

You often hear people say, especially those who are on really fixed incomes, as am I, that they find themselves choosing between food and prescription medication. I hadn't given that much thought until I came face to face with that realization. I had to cut my grocery bill in half to accommodate my prescription needs.

My only support, as I've mentioned before, is that thing called Social Security. Not many bucks, but it's better than nothing. And I warn those politicians who think they are going to put their carving knives into Social Security that I will personally hunt them down and use my carving knife on each of their fingers. I'll also whack off their thumbs to boot!

It's no laughing matter, but there are some crazies in the House of Representatives and in the United States Senate who have an eye on Social Security as one of their targets.

I am not alone in this fight for survival. I spent my life working for a noble, very noble cause – the right to know – newspapering, in other words.

Many of those community newspapers I worked for were not so blessed as to be able to offer their employees a retirement plan. Of course, it wasn't just newspaper employees faced with this, but employees of many other



Tom Dreiling

Man of the Plains

occupations as well. There was a time, it might be worth noting, that when you landed a job, the package might include a vacation, but not always paid. Retirement compensation? What's that?

I loved working as a journalist for 44 years, and proof that I still love writing can be seen in my frequent columns that appear in your favorite newspaper(s). Yep, ink still runs through my veins, although retirement dollars don't. But that's just the way it is.

Yes, there are people who still count pennies as part of their survival plan. And they give thanks for that allotment, knowing there are people worse off who wish they had pennies to count!

Someone some time back, over a cup of coffee, offered this during a conversation about God, "I would rather believe there is a God and then find out there isn't, than to believe there isn't a God and then find out there is!"

Time for a few Snippets

"Snoot' Gingrich for president? May as well toss in 'Terrible Trump' as his running mate. Maybe this will bring Americans to their knees in prayer!"

"Welcome to Colorful Colorado,' somewhere under all that smoke!"

"Aurora (Colo.) is what it is, despite one newspaper's effort to change its image. Too many years of adversity are embedded in its history to suddenly wipe all the bad stuff

away."

"Is it Bush or Obama we thank for Bin Laden's demise? It's not clear."

"If Pakistan's leadership knew Bin Laden was living a life of luxury, with three wives, inside their borders, how can we trust that country? Wake up Obama!"

"Our children go to private schools and they aren't laying off anyone. Maybe the public sector needs to look into how we do it.... It's all about living within your means."

"I saw a thing on television about the seriousness of head injuries to football players in high school. Did our schools see that? ... That's a real wake-up call for every parent who has a child on that football field!"

"Can I wish someone a happy birthday in your Snippets?" (Note: No!)

"The I-70-Vine Street Interchange in Hays is a classic study of an engineering student who flunked. That's as big a mess as you'll find along the Interstate from Denver to Topeka. We usually pull off at Russell to eat our McDonald's hamburgers...."

(Snippets to my e-mail address. Keep them short, no more than four sentences, or I'll do the cutting.)

I will close today with love to Lance and Tobie and Alyssa and Caleb; Todd and Darci and Grayson and Kennadi; and Denise and Darren and Samantha. (I knew I'd eventually slide my kids and grandkids' names in the column.) If you've got a name of someone you'd like me to sign this column off with, please e-mail it to me. It's free ... on me!

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.

'Pencils down' say test protestors

"...Tests do not give a true picture of pupils' attainment, encourage teaching to the test and put pupils under pressure." This quote is not about No Child Left Behind mandated testing. It is part of a BBC News report on England's primary tests for 11-year-olds, called the "Sats tests" (no relation to the SAT). England's teachers, parents and students – unlike Americans – are not passively rolling over to government edicts. Teacher unions joined forces with parents to boycott the tests. "...Year 6 pupils in 4,005 schools did not take Sats in the summer term," according to BBC News. The Sats scores are used to compile league tables or comparisons, a practice the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers calls demoralizing and unnecessary.

If England can do it, why can't we? Kansas schools have just completed their massive mandated spring assessments. Data were due in to the State Department of Education on May 2.

The time has come to make this the last year of drill-and-kill teaching.

Thanks to idealists divorced from reality, No Child Left Behind criteria require that nearly all enrolled students must take the assessments. It will not take very many objectors to shut the system down.

To call for civil disobedience in the classroom is rarely done. As teachers, we rely on



John Richard Schrock

Education Frontlines

conformance for classroom and school order. But the destruction of the K-12 educational system under No Child Left Behind – maintained under the proposed "Blueprint for Reform" – has progressed far enough to lose its legitimacy. We are at the verge of declaring our schools, teachers and students failures based on criteria that trivialize true education.

Thomas Jefferson said: "When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty."

And enough, is enough! It is time to end the narrowing of the curriculum to the few disciplines tested.

It is time to end the contrived pep sessions to get students to perform for the sake of school Adequate Yearly Progress.

It is time to restore professional decision-making to the professional teacher.

It is time to attract our best and brightest college students back into an honorable field where they are treated as professionals, not assembly line workers.

It is time to stop a system that is driving every ounce of creativity out of science and promoting memorization and drop outs.

It is time to stop blaming teachers for student failure that is beyond their control.

It is time to halt tying teachers' salaries to pay-for-scores.

It is time to stop freezing the curriculum to some static national core and national test.

It is time to return teachers to professional development that is centered on new developments in their discipline and not on raising test scores.

If by next spring, our politicians in Washington cannot or will not end the disaster of standardized testing and teaching-to-the-test, Kansas parents, teachers and students can force an end to this classroom tyranny.

Simply let our students lay their pencils down.

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.



Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

