



Other Viewpoints

Political agenda drives decisions

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback really doesn't seek less government, just different government. And he is like so many others who have agendas, whether liberal or conservative, and want to mold government to fit their ideologies.

So, for Brownback, spending \$700,000 for an arts agency was outside the scope of government. He vetoed the line item and laid off the Kansas Arts Commission staff.

Meanwhile, however, Brownback thinks that promoting marriage should be a government function. His administration has applied for a \$6.7 million federal grant for a three-year Marriage Education and Encouragement (MEE) program. It would add a position in the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and contract for counseling services for unwed parents with babies.

Marriage is good. But so are the arts. For some people, one is more important than the other.

The fact of the matter is that government spends taxpayer money on many programs that arguably should be done privately. Much of government spending is about trying to make life better in this country. The disagreement is not about whether that is the role of government - save for a few true libertarians - it is about which programs make life better.

So, for example, many conservatives say government should not subsidize public television and radio. Let the private sector do that or leave all broadcasting to the commercial model.

Fair enough. But public broadcasting produces quality programming clearly lacking on commercial stations. "Sesame Street" is better for our children than the garbage on commercial stations. So in this respect, public broadcasting, too, is about making life better in America.

Kansas is about to find out where we will be without government support of the arts. Following the governor's dismantling of the state arts agency, the National Endowment for the Arts withdrew its annual grant. Arts programs are going to suffer, especially in rural communities that have been heavily dependent on these monies. Programs that expose children to the arts will be cut or go away - an annual trip middle school students in southwest Kansas' Bourbon County take to Kansas City to see a play, for example.

Is a program that promotes marriage more important? Maybe.

But let us be clear when a governor or legislators - or members of Congress in Washington - say that the arts, public broadcasting, or whatever it might be, is just wasteful government spending on something that isn't a primary function of government. Let us just make sure such an argument is applied consistently. -The Hutchinson News



Road trip church brings new experience

I should have known we were in for something a little different when I saw a bishop's mitre in the procession while we were on the way into church.

The archbishop doesn't show up for just any service, after all. And this one would be different.

Regular readers know Cynthia and I try to go to church wherever we are, and Saturday, that happened to be Santa Fe, N.M., where we went to see a photography exhibit. We saw the pictures, then discovered it was the week of the annual Indian Market downtown.

Cynthia wanted to go see what was going on, so we started walking around among blocks and blocks of tent-like booths put up in the streets around the downtown Plaza. Artists from native tribes across the continent were selling jewelry, paintings, pottery, you name it.

After circling the square, we wound up by the cathedral, the focal point of downtown Santa Fe. There the bells were tolling, loud and long. We figured it was a wedding, the end of a war or maybe just Saturday evening Mass. We looked at each other and decided if



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

they were having church, we could go and free up some time in the morning before we started back to Colorado.

So there was the archbishop, in full regalia. An usher explained that it was the annual Native American Mass, with participants from all the New Mexico Pueblo tribes. Everything from music to prayers would have a native theme, with songs, prayers and a dance by tribal representatives.

The old cathedral, a block off the plaza, was packed, as the market had just shut down. The audience seemed to be split among locals, visiting Native Americans and tourists like us. We were hardly dressed for church, but then neither were many of the others.

The archbishop announced a new evange-

lism initiative for the pueblos and talked about the church's links to the native community. The highlight of the service was a presentation of the Eagle Dance by one of the tribes, with two dancers and several drummers.

The whole thing took about an hour and 40 minutes, more than twice as long as a regular service, but then, how often do you get to see the Eagle Dance?

We've gone to church on a couple of continents, and it's always interesting. We've been to the cathedral in Hong Kong, in tiny churches in Central America and Mexico and to Latin Masses blessed by the bishop - and one that was not.

I'd have to say this had to be one of the most interesting services we've stumbled into anywhere. But, we did find it a little hard to sing the hymn done in Tiwa, the Pueblo language.

You just never know what you're getting into when you go to church on the road.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

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Taking the 'state' out of state university

My saddest duty as a department chair five years ago was signing the withdrawal form for one of our college students. He had a good academic record in his first two years so I asked why he was withdrawing. His reply was that his farm family from western Kansas had calculated and saved enough for him to go to school. But even with his working part time, tuition had increased in cost beyond their ability to pay. I readily understood their reluctance to borrow money.

I respect parents and students who save ahead and plan for a college education, often at great sacrifice. But the increases in tuition are now soaring beyond the ability of even middle-class families to "save up." If a student or family takes out college loans, the job prospects for paying back those loans are at an all-time low. Higher education, even at public universities, is becoming just for students from wealthier families.

According to some governors, legislators, university presidents, and regulating bodies such as our state board of regents, college study is now a "private good rather than a public good." That excuse is used to remove the guilt they carry for raising state university tuition year-after-year, an increase that exceeds the exorbitant rise in health care costs.

In the 1980s, Kansas paid nearly two dollars for every dollar paid by students or parents in tuition. Today, that state share is 92 cents and falling.

The real cause of the drop in per-student state



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

support is the near doubling of the number of high school students entering Kansas tertiary institutions since 1980. Today, the majority of our students need remediation. ACT scores show half of the students at state universities are not college-ready. For community colleges, the figures show only one-fourth college-ready for a two-year associates degree.

With limited resources spread across over twice as many students, state support had to drop by more than half per student. The real victim of this shift to tuition-driven enrollment is the good student who pays over twice as much in tuition, and will soon be sitting beside far less capable students at graduation as our policy-makers insist on higher graduation rates.

What does this mean for the spectrum of parents across Kansas with future college students in their family? By switching from "public good" to "private good," state administrators are abdicating their responsibility to provide the state with the intellectual talent it needs and treating students as "customers." They want to "sell" education to customers

who ultimately benefit from the higher education through higher personal salaries.

Treating the student as customer and shifting to what students want in the moment's popularity does not serve Kansas. Shifting university resources to the 200 students who today want to be crime scene investigators, thanks to CSI on television, will produce 190 graduates without a job. Closing down a physics department because it only produces a few nuclear physicists, when we desperately need every one and many more, directly damages the future of Kansas and our country.

State universities should be producing the engineers and nuclear physicists and other experts Kansas needs. Much of that talent will come from middle and lower class Kansas students that the "private good" philosophy is excluding from our universities. Letting the richer kids be customers that drive our curricula by popularity does not serve Kansas.

Students are not customers and state universities should not be commercial storefront operations advertising the latest fad curricula. State universities serve a public good. If the Governor and state educational regulatory bodies continue to privatize our system, we will know exactly who to blame when our doctor shortage continues to grow and we can't find physicists for our power plants.

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.

Slow down for flashing lights: it's the law

To the Editor:

I saw today something that made me sick. I was driving down K-25 and saw flashing lights coming towards me from several blocks away. Flashing lights, flashing headlights and when the officer got close enough he was running his siren.

What made me sick was the traffic going both ways was not pulling to the side, making him go left, right and into the wrong lane just



Free Press Letter Drop

- Our readers sound off

so he could get where he was going. Not only

is this a way to get someone hurt or killed, it was slowing him down and also not only is pulling to the right side of the road the courteous thing to do, it is the law.

I did pull to the right and got stares from the driver behind me like, "schmuck why are you doing this." I do thank you for your time to allow me to get on my soap box. Hope it makes people think from now on.

Steven Hamel, Colby

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

