



Free Press Viewpoint

Regulations still have role to play

We had the good fortune to play host to both Kansas senators this week, and interestingly they both had the same subject on their minds: regulations.

They are of the opinion that regulations stifle businesses, and a lot of their ire is focused on the Environmental Protection Agency. They believe the EPA is out to get farmers, and it's easy to see why when new regs are handed down all the time concerning things like milk spills, dust control, and even hay storage.

When debating regulations, we shouldn't forget there are a lot of good regulations out there; a lot of agencies that are doing their jobs. Take the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for example. It oversees more than 100 commercial nuclear reactors. It uses licensing, safety inspections, performance assessments, employee evaluations and more. It keeps tabs on the design, siting and construction of new plants, research reactors and test reactors. It also has sections that deal with radiation protection, emergency preparedness, and recently created a task force to study Japan's nuclear accident and ways to prevent a similar one.

That's quite a lot of power for one agency, but you don't see many "small government" Republicans going after it, or the Food and Drug Administration or the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Why? Because it's easy to understand how these regulations keep us safe. They prevent nuclear meltdowns or dangerous levels of arsenic in our turkey sandwiches or lead in our children's toys.

Given what happened with the tsunami in Japan and the semi-close call some of the nuclear plants in Missouri experienced in floods this year, we have to ask: is any amount of regulation too burdensome when it comes to public safety? In June the Associated Press investigated U.S. nuclear plants and found that about 1/3 of them were leaking radioactive tritium. Sounds like more regs are needed, not less.

But the senators are right about the need for common sense regulations. We need regs that do their job of protecting consumers, the country and the environment while hurting business, especially small business, as little as possible.

Not all regulatory agencies are the same, and the EPA has gone overboard, especially with regards to agriculture. Congress needs to be able to curb their more radical, off-the-wall regs like this one requiring upgrades to power plants, no matter how many hours a year they are in operation. The EPA itself needs to slow down and allow Congressional approval. Let as many people as you can – from all sides – take a pass at the regulation, and you'll find you have one that makes a lot more sense.

Regulations shouldn't be about politics. They should be about striking a balance between public safety, business growth and the overall good of the country.

So tell your senator and your congressman not to demand an end to all federal regulation. Tell them to demand better oversight, so we can get the regulations we need and put a stop to those we don't. —Kevin Bottrell



Focus on positives in public schools

I keep hearing and reading about public schools and how they are failing all across America. I don't know who the people are that grade the schools, but maybe it's the "graders" themselves who are failing. Maybe they don't quite understand the programs being taught because they have changed dramatically over the years. A tougher challenge but a challenge being met.



Tom Dreiling

• Man of the Plains

I am of the opinion that our kids, for most part, are today getting a top-notch education. It's easy to find fault in anything put under a magnifying glass. But I think parents by a large majority would agree their kids are learning exceptionally well from very competent teachers. And I also think the "judges" put way too much stock in the kids who are falling behind – not due to the teacher(s), but because they don't want to learn – they come from homes where parents fail to put education at the top of the list, or they are nothing more than distractions in the classroom and couldn't care less about today nor tomorrow. There is little that can be done to correct kids in these categories, despite the best efforts of their teachers. Yes, "Some children are left behind."

Two of the three went on to earn college degrees, the other chose to enter the United States Air Force after taking some classes at a community college and a four-year university. Those college courses certainly had an impact on his ability to gain the rank of Air Force master sergeant and he is now serving as a first sergeant at Buckley AFB, Aurora, Colo. He is in his 22nd year in the military. The other two are involved in somewhat of a family business in Aurora and they are doing quite well, now in their eighth year.

Let's focus on the positives. After all, any student who climbs the grades from kindergarten to high school senior, and graduates, has done so with a record of achievement. And as we track the progress of kids after they leave high school and enter college we so often hear these words, "I just knew he (or she) had it in him!" And who paved the way? You know the answer.

Maybe my kids' successes were due to my attentive nature. But most importantly I credit the men and women who manned their classrooms and I cannot thank them enough even today for the gift of education they gave them.

My three kids did very well in public schools, in fact one graduated valedictorian.

My grandchildren are, likewise, getting the education necessary to function in today's challenges. One just graduated in May from high school, the others range from pre-school to fourth grade. Reports are all positive and they must be because their parents are demanding.

I have always been of the opinion that our greatest needs are educating our children and protecting our homeland. And Congress would best serve our interests if they kept that in mind.

Observation: I keep seeing this commercial on television directed specifically at people with breathing problems. Before you ask your doctor for a prescription of the medication being pitched in that commercial, there's something you can do to greatly improve your breathing right away: get rid of that elephant sitting on you!

I love poetry. There is just something about it that fascinates me. In fact, I spend a little time writing some, nothing complex, mind you, but simple and to the point, to wit:

- (1) Cars fly by, trucks do too; overlooked red light, too late to undo.
 - (2) Son has birthday, has eye on car; dad nods nope, too young for bar!
 - (3) Aroma enticing, what must it be? A summer favorite, like, "hey...iced tea?"
 - (4) Exercise a must, so doctors say; but dog has best answer, ...lay!
- Booing is allowed!

Snippets were primarily about Texas Gov. Rick Perry getting into the Republican race. I opted, instead, to toss in a few of my poems and to hold the snippets until the next column. Thanks for your understanding!

Peace!

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.

Cutting retirement fund won't help

I have an email from the Kansas Democratic Party urging me to tell my Representative to not rescind the cut in FICA deductions or contributions. I'm not going to do that!



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

Why do we think it stimulating to the economy to cut the investment in retirement income?

Why do we call our and our employer's matching investment "tax"? When we have payroll deductions that are invested in E Bonds or other stocks or bonds, we don't call it "tax." I've been told, all my life, that I need to be saving and investing for the future. Now we are being told to stop saving and investing and spend. Short term gratification and pleasure at the expense of long term security and wellbeing?

aside. Why? Because, it would dry up a source of funds and require borrowing money – raising the debt ceiling. We will fund the government at the expense of the postal system. Blame it on the postal workers themselves, never mind that the rate is mandated by Congress. Scapegoats come in handy, sometimes. Besides that, it helps kill the unions. Postal workers wages are a small factor in the problems of our postal system. The internet and inability of management is the biggest problem.

The "Social Security Trust Fund" doesn't seem to be in very "trustworthy" hands. The government started using those funds to keep from borrowing on the open market or raising income tax rates. Now that the Social Security system is nearing the point of needing to use that "Trust Fund," we can't get it back. Why not? Because the government would have to borrow the money from somewhere else or raise taxes. We can't replace what was supposedly put away in trust for our retirement or disability. The kids – and the old folks sometimes – have spent the savings account before the old folks found themselves in need of it.

The conservative right (Republicans) have been trying to eliminate the Social Security System since its inception. We now have the Democrats aiding in destroying the system. Now, the Republicans are wanting to reverse and restore the funding source. Who is the fox and who is the chicken? Which side of the fence are they on?

The Postal System is in a similar situation. Required funding for the employees retirement fund has exceeded the needs. Actuaries have been indicating this for years. The government has been using those funds for other things. Now they refuse to change the required set-

The public doesn't seem to have a clue. We're like a herd of sheep following the shepherd. The shepherd wants a shade tree, whether there is grass or security for the sheep, or not. The shepherd runs faster from the danger than the sheep, hoping the bear will satisfy his hunger before he reaches the shepherd.

Our political leaders – all parties – are more interested in their own welfare than the wel-

fare of their constituents. Sad to say, that is a reflection of society, in general. We are more interested in our own luxuries than we are in the welfare of our fellow human beings. At the expense of a civilized society, we have been trained to look after number one and let the devil take care of anyone else.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

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- 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.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

