

Other Viewpoints

It's good to see some peaceful rallies

Dissatisfaction with political leaders has not reached the fervor recently seen in Wisconsin recall elections, but Kansans are beginning to demonstrate their disdain for Gov. Sam Brownback's decisions and policies, which have adversely affected the state.

Though it's unfortunate that a narrow-minded ideology in Topeka has prompted such activism, it is good to see citizens rally and peacefully demonstrate against wrongs they believe should be righted.

The complete dismantling and funding revocation for the Kansas Arts Commission is just one of several decisions that recently fueled activists. Arts supporters rallied in Topeka to protest the loss of nearly \$2 million in federal arts money due to the governor's decision.

But Kansans aren't stopping there. An even larger rally is planned for next Friday to protest a host of Brownback policy decisions made in just the first eight months of his administration.

Organizers for Kansans United in Voice and Spirit say their squabbles with the governor range from arts funding to the closure of social services offices.

"He feels he has a mandate to make changes in the policies Kansans hold dear," said Crystal McComas, one of the organizers for Kansans United.

Brownback was elected by an overwhelming margin, garnering nearly 63 percent of the vote last November. But he should not mistake that as a mandate for his personal agenda, which has included an attempt to shut down abortion clinics in the state and make access to social services nearly impossible for some.

Activism is not a four-letter word; Kansans need to speak up and speak out now before the governor's policies and decisions further harm the state.

Kansans United offers citizens a voice. It is activism at work, and that is amazing to witness, especially in a red state like Kansas.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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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
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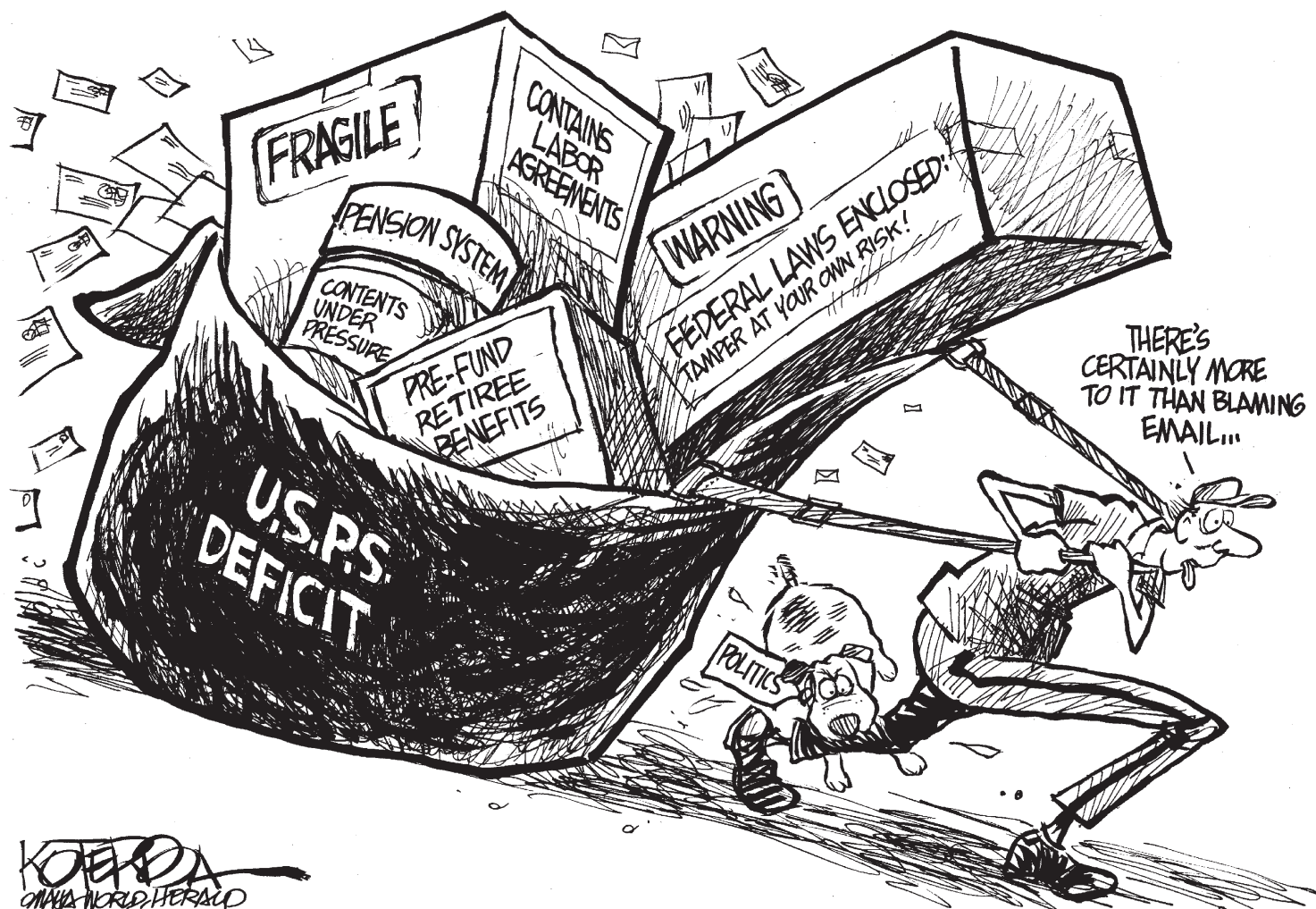
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KOEPA
ON THE WORLD HERALD

Athletics important to college, city

Though the "Dog Days" of summer have officially come to an end, the temperature remained very hot throughout most of the month of August. But with cool weather right around the corner, we are about to enter my favorite time of the year — fall.

For me, fall is about the start of a new school year, a return to normalcy — and college football. Those who know me will admit I am something of a different person when it comes to my passion for the sport. Then again, growing up around North Dakota State football — eight national championships — and attending the University of Alabama — 13 national championships — I'm not sure how I could feel any differently.

Truthfully, I enjoy athletics regardless of the sport and am looking forward to the Colby Public Schools and Colby Community College teams competing during the season.

Recently someone raised a valid question with me about the value of spending money on athletics rather than other areas or programs of our college. During difficult economic times and shrinking state support, this is a topic many presidents have shied away from addressing. When pressed for an answer, I have heard some seasoned colleagues talk about tradition, alumni or even character building when it comes to support for athletics.

As a historian, I appreciate tradition. However the past can consume people so they cannot function in the present. Alumni support is also important, but if the only thing that keeps one loyal is sports, that loyalty will be tested when teams have losing seasons. And with regard to character building, having been an athlete in my youth, I would argue that sports do not build character, but personify the character we already possess.

None of those three really make a compelling argument for me. I am a relatively new president, though, and rather than skirting the issue, let me take a shot at explaining why I



Steve Vacik

• From the president

am a proponent of athletics, particularly at the community college.

For starters, athletics are important for their economic benefit. What funding the college does receive currently from the state is almost exclusively based on enrollment (student credit hours). This fall, student athletes will account for anywhere from 18 to 20 percent of the credit hours generated at the college.

These young people may also bring with them girlfriends and boyfriends, siblings, classmates and the list goes on. They are often some of our best recruiters. Student-athletes, especially those from outside the immediate area, also live locally in residence halls or rental properties and bring their families for games and other visits.

Athletics, given the size and location of our college, bring social benefit as well. Let's face it — northwest Kansas isn't a hotbed for diversity. Most of us look alike, talk alike and even think alike.

But consider how much richer our lives are when we interact with and learn about others, especially our students. Many have never ventured beyond Denver or Salina.

The college recruits student athletes from around the state, nation and even the world. Our students, really all of us, can discover other cultures without ever leaving home.

Finally, athletics provides an educational benefit that trumps the previous two: opportunity. For many young people, athletics is the only chance for postsecondary education — and also the only hook to keep them enrolled and

working toward a degree or diploma.

Let me illustrate an opportunity through athletics. Years ago, when I was a junior faculty member at another school, I agreed to serve as the faculty advisor to the men's basketball team. There were seven sophomores on the squad, which actually finished seventh in the nation that year.

I taught each guy in addition to holding study hall every afternoon Sunday through Thursday. These guys didn't make all A's — as I recall, there were a goodly number of C's and even some D's during the year. But, all seven graduated with an associate's degree and transferred to four-year institutions, where at least five later graduated.

Most of the seven were from impoverished backgrounds, recruited from the inner cities of places like Birmingham and Memphis and Miami. Without the opportunity afforded by a basketball scholarship, those young men would likely never have had any higher education — at least two shared with me that if not for that opportunity, they would not have survived. That group represents what education is all about: changed lives.

So am I a supporter of athletics? Absolutely. Are athletics more important than other facets of education? Absolutely not. Regardless of the level, we need academics, athletics, arts — all of these — in education as we strive to be different, better and purposeful.

So this fall, as you have an opportunity, I invite you to experience middle school, high school and college athletics and support our students and institutions. You will be excited not just watching the action but knowing that athletics is having a positive impact off the field as well.

Dr. Stephen Vacik is president of Colby Community College. Vacik is a native of Fargo, N.D., and was vice president of instruction at East Mississippi Community College before moving to Colby.

Trade pacts mean money for Kansas

When I stop and think about how quickly we exchange information and ideas with people across the globe, I am astonished.

In a matter of seconds you can transmit your voice and picture to someone thousands of miles away. In a matter of hours, you can travel to another continent. But what you cannot do is sell our goods to people in certain countries. It's neither technology nor transport that's the impediment, either.

Sitting in the White House right now are pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and Korea. They have been ready to go for months and years, but remain on the President's desk. We can exchange e-mails with and visit people in these three nations, but if these agreements are ratified, Kansans will be able to sell their goods and products to people there also.

If the president would submit these three agreements to Congress, they would be approved swiftly. Democrats and Republicans alike in both the House and the Senate have already expressed their support for expanding trade with these nations. There are often disputes in Congress, but members of both parties understand the significant economic impact these agreements would provide to each of the 50 states.

With unemployment high, manufacturing



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

• Capitol Notes

declining and overall economic growth stagnating, these agreements would provide immediate relief and opportunity to reverse these trends. Like every other state in the nation, Kansas would benefit both in economic activity and job creation.

According to the Kansas Farm Bureau, our state is likely export \$106 million a year in agricultural goods to Korea, \$21 million to Colombia and \$1 million to Panama. This is not chump change; this would provide a much-needed boost to our rural communities in particular.

More than a thousand new jobs would be supported. And, what's more, trade-related jobs pay up to 18 percent more than average. When Washington is in search of an easy — and inexpensive — way to get Americans back to work and money back in their pockets, this is a golden ticket.

In our global marketplace, we cannot afford

to wait. One need only look to the new agreement between the European Union and Korea as an example of the opportunity created by opening trade between the U.S. and Korea.

On July 1, Europe and Korea began a new agreement; the first two week saw a nearly 20 percent increase in trade volume for the union. The U.S. would likely see similar surges. If Kansas could have the opportunity to trade on better terms with Korea — particularly beef — the gain would be ours. According to some estimates, every \$1 billion in beef exports to Korea would create 12,700 jobs.

Members of both parties anxiously await receipt of these trade agreements from the White House, so it is my hope that when Congress is back in session in September, the President will send them immediately.

Every day that goes by without ratification will likely include more negative economic indicators. Every day that passes, economists will continue to scratch their heads, wondering from where the recovery will come.

These trade agreements may not be the full solution, but they are certainly one key piece of the puzzle of getting our economy back in shape.

Tim Huelskamp is the congressman from Kansas' 1st District, serving his first term.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

