

## Other **Viewpoints**

## Trouble lurks in secret task force

By any definition, a task force must have members, so assuming there really is a "task force" working on what could be dramatic changes in Kansas tax structure, why can't the Kansans who will be affected know who its members are?

Not only are state officials keeping the members of the task force secret, they also are operating entirely out of the public view, offering the people of Kansas no opportunity for input.

When the Journal-World pressed a Department of Revenue spokeswoman about the makeup of the task force, she refused to give names or details. She identified a couple of department staff members who "are being consulted." She said legislative leaders have been consulted, but only Republicans. Others consulted, she said, include "various state agency heads, economists and business owners. This is not an appointed group."

So is there really a task force, or is this just Gov. Sam Brownback and Revenue Secretary Nick Jordan collecting input from like-minded business and government associates, many of whom have a financial stake in the outcome?

The department spokeswoman wouldn't identify any of the business owners who were being consulted, but Brownback's ties to, for instance, the multibillionaire Koch brothers is well known. The spokeswoman did confirm that Arthur Laffer, one of the architects of President Ronald Reagan's supply-side economics strategy, is being paid \$75,000 for "providing his expertise" on the tax proposal. Laffer's guiding principle is that lowering certain tax rates will result in economic benefits that more than offset the lost tax revenue. It is a theory that has been discounted by many economists, but has support in some circles, apparently including the Kansas governor's office.

Regardless of what direction this group is taking, the people of Kansas deserve to know what is going on and to have some input on the process. To that end, Senate Majority Leader Steve Morris announced that he was forming his own tax study group to analyze options for reducing taxes and creating a more business-friendly environment. He appointed Sen. Les Donovan, R-Wichita, as the group's chairman and named three other senators as members. He said the Senate minority leader would be invited to appoint a representative to the group, which also will include members of the public.

"Right now, there are a lot of ideas being floated around, but what they all seem to be missing is citizen input," Morris said in his announcement. "This isn't something that should be done behind closed doors by a bunch of bureaucrats."

Morris also noted, "One of the reasons Washington got itself into so much trouble is because they listened to special interest groups instead of the folks on Main Street. We're not willing to let those same mistakes be made in Kansas."

Morris' effort shows courage people in his district and across the state should appreciate. Morris and at least one of the senators he appointed to the group already face opponents in the Republican primary. It seems likely they are being targeted by the conservative wing of the party because they supposedly have not been supportive of a conservative agenda.

The only problem with Morris' group is that it isn't scheduled to meet until the 2012 legislative session. By that time, the existing "task force" will have a proposal on the table.

The secrecy surrounding the work on new state tax policies certainly leaves the impression there's something about this process that the governor and his revenue secretary want to hide from the people of Kansas. If that's not the case, state officials need to open this process to public input and scrutiny.

- Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press

### Colby Free Press

155 W. Fifth St. Colby, Kan. 67701 (USPS 120-920)

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, abor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby,

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press

Association and National Newspaper Association. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one

year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per ook elsewhere in the LLS \$7

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# Rhetoric discounts value of capitalism

Political and social discourse has come to polarized positions in which groups are accusing each other of being advocates of Hitler's style of fascism and Russia's style of communism. What most people don't realize is, those two styles were a bastardization of true capitalism and true socialism.

Capitalism - void of a social conscience and respect for humanity that includes all ethnic, racial and religious persuasions – is what Hitler's style was. Socialism - void of a social conscience and respect for humanity that includes all ethnic, racial, and religious persuasions – is what Russia's style was. They were far more similar than most people realize. The biggest difference was only in the titles of the ruling class.

I believe our founding fathers, who fought politically and physically for freedom from the tyrannical colonial power of Great Britain, intended to establish a capitalistic system with rewards for entrepreneurial endeavors that guaranteed protection of individual rights of all minorities, majorities, ethnic origins, economic levels and religious persuasions.

They did not succeed in establishing a perdiscussion and debate. They established a living constitution with provisions for amend-



#### Ken **Poland**

 Ken's World

ment as social values and standards changed. They guaranteed the right of public assembly to address perceived inequities. That system, though severely challenged by the Civil War, has survived and gradually afforded more equitable treatment of most segments of society.

Today, challenges are being made that disenfranchises minorities with unpopular social values and practices. Discrimination is being fomented toward ethnic origins, religious and sexual persuasions and economic levels. Our taxing structure, regulatory standards, and government programs are being skewed in favor of the wealthy and mega-size business operations that suppress individual freedoms and opportunities.

The colonial power of Great Britain has been fect system. Compromise was evident in their replaced by the colonial power of corporations and the taxation without representation of the common individuals of society.

We appear to be striving for the best government money can buy.

Opinion

It took the Boston Tea Party, a quite radical demonstration, to motivate and unite the Colonies in their struggle for independence from Great Britain.

It took the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 to relieve small farmers of an unfair tax.

It - sometimes - takes radical demonstrations in the street to focus public attention on police brutality. It took radical demonstrations in the streets

to bring the civil rights issues into public scru-

tiny in the late fifties and sixties of the 20th century. Those demonstrators didn't have the power to enact legislation or laws, but they had the power to wake up a nation to the inequities of our social structures. Will the 'Occupy Wall Street' demonstra-

tions wake up society to the gross inequities of our distribution of wealth and power in the United States today? I hope so, before violent and physical rebellion such as we are witnessing in the Mid East occurs. Ken Poland describes himself as a semire-

tired 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.

# Telephone merger offers bright spot

It is hard to escape the constant bad news about the state of our economy and the lack of good jobs. While it seems like these negative headlines are the only news we see, there is some potential good news out there, news that holds promise to get our economy moving again and deliver thousands of jobs for American workers.

One of those bright spots is the proposed combination of AT&T and T-Mobile USA. As part of this deal, AT&T has pledged to bring 5,000 jobs back to the U.S. that are currently outsourced to other countries. This is the single largest commitment by an American company to bring jobs back to the U.S. since the economic crisis began in 2008. AT&T has also committed to no job losses for wireless call center workers at AT&T and T-Mobile that are on the payroll at the closing of the proposed combination. America can use this kind of good news on the jobs front to counter unemployment figures stubbornly stuck at near historic highs.

Furthermore, as part of the combination of the two companies, AT&T has promised to invest more than \$8 billion to integrate AT&T and T-Mobile networks and to expand its nextgeneration 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) wireless network. According to an Economic Policy Institute study commissioned by the Communications Workers of America, that investment will create an estimated 55,000 to



#### Free Press **Letter Drop**

• Our readers sound off

96,000 jobs. Given the job situation of today, those numbers are substantial and encourag-

But this is about more than just jobs. AT&T's combination with T-Mobile means more Kansans will enjoy access to AT&T's 4G LTE network when it is built out. In fact, 92 percent of the Kansas population will be covered by this high-speed advanced mobile broadband network - that's 750,000 more Kansans, and a more than 900 percent increase in geographic area than would occur absent the transaction.

Our world is now mobile, and in everyday terms, the super-fast wireless connectivity 4G LTE would deliver means businesses of all sizes will be able to conduct business on the go on their smart phones or tablets, from anywhere covered by the network. That kind of mobility injects flexibility into business operations and marketing that can have a real impact on a company's bottom line. In addition to the impact for businesses, wide-

spread access to 4G LTE technology would be

Using handheld devices, doctors can monitor and interact remotely with patients who can remain in their homes. Physicians standing in an operating room can share data and images with peers who are states, or even countries, away. Students will no longer be tethered to the classroom and can instead access information from around the globe. They'll be able to participate in real-time instruction from their homes. The options made possible by highspeed wireless connections are endless. It's no wonder that organizations such as the National Cattlemen's Association, the National Rural Health Association, National Grange, National FFA Organization, and over 200 members of Congress have voiced support for the benefits that the combination of AT&T and T-Mobile will deliver for Kansas and the rest of the

The Department of Labor reported that there was no net job increase in the U.S. in August. Analysts had predicted an increase of 60,000 to 100,000 jobs during that time, but none materialized. In contrast to this gloomy news, the combination of AT&T and T-Mobile is a bright spot on the horizon poised to deliver tens of thousands of American jobs and tremendous residual economic benefits. That's welcome news for Kansas and America Cindy Zapletal

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