



## Other Viewpoints

### Time to stop raids on transportation

The old and well-worn phrase “robbing Peter to pay Paul” is often recited when someone wants to note the fiscal folly of paying one debt with money set aside for another.

We aren't ready to describe as fiscal folly the state's multiple uses of Kansas Department of Transportation money for purposes that have nothing to do with transportation projects. But the practice has been a case of “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” and we agree with outgoing Transportation Secretary Deb Miller that it's a practice that should be halted.

In a more robust economic climate, dipping into the department's till to fund other programs may not have happened. But the availability of transportation department funding proved too attractive for governors and legislators to ignore as they tried to balance the state's annual budget over the past 12 years.

During that time, \$1.4 billion in the department's funding for transportation improvement projects was diverted for other uses — including funding the Kansas Highway Patrol, supporting the state's Medicaid program and subsidizing airline tickets in Wichita.

Because the highway patrol and Medicaid represent essential services and programs, we can understand the reluctance to cut spending there beyond what legislators considered prudent.

Regardless, when cuts, or further cuts, weren't palatable, the Department of Transportation money was there and was used — liberally, some would say. During the 2012 fiscal year, which began July 1, the state will use \$238 million in department money for other programs.

Our purpose here isn't to cast stones at anyone for what's happened. Given how long it's been going on, that would require a lot of stones. But we will repeat that “borrowing” — to use the word loosely — from transportation is a dangerous practice.

The major infrastructure building and rebuilding programs the state has embarked on in recent decades have provided substantial benefits, and should continue to do so as our elected officials try to spur economic development. In a state as large and as sparsely populated as Kansas, an efficient transportation network is essential.

Mars Chocolate is preparing to build a \$250 million manufacturing plant on U.S. 75 highway in south Topeka, from which it will have ready access to Interstate 70 and the Kansas Turnpike. The site also offers rail service.

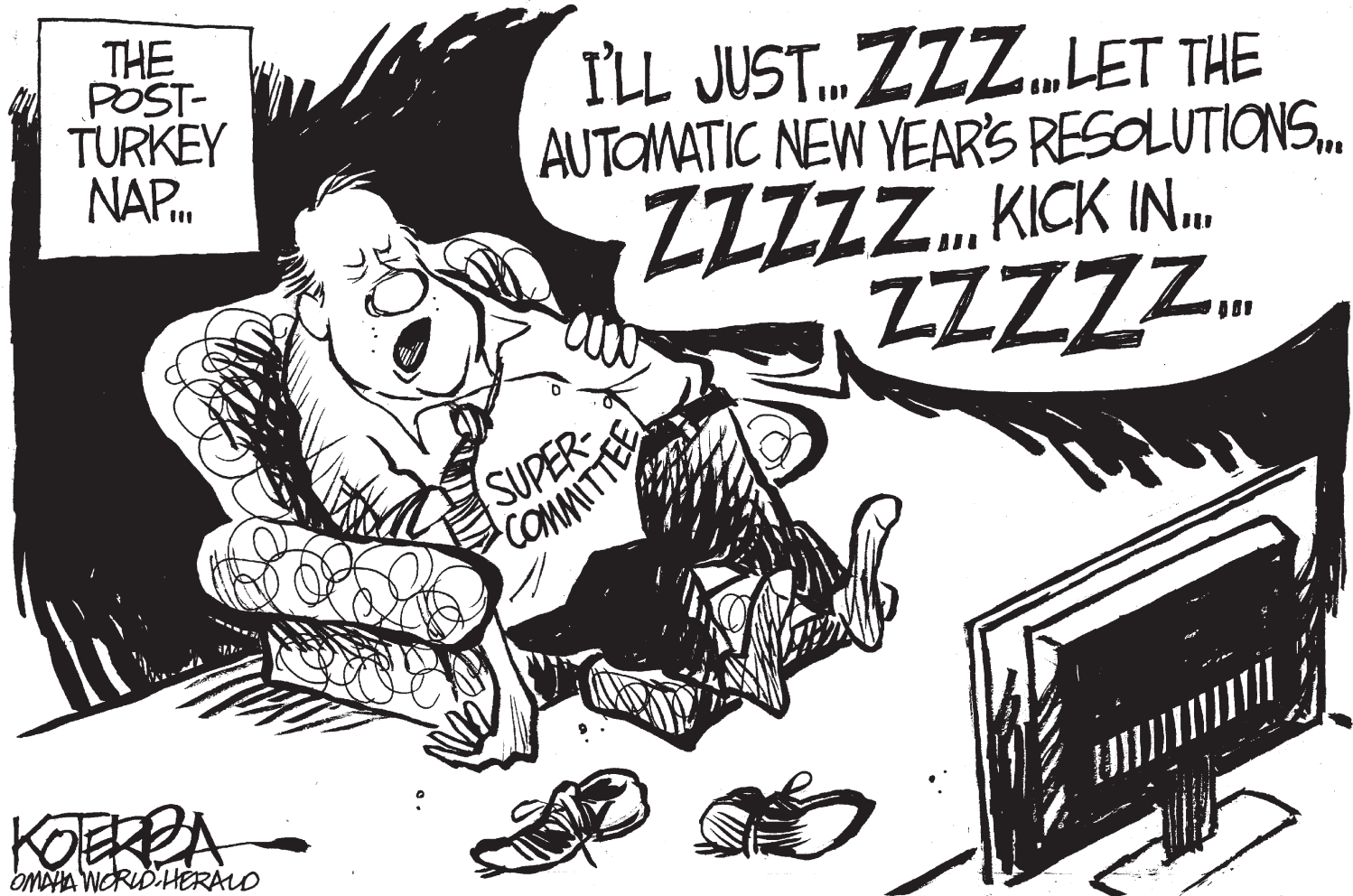
There were other factors that figured into the company's decision to locate in Topeka, but no one should discount the role infrastructure played in that decision. And no one should discount the role it can play in economic development for other communities.

Due to some federal stimulus money, refinancing of bonded indebtedness and an economic climate that moderated inflation in the construction industry, the department thus far has been able to proceed with planned infrastructure projects despite surrendering a lot of money earmarked for transportation.

That can't continue forever, though. Miller says projects will have to be eliminated if the cash drain continues.

Gov. Sam Brownback and legislators should do what is necessary to ensure money raised for transportation is devoted to that purpose.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press*



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### Save me, big brother

When did we become a nation that needs to be saved from itself? Do we really need signs that tell us that a cup of coffee is hot so don't put it between your legs and drive. Apparently we do. Almost every product now comes with a “duh” label on it.

Somedays I feel like a 2-year-old when I buy a product and it tells me I have to unwrap it to use it. Gee, really? I have to unwrap that pillow before I sleep on it? Oh, and don't forget, don't put this plastic bag over your head either.

Am I the only one who feels as if the government thinks I am that dumb to need that much protection? I bet I am not.

I have a sign in my office about how the government took over a brothel in Nevada for tax evasion and went bust trying to run it. If you can't make money selling sex and whiskey, how can I think you can protect me from myself?

Now the courts don't want the graphic warning labels placed on the packs of cigarettes. They want the government to prove these labels won't harm the companies and will actually stop anyone from smoking.

Please tell me that anyone can believe that the government has the right to place these warning labels on a product they don't manufacture. What's next, warnings on beer bottles that drinking too much can make you get pregnant? Frankly, voting can result in more harm to the general public than any of these behav-



**Sharon Friedlander**

• Musings

iors. Every one of us has done something that may be considered harmful, and I don't think we are so unaware we need someone in Washington to guide us through this morass of behaviors.

We are not a nation of ignorance, just a nation of “I don't care” and “it is none of your business.”

I don't smoke, but if I did these messages would not deter me in the least. This just seems like one more way the government is intruding into my personal life and my personal choices.

I am the daughter of a smoker who died of lung cancer. She knew the risks and paid the ultimate price for her decision, but who really knows if that was the cause of her cancer.

The government will slap these warnings on a pack of cigarettes while allowing industry to belch out mercury and other harmful substances under the guise of creating jobs. The government still pays subsidies to tobacco growers while trying to appear righteous in their health concerns.

The government wants fast food outlets to be held responsible for making our nation obese. Whatever happened to holding individuals responsible for their own well being? No one at McDonald's forced these folks to consume mass quantities of fat-laden burgers and fries.

They did it to themselves. They chose the items from a menu that offers more healthy choices. Is this really so hard to understand?

Why do I want my government spending my tax money on things like this when we have hunger in this country and poverty issues that would be better addressed?

I am really tired of hearing how everyone else is responsible for bad behavior. Please don't ask me to feel sorry for you when your own actions caused your distress. Why can't we own up to our mistakes and learn from them?

This holiday season when I go back for seconds I won't need a label to tell me that I will feel like a fat puppy later. I know! I just choose to ignore the warning bell in my head that says “stop.”

So if you need to blame someone for taking that second piece of pie, my shoulders are broad.

*Sharon Friedlander, publisher of the Colby Free Press, enjoys reading, hot rods and critters. Contact her at sfriedlander @ nwkansasc.com.*

### Unspoken values grow on the farm

Think of farmers and ranchers and this old, often forgotten tribute comes to mind. It fits farmers like seed in the soil or ranchers like a new-born calf takes to its mother's udder.

I've often heard friends, neighbors and family — my dad for one — quote bits and pieces of it. I've heard others refer to it at meetings, in church, at a sale barn, funerals and many other places where rural people live, work and congregate. It exemplifies the farm and ranch vocation. It goes something like this.

A man's greatest possession is his dignity and no calling bestows this more abundantly than farming. Hard work and honest sweat are the building blocks of a person's character.

Farming — and ranching — despite its hardships and disappointments, is the most honest and honorable way a man/woman can spend days on this earth. The vocation of agriculture nurtures the close family ties that make life rich in ways money can't buy.

Children who are raised on a farm or ranch



**John Schlageck**

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

earn values that last a lifetime that can be learned no other way. Farming and ranching provides education for life and no other occupation teaches so much about birth, growth and maturity in such a variety of ways.

Without question, many of the best things in life are free — the splendor of a sunrise, the rapture of wide open spaces, the exhilarating sight of the landscape greening each spring — true happiness comes from watching crops ripen in the field, watching children grow tall in the sun, seeing your whole family feel the pride that springs from their shared experience

living, working and harvesting from the land.

Farmers and ranchers believe that through their shared vocation they are giving more to the world than they are taking from it — an honor and privilege that does not come to all men or women. Agricultural producers believe their lives will be measured ultimately by what they have done for their fellow men/women and by this standard, fear no judgment.

They believe when they grow old and sum up their days, they will stand tall and feel pride in the life they've lived. Farmers and ranchers believe in their vocation because it makes all of this possible.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.*

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Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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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, Labor 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, Kan., 67701.

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 week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

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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, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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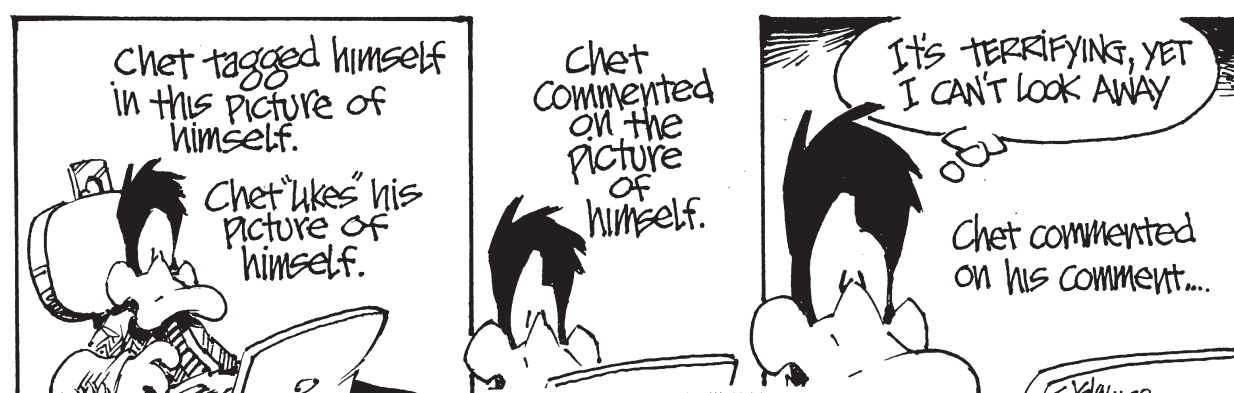
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#### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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