



Other Viewpoints

Kansas liquor laws need some updates

One is hard pressed to explain the logic of allowing grocery and convenience stores to sell only beer and wine coolers of a low strength and requiring consumers to go to a liquor store meeting certain qualifications to purchase any alcohol beyond that. That is just the nature of Kansas' archaic and inconsistent liquor laws.

But for another year, a bill has been introduced in the state Legislature to allow grocery and convenience stores to sell full-strength beer, wine and spirits. Besides being logical, it makes sense from a consumer and a free enterprise standpoint.

The only purpose the current law serves is to preserve a monopoly market for small retail liquor stores. That shouldn't be altogether discounted, for these retailers generally are local, and, as with any retail, sending more business to the big national store companies comes with a little heartburn.

But in a time when prevailing wisdom is to get government out of the way of the free market system, this isn't the best argument.

In deference to liquor store owners, the bill would wipe out the current prohibition on them selling nonalcoholic goods and services, allowing them to sell mixers and party supplies. That helps. So does a three-year phase-in, during which time the state would issue no new retail liquor licenses. That would force grocery and convenience stores to pick up surrendered licenses and give liquor store owners the opportunity to sell.

Another concern about having liquor in grocery and convenience stores is making it more visible to teens. But of course the beer already is there, as are cigarettes.

Other states that allow liquor sales in grocery and convenience stores don't seem to have a problem with it. And liquor stores continue to exist.

If legislators don't go for this bill as written, maybe they at least could consider full-strength beer and wine for grocery and convenience stores, leaving liquor stores to maintain purview over hard liquor.

- The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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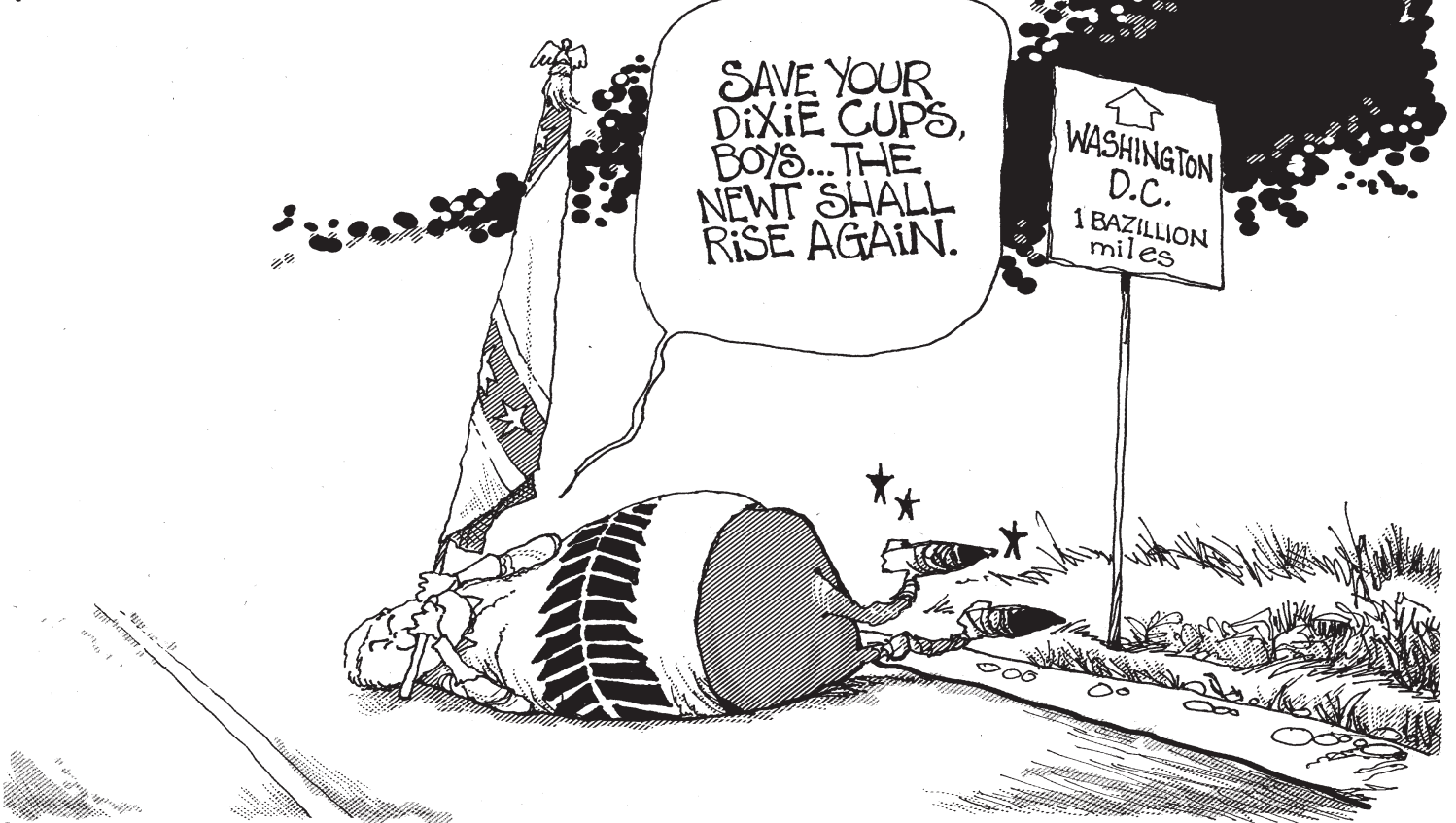
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ON THE ROAD WITH THE HISTORIAN

Primary brings back memories of Florida

'Tis the season! Okay, Christmas is just a fond memory and the resolutions have already been broken. Now it is the season of the political games and promises.

This is a season that isn't marked by pretty decorations - unless you include the wives bejeweled and coiffed - but by something I refer to as imagination.

I have tried to ignore all the hoopla in some of the primaries, but they keep popping to the surface of every newscast, website and e-mail box. Perhaps it is just my warped sense of humor that keeps me amused instead of irate to continuously be accosted by candidates claiming that they will be bigger, badder or better than the sitting president.

Frankly I have to admire their tenacity. It must be quite nice to walk away from the past and expect that everyone in the country will join you in that journey.

The recent Florida primary is a prime example of the do-anything, say-anything-to-get-elected circus. Being from the Sunshine State, it really doesn't surprise me to watch this play out. I can just imagine the wringing of hands going on the morning after.

Politics in Florida is an animal all its own. We used to make jokes about how folks would move there to get a new start but bring all the old politics with them. New arrivals would try to change everyone around them to be more like where they just left. My question always was if it was so great "there" why didn't they



Sharon Friedlander

Musings

stay there?

The candidates didn't disappoint me at all in Florida. After all, it is the home of the Ringling Brothers Circus.

I am sure all the egos involved took a beating, but to hear Mr. Second Place, you'd think the votes had been stolen from him. In spite of the promise not to go negative, Mr. SP jumped into the mud puddle with a boat paddle and started to sling with the best of them. One of the news broadcasters referred to him as the human Roman candle and, after watching some of his comments, I think this was spot on. It seems that when someone else makes a disparaging comment they are negative, and when Mr. SP does it he is only telling the truth.

I have joked about running for president. I have raised children, balanced budgets and meted out discipline. I have managed career moves, family moves and still have a bit of sanity left. I can juggle lots of things at one time with some amount of patience.

I also believe in sticking with your friends when they stick with you. The ones who re-

peatedly slide you under the bus - until someone invades their country and they need help - would go begging for my help. Isn't that what they made caller ID for?

I am also in favor of helping those that help themselves. The recent extensions of unemployment have created some major problems for employers. There are jobs that go unfilled - why would you work when you can sit home, go fishing, travel and still draw a check equal to or better than pay on a job. I know times are tough in some areas, but areas that haven't been hard hit by massive layoffs do have jobs that need filling.

I would want to lead a nation that is proud of who it is and how far we have come.

If you don't feel a sense of pride when you see someone in uniform then you need to do a reality check. Those folks make it possible for us to live our lives with the kind of freedoms that many in the world can only dream of. We are even free to be critical of our elected officials without listening for the knock on the door with troops behind it.

Well, I guess all in all I probably won't run for president. I get enough grey hairs from being a publisher without adding even more stress to my world. Even if drafted, I won't - well, maybe.

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

Math of tax plan double bills the poor

The following is a little snip taken from a Kansas City Star article:

"The Revenue Department's analysis of the Brownback plan examined income tax data from 2009 and breaks down taxpayers into six income brackets. The only bracket with a tax increase ranges from zero up to \$25,000.

"That group ... of 564,328 tax filers, would pay \$88.2 million more in taxes under the governor's tax plan. Meanwhile, the highest income ... would pay \$110 million less ..."

I don't have the resources at my finger tips to validate these figures. But, I've learned that tax reform usually reflects an advantage for those proposing the reform. Most of Gov. Brownback's agenda is benefiting the upper crust far more than the hardtack-biscuit eaters in the lower income brackets.

Please take special note of the tax increase in those falling in the zero to \$25,000 bracket. And it appears that those in the \$250,000 range will get tax decreases. The break-even point in his tax reform must fall somewhere in between those extreme figures.

Those at the bottom \$25,000 and under will pay more and those in the \$250,000 and higher will pay less. \$88.2 million more and \$110 million less does not compute mathematically to balance the budget. In addition to those discrepancies, the lower income folks pay a greater percent of their income into sales tax, property tax and Social Security taxes.

Social Security does not go into the state coffers, but it is a tax that is being used to offset increasing federal income tax to pay national general fund expenses. That is certainly an advantage for those in the \$100,000-and-above wage earner category and those whose income is not subject to Social Security. Those with investment income pay no Social Security tax on that income. Where does most of your income



Ken Poland

Ken's World

Some say renters don't pay property taxes. Does the \$100 per month for apartments or tenement houses not cover the property tax for the landlord? If not, the landlord isn't apt to stay in business very long.

Where are you on the scale? Are you in the \$100,000 or lower brackets? If so, you are paying a much, much higher percentage of your income for government functions than the Romneys, Buffets, etc. You're also contributing more in percentage than those in the \$100,000 plus category.

Our governor seems to blame the exodus of Kansas workers to other states because of Kansas income tax structure. My guess is you will move to where you can find a job. Or you'll move to be closer to family, or better climate, or for health reasons, or entertainment. But, the bottom line for most folks before moving is job opportunity and pay scale. People don't move from state to state based on state income tax differences.

Many Boeing workers will most likely be leaving Wichita and Kansas. Some will follow the company to a new location. Others will seek similar employment wherever it is available. Income tax will most likely not be a factor. Does Gov. Brownback really think Boeing made its decision to close down in Kansas and move production elsewhere for state income tax reasons? I'm not on the upper management

team of Boeing, probably not qualified, but I'm quite sure that 1 percent or 2 percent difference in income tax liability was not a factor.

Cutting programs that benefit lower income people and increasing their income tax is asinine, coming from a supposedly compassionate religious governor.

According to statistics I read, Thomas County has a high percentage of families eligible for food stamps, students eligible for reduced or free lunches at school and quite a few receiving Social and Rehabilitation Services help. You folks just keep on voting the Republican ticket and you can pay more taxes and receive less benefits. The rich need a reduction in their already lower taxes than yours and you just need to work a little harder or go hungry, shelterless and pray for good health.

And, those of you who aren't quite in that category, just hang in there. The trend indicates you'll get there sooner or later. We've got to lower wages for the workers and lower the taxes for the rich. That's going to create jobs and bring our economy right out of the doldrums.

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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Mallard Fillmore

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