



Other Viewpoints

Limits to KanCare good political move

Gov. Sam Brownback’s proposal to overhaul the state’s Medicaid program encountered stiff opposition as soon as details of the plan emerged. Wrapping services for the developmentally disabled into the reform effort only increased the number of people who wanted no part of it.

Deciding to delay inclusion of the developmentally disabled in KanCare, the reform vehicle, until at least Jan. 1, 2014, which the governor did last week, was the right thing to do for political and humanitarian reasons.

Whether the administration can get the rest of the plan through the Legislature in the next couple of weeks is yet to be determined – it still has plenty of critics – but the odds probably improved once services for the developmentally disabled were stricken from the immediate package.

Reforming Medicaid was on high on Brownback’s “to do” list even before he was inaugurated in January 2011. The program is one of the state’s largest and consumes about \$2.8 billion annually under its current configuration.

Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer, a craniofacial surgeon, was the administration’s point man on development of KanCare, which was the result of 14 months of work. KanCare proposes to contract with managed care companies to operate the system and is being credited with the ability to save the state about \$850 million over five years without cutting eligibility or services.

Critics began questioning how KanCare would save money without reducing services or eligibility while paying private companies for administering the program. They also noted money would be leaving Kansas because the companies that had applied were from out-of-state. The din from developmentally disabled proponents added to the uproar.

Some county commissions across the state weighed in and asked the governor to reconsider. Even some legislators who are supportive of the governor and his attempts to reduce state spending began talking about delaying implementation of KanCare for six months, which would move the target date from Jan. 1 to July 1, 2013.

Proponents of the delay said the additional time would give providers and recipients time to become more familiar with what is proposed and determine how it would impact them.

Through it all, Brownback retained his resolve to implement KanCare on Jan. 1. His one major concession came last week when he issued a statement endorsing holding some developmentally disabled service out of the program until 2014.

That statement came the same day hundreds of people – developmentally disabled and their advocates – rallied outside the Statehouse. Whether the rally was the impetus for the statement or just the tipping point is unknown. Brownback is an intelligent and seasoned politician and must have known the issue was costing KanCare votes in the Legislature.

It’s safe to say KanCare and other administration proposals – income tax and school finance reforms – could cost some incumbent legislators votes in the upcoming election.

Granted, it’s highly unlikely controversy over those issues would be enough to tip the legislative balance away from conservative Republicans this fall. But there’s no doubt voting for KanCare became less troubling for a lot of incumbents.

That made delaying inclusion of the developmentally disabled in the program a smart political move.

It also was the right thing to do for Kansans who had real fears that their concerns were falling on deaf ears.

– *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

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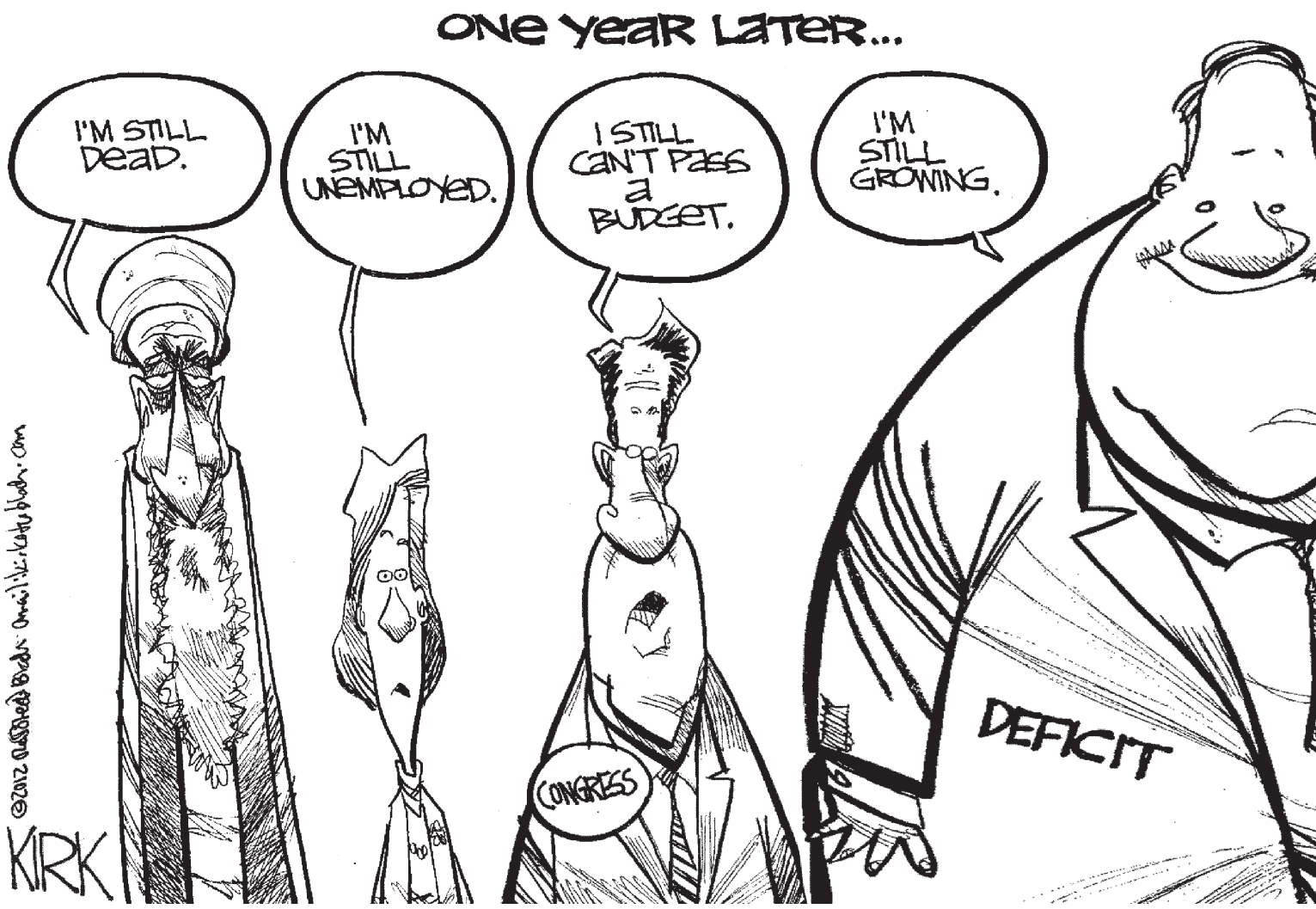
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W.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



Baseball season: excuse to get outdoors

I really enjoy baseball season.

I’ve said it before: I’ve never been much of a sports fan, but the one sport I’ve always enjoyed since I was a kid was baseball.

Growing up in Colorado, my family spent quite a few summer days going down to Mile High Stadium (the original) to watch the Denver Zephyrs, a minor-league team. Looking through the list of players to come out of that team, only one jumps out at me: Filipe Alou, who played in Denver when the team had been known as the Bears.

Once the Rockies came in, the Zephyrs moved out, but we still went to games, first at Mile High and then at Coors Field. We spent a lot of time in the nosebleed sections, but sadly we never managed to get tickets in the row of purple seats that marks one mile above sea level. We also got to spend some time at spring training because my grandparents have a house in Phoenix.

One of the reasons I like baseball and softball season is that it is outside when the weather is (mostly) nice. That makes my job one heck of a lot easier.

For the past couple of years, I’ve been on sports reporting duty during baseball and softball season, first over in Colby, filling in until a new sports reporter could be hired, and now in Goodland where sports is a regular part of my job. I’ve quite enjoyed it, and I even won an award for my photography – my first award in this business.

I’ll never forget that play: One girl slid into home plate to score and the catcher missed the throw. She went back to get the ball and the



Kevin Bottrell

• Simple tricks and nonsense

runner from third took off home. She slid in just as the catcher got back to the plate. In the picture, I caught her trying to tag the runner, who was half hidden in a cloud of dust, as the umpire behind was calling “safe.”

I got second place in sports photography from the Kansas Press Association for that picture. It wouldn’t have been near as good if it hadn’t been outside in good light. As much fun as basketball and wrestling are to watch, indoor arenas aren’t conducive to the best picture. Max Jones is better than most, but I still prefer to be outside. I like a good rodeo for that very reason. Not because I’m particularly into rodeo, but because it’s easy to get incredibly good pictures.

So it’s good to be out on the ball diamonds this year. The Cowgirls are doing great. They have some pretty good pitching, but they have to remember not to be sloppy when they’re ahead by double digits. Play with precision every time, and it’ll help you when you need to make those clutch plays.

The Cowboys have been struggling a bit. They do well on offense, but they need to tighten things up on defense. I’ve noted a number of passed balls that could have made all the

difference had they been caught. Luckily, we have one of the best catchers in the league in Ryder Kling, so we don’t seem to have half the wild pitches other teams do.

Armchair coaching is, of course, a favorite pastime of sports fans, and one that I’m obviously taking a liking to. Win or lose, it’s great to see these young people putting in great effort and sportsmanship, and we continue to cheer for them.

And don’t worry, we’ll always make sure to feature track and golf as well.

The NCAA basketball tournament is over, and I continued my just-over-50-percent streak, accurately predicting about one game out of two in the Final Four. I did get the championship right, however, much to the chagrin of some of the KU fans around here. I had them losing a long time ago, so their success came as a great surprise to me.

In any case, I had a lot of fun taking part in March Madness this year. I can see why people enjoy this so much, and I may try it again next year.

It’s worth noting that with all the hoopla about March Madness, it’s easy to forget that NCAA women’s basketball had its tournament as well. Apparently, Baylor won, capping a record-setting 40-0 season. Pretty impressive.

Kevin Bottrell, editor of the Goodland Star-News, is a Colorado State University graduate who believes that the middle road is often the high one. Contact him at kbottrell @ nw-kansas.com

Liberty, responsibility keys to future

Most Kansans are familiar with the iconic mural in the Statehouse east wing painted by Kansas artist John Steuart Curry.

Curry depicts another Kansan, the abolitionist John Brown, his arms spread wide with a Bible and a rifle in his hands as he presides over the conflagration of the Civil War.

The scene is a constant reminder of the role Kansas played at the headwaters of our nation’s painful struggle to define America’s promise of freedom and equality for all. Our state stands fiercely for the notion that no person should be subjected to mastery by another.

Less well known is Curry’s majestic mural in the west wing. As Paul Harvey would say, it tells the rest of the story. It gives Kansas’ answer to the unstated question, “Freedom, yes, but to what end?”

The west wing mural depicts a Kansas farmer and his wife standing straight and tall, surrounded by their children, surveying the fruits of their labor – a barnyard full of livestock, a bountiful garden and grain gathered in the fields. In their bearing is the satisfaction of free people, tempered with humility and gratefulness for all they have been given. In the distance, thunderclouds gather, perhaps as a testament to nature and to nature’s God, which graciously gives life and yet may test our unity in times of trouble and scarcity.

These are the two stories of our state’s founding. As Kansans, we hold dear the stories and images of liberty and self-determination on the one hand and responsibility and self-sufficiency on the other. Only as we continue to see our lives as rooted in both will our experiment in self-government endure.



Sam Brownback

• Kansas Governor

The men and women who settled our great state, who bled for freedom and dirtied their boots and hands to provide for themselves and their families, understood this well. An 1881 editorial in the *Abilene Chronicle* summarized it with prairie efficiency: “A man with a family, with 160 acres of land in Dickinson County (with a contented mind and a will to work) is far better off than the Astors or Vanderbilts, or even President Garfield, as far as the real substantial enjoyment of life is concerned.”

We can no longer afford to view our current economic crisis as something distinct and apart from the crisis of family and community decay. Increasing economic dependency on a deeply indebted government is not a viable long-term solution.

Likewise, economic opportunities that entice our children to abandon the communities that nurtured them cannot be the answer.

Our economic prosperity depends on strong families and strong cultural institutions. Healthy families and communities require economic freedom. The best welfare program is a good job. The best child poverty prevention program is a stable, two-parent home. The best disaster recovery program is a community of resilient, caring neighbors and businesses.

The best community revitalization happens when towns and cities are free to create economic opportunities so they can stop exporting their best, brightest and hardest working.

When I took office a little more than a year ago, my administration refocused state government on core functions, reduced state spending, buttressed the stability of our small towns and rural communities and began to roll back a regulatory environment that too often smothers economic activity.

These changes are beginning to pay off. We have turned a \$500 million state deficit into a \$600 million projected positive balance. Kansans entrepreneurs and workers have created more than 22,000 new private sector jobs. Human capital is returning to small towns and rural communities as economic opportunities increase.

Now the Legislature has the opportunity to enact significant tax reform and prevent another lost decade of economic decline. Empowered by a tax policy that is built on liberty and rewards hard work, we can accelerate economic growth, create good-paying jobs, increase family and community stability and reduce the number of children living in poverty.

As Kansans, we have a rich heritage. Curry’s Statehouse murals remind us that Kansans have always insisted on both equal liberty and opportunity for all people, and also on our responsibility, together, to care for our own needs and the needs of our families and communities without being overly dependent on the state. This is still the best course to chart for liberty and prosperity, for ourselves, our children and their children to come.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

