



Other Viewpoints

Traffic deaths need new approach

Over in Kansas, advocates want to change the conversation about traffic deaths and what should be done about them.

Their insights are fresh and powerful, and deserve a wider hearing.

First, state Transportation Secretary Mike King and others think we sugarcoat reality when traffic crashes leading to death are called “accidents.” In almost every instance, they say, these are best described as preventable tragedies directly resulting from poor decisions.

Cell phones and texting contribute, they note, but are far from the whole problem.

“Drivers have to be aware of speed, weather conditions, construction, deer and so much more. It only takes a second for your mind to wander,” Mr. King says. “Add alcohol which, despite all our prevention efforts, is still a factor in about a third of all fatality crashes, and you have an even bigger problem.”

So big is the problem, and so resistant to improvement, he and others like Jim Hanni, a prominent executive with AAA Kansas, believe a new approach is needed. They think traffic deaths should be labeled a public health crisis.

“If that many people were dying from a single disease, we’d be doing something about it. We’d do research, develop a vaccine, issue health alerts, and hopefully come up with a cure,” Mr. King says.

Getting the public on board is complicated, the advocates say, because most people are familiar with only a few crash victims in their immediate area and as a result they miss the big picture – the fact hundreds are dying each year in both Kansas and Missouri.

We are pleased to see officials in both states working to spread this message.

In Kansas, a new web site at www.KTSRO.org is updated monthly with details on the highway death toll and programs that can help drivers. In Missouri, officials plan to use electronic message boards on busy highways to publicize fatalities and call attention to the percent who were not wearing seat belts.

These are timely steps from people who want to see deaths of our friends and loved ones cut dramatically. Confronting the real statistics is a start.

– St. Joseph News-Press, via the Associated Press

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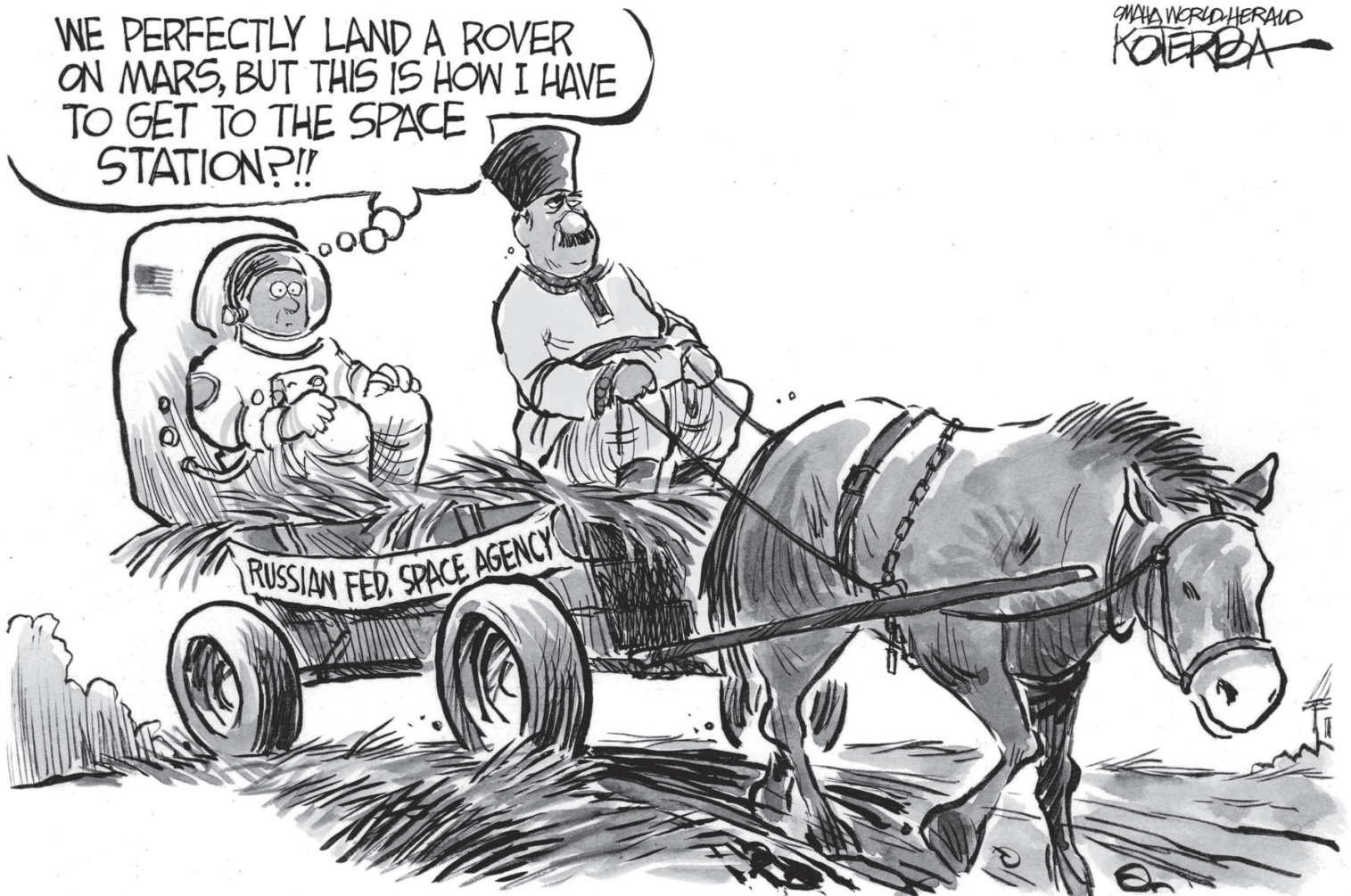
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Gun rights need to be sensible

The gun-rights people are having a bigger heyday over the theater shooting in Aurora than the gun-control crowd!

The gun-rights people are screaming about Second Amendment rights. Do they know what ‘militia’ means? Do they think everyone living in an apartment complex needs to shoot a rabbit for dinner, or protect themselves from a skunk? Should we dismantle our standing military and law enforcement and leave it every man for himself?

If there had been a dozen concealed-carry pistol packers in that theater, how many innocent viewers do you suppose they would have gunned down in their attempt to get the villain? How many of those pistols may have had ammo capable of going clean through one body and entering the one near by?

In a crowded theater, with all the excitement, do you suppose they could have hit their target from 15 or 20 feet? The safest place might have been standing so close to the villain that he couldn’t aim his rifle at you.

What kind of reasoning is behind comparing knives or clubs with firearms? You can kill with your bare hands, but you can’t reach beyond the length of your arms. You might be able to make a punching bag rattle, but you can’t sling punches as fast as an automatic rifle can sling bullets. And if you miss your punching bag, you aren’t going to rattle the one 10 feet away.

What kind of reasoning is behind think-



Ken Poland

• Ken’s World

ing someone with a concealed-carry permit is what the authors of our Constitution had in mind when they penned the phrase, “well regulated militia”? They didn’t even have semiautomatic weapons and certainly wouldn’t have perceived every guy on the street corner as having an automatic (pull the trigger ‘till the magazine goes empty). They certainly didn’t have ammo with the ability to pierce a quarter inch, or thicker, armor plate. I doubt they had any weapons that would throw the lead more than a quarter mile away.

Hunters don’t seem to have any real issue with having to plug their magazines to limit how many shots they can take without re-loading. They are hunting game, but if you’re hunting people, you need a Glock with 20-round clip and a couple of extra clips in your belt. That makes sense, doesn’t it?

Gun collectors don’t need loaded magazines to display their weapons. You don’t need loaded magazines on your way to the shooting range. People don’t need thousands of rounds of high-powered ammo in their closets

at home.

We have medicines and drugs that can help the mentally ill. We also have access to drugs that derange the mind. Do we expect those who have mental problems to diagnose their problems and prescribe their own medication? Do we expect the drug abusers to limit their intake so they don’t lose their sense of right and wrong? Do we expect children, or adults, who have never learned respect for life, either human or animal, to control their emotions when they don’t get their way?

We certainly have some very serious human relations problems in society today, but to have everyone “packing heat” isn’t the answer.

We live in a far more complex society than existed in 1787. We need reasonable rules and regulations for society. We need trained regulators and enforcers. The efficiency and justice of the “posse” system on the frontier depended on a trained and responsible leader. We need systems and agencies to intervene when individuals or families cannot cope with their frustrations.

Survival of the fittest didn’t get us to the standard of living we enjoy today.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired 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.

Reining in cost of government continues

During the last decade, the cost of state government in Kansas grew at an alarming rate. From 2003 to 2008, the spending of state tax dollars in Kansas grew by almost \$2 billion. That’s an increase of nearly 50 percent in just six years.

This led to an inevitable crash that started shortly thereafter and a financial mess that needed sorting through. Kansas began fiscal year 2011 – just six months before I took office – with less than \$1,000 in the bank. In my first year as governor, the state faced a \$500 million projected budget deficit. Instead of raising taxes to cover this deficit, we reduced spending. In fact, in fiscal year 2012, for the first time in 40 years, the Kansas state government spent less money than it had the year before.

To reign in the era of ever-expanding government, my administration focused not only on the big issues such as tax policy reform, but also on fixing the small things that can add up to big problems.

I directed members of my cabinet and staff to examine every process in state government. A reorganization of agencies enabled consolidation of back-office services like human resources and reduced duplicitous bureaucratic labor and red tape.

Immediately upon inauguration, we froze state spending, and in short order had eliminated more than 2,000 positions that had been open and unfilled for at least six months. We later initiated a voluntary buyout program that allowed more than a thousand state employees who met certain criteria to retire with extra benefits, saving the state millions of dollars in the long term.

The savings quickly mounted and helped turn the \$500 million projected budget deficit into an almost-\$500 million ending balance in just a little more than a year.



Sam Brownback

• Kansas Governor

We aren’t done. I believe that government has much to learn from the private sector in cutting costs, creating efficiencies and improving services. Leading private sector firms cut waste, compensate employees based on performance, eliminate inefficiencies, streamline processes and provide targeted funding to areas that help them meet their goals. This is how they survive. And although government is different, make no mistake, Kansas is in a competition with its surrounding states, and if we want people to invest and live here, we need these efficiencies, too.

My administration is evaluating how we deliver the services Kansans require of state government and targeting where we can improve that delivery while we cut costs. For the first time in decades, state agencies are assessing utility costs for state office buildings in hopes of negotiating lower rates. We are implementing Medicaid reforms that will reduce costs by more than a billion dollars – and improve and expand health care for our most needy Kansans.

A new online tool that many companies find useful is now available to state government managers with a click of a mouse. Known as the Cost Management System or CMS, this new system is helping state agencies become more effective and efficient without harming services and programs. It links agency activities with cost data and tracks those costs over

time by calculating department unit costs and per-person costs every pay period. The department unit costs are tracked on a graph so trends and variances can be identified and analyzed. Any substantial increase or decrease is flagged to allow agencies to investigate its root cause.

American taxpayers expect their government at all levels to use their hard-earned tax dollars well and to live within their means. All governors and state legislatures in our country should insist that every state tax dollar is spent efficiently and effectively in the delivery of services and programs to the citizens who need them.

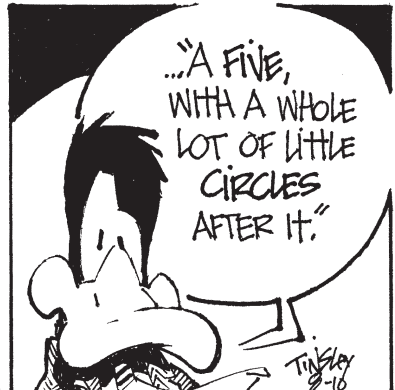
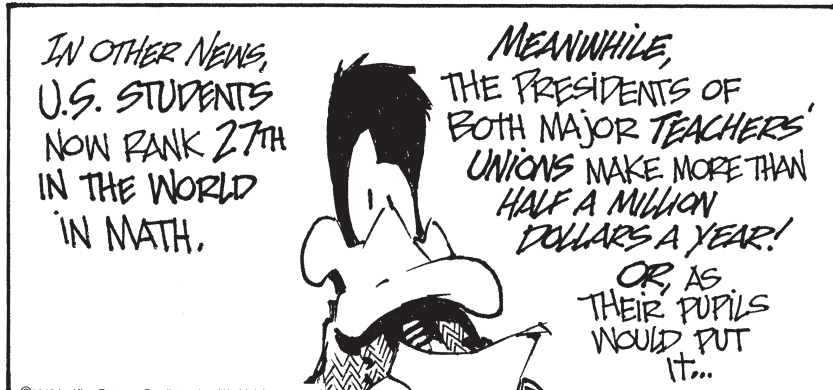
In 2010, Missouri spent roughly \$2,300 in all state money per resident and Oklahoma spent about \$2,800. In Kansas, we spent more than \$3,200 per resident. Kansas taxpayers want their elected leaders to be responsive to their needs and responsible with their tax dollars. I believe that becoming a more efficient and effective state government does not mean essential core services and programs such as public schools, Medicaid and public safety should suffer.

Rather, with state agencies able to more readily identify and analyze their costs, state government will be able to better target the use of taxpayers’ dollars, cut costs through process improvements and streamline agency services and programs to better serve you and your family. And the best news is, the savings we generate will end up back in your pocket.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



...“A FIVE, WITH A WHOLE LOT OF LITTLE CIRCLES AFTER IT.”

Tinsley 8-10