

Other Viewpoints

Election 'referee' should be sidelined

Kansans would erupt in outrage if it was discovered that the referee for a major football or basketball game between two rival schools held a vested interest in one of the competing programs.

A booster member, a coach or even a parent with a child in one program or the other would likely sit out the game to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

Yet Kansans tolerated far worse this election, as the state's "referee" of elections, Secretary of State Kris Kobach, doled out thousands of dollars through his Prairie Fire PAC to those candidates he hoped would emerge victorious.

Before the July 30 reporting deadline, Kobach's PAC shelled out more than \$10,000 in support of conservative candidates, most of whom were challenging moderate Republicans. After the deadline, in the week prior to the election, Kobach dished out more than \$3,000 on radio ads to help conservative Larry Powell defeat moderate Steve Morris; spent more than \$3,000 to help Joe Patton's unsuccessful campaign against Sen. Vicki Schmidt; and tossed out \$500 in support of Mitch Holmes, who downed incumbent Ruth Teichman.

Currently, there is no law or provision that prevents Kobach from dipping one hand in his party's political battles while using the other to judiciously ensure a fair and impartial election. Yet it seems instinctively wrong that the person who oversees the elections can play an active role in who wins or loses.

While there's nothing to indicate that Kobach allowed his clear bias to sully the election results, there is no doubt who the guardian of the elections hoped would win. That creates suspicion and doubt on his integrity and his ability to fairly perform his duties.

We expect at least as much separation from the people who referee high school or middle school sporting events, but explain such behavior away when it involves something as wide reaching as elections?

Nevertheless, now that "his" candidates have been elected, Kobach and Co. have the power to further erode any division between the Secretary of State's office and active political involvement – thanks to a crop of indebted newcomers who owe at least some of their success to the Secretary of State's generous financial contributions.

– *The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press*

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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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Soapbox occupied, no politicians allowed

Ok, grab that soapbox and dust that puppy off. Am I the only one out there that is already very tired of hearing political ads?

It seems that those running for president have been on the stump for the last two years, and there doesn't seem to be an end in sight. I even have serious doubts that the actual election day will stop this silliness.

I was sitting there the other night trying to enjoy one of my shows and up popped an ad claiming that Obama is killing off the Work for Welfare program and that the Republicans are up in arms over it. The very next ad was the Obama ad claiming that Romney is not telling the truth over this issue. Guess what ad was next? Yep, the same Romney ad again. It was like a Romney white bread sandwich with Obama baloney in the middle.

So, who is actually telling the truth here? Who do the voters believe? Well, your guess is as good as mine on that score.

I guess my sense of humor can only stand so much politicking and the final alarm bells are going off. Maybe I am just getting cranky in my old age but I think I have a solution for some of our nation's problems.

Fire hose. Insert in one side of that big white building on the hill inside the Beltway and turn the danged thing on full blast. Oh, yeah, open a door on the opposite side so the flotsam can wash out.

Now, you have a nice clean building. Rent



Sharon Friedlander

• Musings

out some of the space to help defray the cost of utilities and upkeep.

Go back to the states and have elections for new senators and representatives. Have job requirements that include business experience, community service and basic skills like balancing a checkbook. Terms of office will not exceed two terms.

Each one of these folks gets an office with government-issued desks, an office manager and one assistant. No more free mail except for a yearly report to voters back home. If they want to say more to the voters it has to come out of their pockets, not ours.

When their term is over, they go back to their lives without lifetime benefits or pay.

Okay, I know this is radical, but think of the tax dollars that will be saved on staffing, postage, insurance and retirement. To serve your country should be the lifetime reward. If we don't give them everything, maybe they will legislate to make our country work for all of us and not just their little groups. If they know they have to go back to their own communities

and earn a living, maybe they will protect our jobs from going overseas and make insurance really work for all of us.

Some of the folks who serve their states are working hard while others just stand behind the party line and wait for the next issue to pop up and party leaders to tell them how to vote. If you worked for a company instead of the government you would not keep your job very long with the wait and see attitude.

Being a public servant is surely a hard job, but that should mean that they would listen to the folks that put them in office in the first place, right? I think that just crossing the Beltway on their way into Washington seems to bring on amnesia of why they are there and where they came from.

If we can't find a way to wake them up in Washington, then there never will be any improvement and folks will still be taking to the streets to demonstrate.

Maybe if we all just get off our collective duffs and vote in November it will be a start to taking our country back. Large numbers of voters tend to make politicians polish up their acts and make them more responsive to their electorate.

So, join me at the polls....

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

Sports span good, bad and ugly

This year the Olympic Games came at a time that helps America shift focus away from the ugliest episode in our sports history: the Sandusky-Penn State affair. The ugliness in this affair was the jaw-dropping degree that coaches and administrators right up to the top failed to report, and in effect covered up, egregious crimes primarily to preserve a sports reputation. This episode has moved off of our radar thanks to the Olympic Games.

But a bad aspect of local sports remains: the overemphasis on sports that makes it "job one" at most U.S. schools. In the 1980s, when 10 science student teachers graduated and went looking for jobs, those who could coach were hired first. Those who had superior credentials but did not coach were often not hired and, being ambitious, took other jobs and were lost to the Kansas science classroom. The shortage of science teacher changed that formula for awhile. But the hire-the-coach-first and ask-what-else-can-they-teach-later attitude is returning.

The dramatic cuts in state funding has placed small community high schools at risk. Declining enrollments make eventual consolidation inevitable. But communities rightfully cry that losing the school will doom their community's future – ghost town in the making.

But probe deeper. It is not the loss of the high school as a center of academics, but the loss of high school sports that brings the communities grief. That is what the community is attending during the sports seasons and long after they have any children in school. View the glass cases of athletic awards that line school hallways, metal icons to ball playing and track accomplishments dating back a century.

Any academic awards, if there are any, are usually temporarily posted on bulletin boards. Despite the professed academic goal of Ameri-



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

can schools, we rarely see awards celebrating those students who went into research, medicine, law, public service, music, theater, writing, etc.

American public schools and most universities have rightly been called a "jockocracy."

We assume that the rest of the world operates the same way. That is wrong.

For five months this last spring I taught at a Chinese university that, similar to all of their schools, does not compete in high profile competition with any other university. For two days only, university undergraduates did have an internal sports competition. Most students played for fun and excitement.

It was the School of Computing versus the School of Plant Protection.

But the whole focus of the public schools and universities in China remains academics. Outstanding student scholars were known and lauded. Yet these students had just as much pride in their university. Years later, just as many alumni return for class reunions.

China and many other countries can still select and train their best athletes for the Olympics without sports mania. So yes, as we witnessed in the Olympics, you can have academic schools and national sports without subverting the whole educational system to a jockocracy.

Some of our coaches assert: "Sports keeps some students from dropping out of school."

But overseas schools keep students in school by celebrating academic achievement – a system that does not mislead larger numbers of students into thinking they can become one of the few million-dollar professional baseball or basketball players. And we fail to weigh the cost of this bribery on the atmosphere of our schools – when buses for science field trips and debate are canceled, but not for sports.

But I am not going to win this debate. America will continue in its gladiatorial mindset.

So I tell my science student teachers, if they are lucky enough to get a job, to be sure to sign up to help take tickets at the ball games. It may be a bigger factor in their being re-hired than anything they do in the classroom.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

