

Other Viewpoints

Conservative shift leads primary vote

Kansas Republicans spoke loudly at the polls in favor of Gov. Sam Brownback's vision of a Legislature as conservative as he is. Casualties of the GOP primary included some smart, dedicated and independent-minded members of the Kansas Senate.

It's too soon to know whether the state's public schools, poor, disabled and property-tax payers also lost.

There's always a chance that Kansas Democrats could make some big gains in the November election in the wake of the primary's near-purge of moderate Republicans from the Senate, and preserve that chamber's ability to check and balance the House. The primary certainly left some Republicans feeling displaced.

"Where is the Kansas of Eisenhower, Dole and Kassebaum?" asked former state Senate President Dick Bond, in the *Kansas City Star*.

But when Brownback stands before the 2013 Legislature in January to deliver his third State of the State address, he may feel like he's looking in an ideological mirror.

It won't be enough just to be far right in thinking anymore, though. Brownback and his allies now must show they can govern and that their philosophy works in practice.

That will mean demonstrating that the state can afford the huge tax-cut bill, passed despite the better judgment of the Senate's moderate Republican leaders, and that legislative researchers were all wet in forecasting huge budget shortfalls.

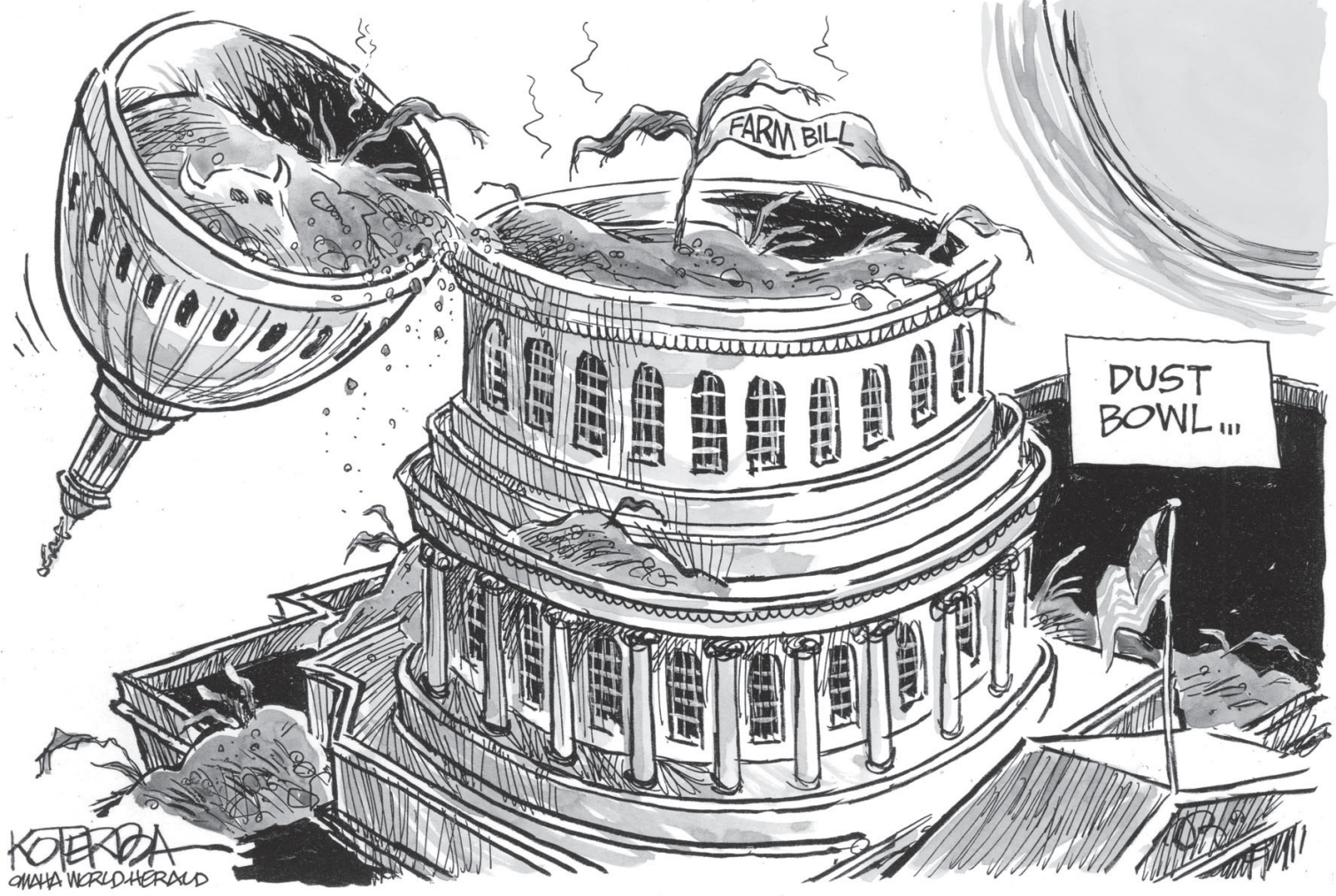
It also will mean reconciling the new fiscal reality and Brownback's oft-stated belief that educating children is to state government as national defense is to the federal government. It will mean showing how KanCare, the transformation of Medicaid in Kansas into a managed-care system, can save \$1 billion in five years without cutting eligibility, provider fees or coverage.

Individual issues on conservatives' various wish lists still will deserve full public debate, ranging from the statutory and constitutional changes Brownback wants to allow him to hand-pick the judges on the Kansas Court of Appeals and Supreme Court, to proposals to allow guns on state university campuses, implement an Arizona-style immigration crackdown, roll back the public smoking ban and pass an anti-abortion bill that could jeopardize the University of Kansas Medical Center's accreditation.

And what about all the money dumped into the election? Ousted Senate President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton, estimated that the total spending of conservative groups against the moderate senators was more than \$3 million. Even if you consider only the documented \$675,000 that was pumped into the races by the Kansas Chamber of Commerce political action committee, that's a lot of cash for an election in which just 392,142 of the state's 1.7 million registered voters chose to participate. And many of those who voted either were Democrats or in districts with uncontested GOP Senate primaries.

The campaign donors will expect something from those they delivered to victory. But the governor and his newly friendly Legislature must take pains to demonstrate that they serve all Kansans, not just those able to spend thousands of dollars on political campaigns.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*



'Image is everything' in U.S. politics

In his younger days, tennis legend Andre Agassi uttered the catchphrase "Image is everything" while doing ads for Canon cameras.

Much has happened to Agassi since he first mouthed this famous sentence. The tennis bad boy of the '90s went from being a brash youngster to a grizzled veteran and tennis icon.

But this phrase still rings true in the crazy world of American politics. There are few fields where a person's record is so detached from his or her public image. Such is the case with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's vice presidential running mate, Rep. Paul Ryan.

If you are not a political junkie — and most Americans are not — you probably consider Rep. Ryan, a Wisconsin Republican, to be a principled fiscal hawk with a keen understanding of budgetary statistics and data. Ryan is that rare breed of politician who's willing to tell Americans the hard truths about our out-of-control spending on entitlement programs. He's a policy wonk who has the courage and soundness of mind to propose the deep budget cuts that are necessary to put America back on the road to fiscal sanity.

The problem with this image is that it's mostly bunk. While Ryan may have wowed many fellow Republicans with his fancy fiscal footwork and predilection for number crunching, the Wisconsin congressman has approved of virtually every program that created the deficit in the first place. In an article for the liberal *Salon Magazine*, Glenn Greenwald wrote that Ryan voted for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Bush tax cuts and the budget-busting



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

Medicare Part D plan. So, Ryan is essentially proposing to fix a budget crisis he helped to create by making deep cuts in federal programs for middle class Americans.

And then there is the plan Ryan put together as chairman of the House Budget Committee. Among other things, the Ryan budget proposes tax cuts for the wealthy that make the Bush tax cuts look tame in comparison. His cuts are like the Bush agenda on steroids, drugs that would make Major League Baseball's most habitual users blush. Also, in a symbolic genuflection to Romney and his ilk, the Ryan plan, formally dubbed the "Road Map for America's Future" — "promotes savings by eliminating taxes on interest, capital gains and dividends; also eliminates the death tax."

"Mitt Romney's income — more than \$20 million each of the past two years — comes almost entirely from capital gains on his investments, or from 'carried interest,' a cut of Bain Capital profits that are taxed as capital gains ('the infamous hedge fund loophole)," writes Alex MacGillis of the *New Republic*.

The most ironic part of the budget plan is that it, like many of the programs Ryan has championed, does very little to fix the budget deficit

because of the large loss in revenue it would foster. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center estimates the plan would result in a \$4 trillion loss of revenue in the next decade. Under the Ryan plan, liberal Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman estimates, the federal deficit in 2020 would be \$1.3 trillion.

But despite an ample amount of evidence that casts doubt on Ryan's reputation as a budget hawk, partisans and self-styled centrists in the media still seem bent on treating him like some kind of fiscal prophet. I have nothing against Ryan personally — he appears to be an affable guy — but his public image simply doesn't match his record. Furthermore, I'm more than a little concerned about having an acolyte of author Ayn Rand as vice president.

The one laudable thing Ryan's plan did was raise hard questions about the long-term sustainability of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. But a solution that, according to the Tax Policy Center, cuts the tax rate of the wealthiest 1 percent in half — it also, admirably, cuts taxes for those at the bottom of the economic ladder — while raising taxes for 95 percent of Americans is not acceptable.

If the Romney-Ryan ticket triumphs in this year's election, the newspaper headline should read "America Shrugged." For the sake of the middle class, I hope this doesn't happen.

Andy Heintz, a *K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision.*

Organic or not? Your choice

Do organically produced foods have higher nutritional value?

Let's take a look. At a 19-country international conference, research studies compared the nutritional value of organic crops versus conventional crops.

Colorado State University researchers compared vitamin content of organically and conventionally grown vegetables — carrots and broccoli. They found no statistically significant differences.

Other research from Colorado State focused on growing potatoes using four different farming techniques under the same growing conditions: an intensive high-chemical system; a moderate conventional system; customary organic farming (hog manure and crop rotation on land used for organic production for 10 years); and virgin organic production, using cow manure on land cleared from brush. Nine minerals and seven vitamins were analyzed and no clear differences were discovered.

Another U.S. study found more soluble iron in conventionally grown spinach. The proportion of the soluble iron available to a consumer's system was some higher for both spinach and peppers grown with compost and manure.

In other studies abroad, a Norwegian study found conventionally grown carrots contained more beta-carotene, more magnesium and more manganese. The ecologically grown carrots had more aluminum. When carrots of the same variety were compared, the only difference was a higher level of carotenoids in the conventionally grown carrots.

A German study discovered lower levels of nitrate in carrots, beets and potatoes grown



John Schlageck

• Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

with manure but the differences were minute under good storage conditions. Stressful storage conditions enhanced the difference.

Consumers can conclude from such findings that people who do not buy organically grown fruits and vegetables, usually at higher prices, can find equally good products with equal nutrition at supermarkets and roadside stands. It also means people who wish to eat organically grown fruits and vegetables should do so.

Bottom line — differing farming systems produce virtually no difference in the nutritional value of the crops. The variety, or strain, of the carrots and potatoes grown appears to have a bigger impact on their nutrient value than organic production methods.

It's no secret, plant breeders have long advocated that fruits, vegetables and grains require three main nutrients — nitrogen, phosphate and potassium and trace minerals in varying amounts according to the plant species. If a plant is sorely lacking in one of these nutrients, it will not grow. If it has access to these nutrients, it will grow into the crop its heredity determines and will pass along the nutrients its heredity intends.

Translation — for a healthy diet eat plenty of fruit and vegetables each day, regardless of

how they were grown. Doing so will probably mean a person eats more fiber, which is healthy. It also means less room for fatty foods, one of the major contributors to poor health.

Eating five fruits and vegetables per day reduces our risk for heart disease and cancer. Researchers tell us this health-enhancing effect is derived from the high levels of antioxidant chemicals in the fruits and vegetables. Studies are confirming this cleansing effect from specific chemicals from specific crops including broccoli and blueberries.

So much of this research on conventional versus organically grown food has demonstrated little nutritional differences. In our society consumers have a choice. It is an individual decision.

The choice is yours.

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.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774 roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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