



Other Viewpoints

Prosecutors need to enforce the law

Prosecutors must take the Kansas Open Meetings Act more seriously. Shawnee County District Attorney Chad Taylor and his staff have determined any violations of the Open Meetings Act by legislators who attended dinners hosted by Gov. Sam Brownback at Cedar Crest were “technical” in nature and “borne of ignorance.” No legal action will be taken.

In essence, that means legislators violated the law by discussing public business at the dinners but will not suffer any consequences because they didn’t know any better.

Maybe some of them didn’t know any better, but some did. And Kansans now must be wondering how long their elected officials will be able to wink at, or turn a blind eye to, the Act and receive nothing more than an admonishment and a recommendation they become more familiar with the law’s particulars....

The Open Meetings Act was adopted to ensure elected officials at the local and state level conduct the public’s business in full view of the public. The law prohibits a majority of a quorum of a legislative body from meeting behind closed doors to discuss business. Multiple local governing bodies have violated the law, and many legislators did so during the dinners at Cedar Crest....

House Speaker Mike O’Neal, R-Hutchinson, said he was pleased with Taylor’s report and “had nothing but confidence that our legislators adhered to the guidelines laid out in KOMA while at the governor’s residence.”

That statement must have been borne of ignorance of what was in Taylor’s report, because the report makes it plain violations did occur....

Taylor’s report also noted most of the legislators questioned during his investigation were represented by the Kansas attorney general’s office and many legislators couldn’t remember the substance of much of the discussion at the dinners.

What Taylor’s report didn’t say is that in law enforcement circles that’s known as “lawyering-up” and “dummying-up.” The prosecutors on Taylor’s staff are familiar with the tactics, but they aren’t in the habit of allowing ignorance of the law as an excuse, or defense.

It’s time Taylor and other prosecutors across the state begin treating Open Meeting violations more seriously.

– The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press

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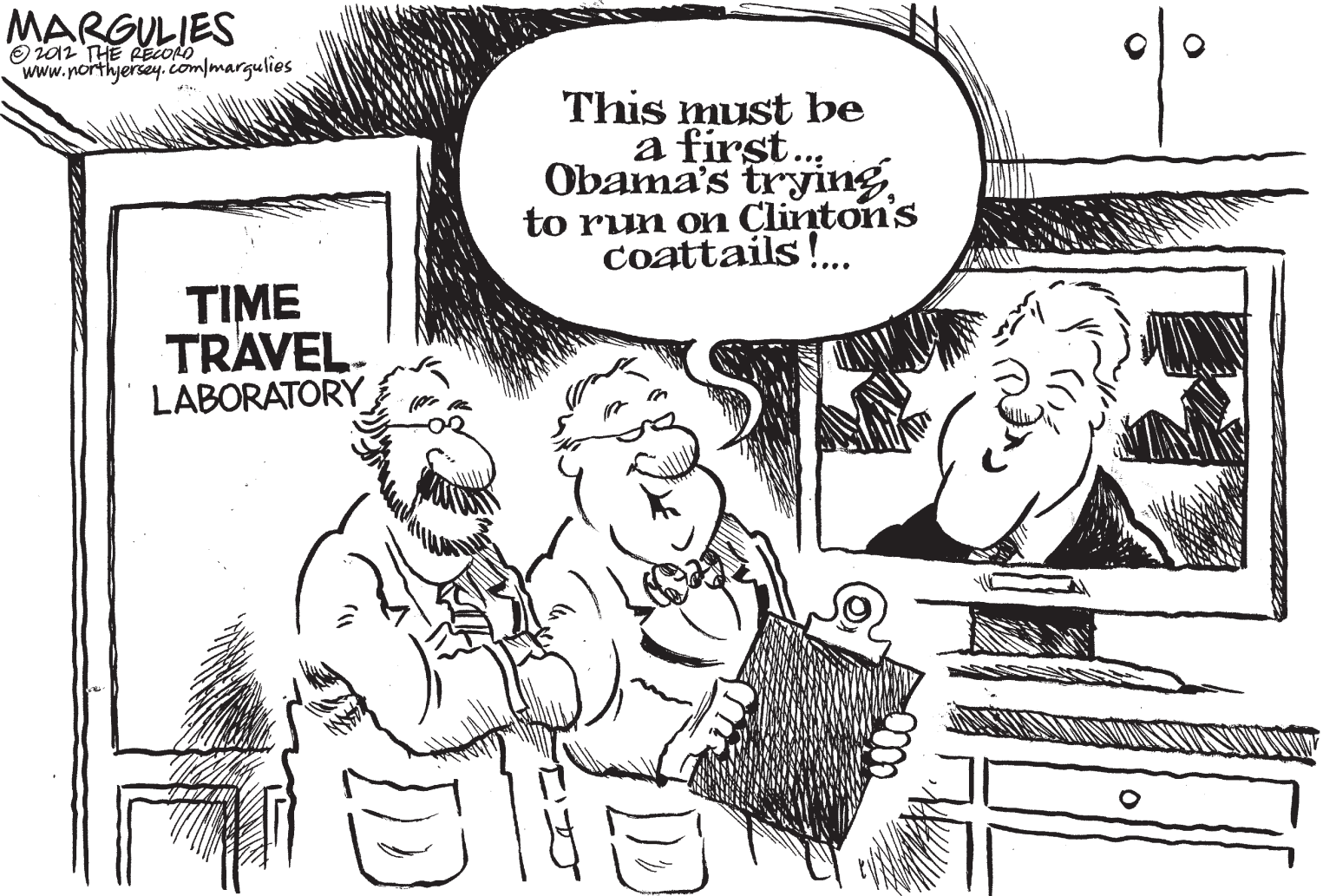
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We need to rethink war on terror

After watching the intense – and more than a little disturbing – nationalistic fervor that hovered over the Republican National Convention like a dark cloud, I realize this article is probably futile. But, if only to clear my own conscience, I’m going to write it anyway.

It’s time we put our alleged ideals in front of our national security and demand that the U.S. government radically revamp the way it combats terrorism. The terrorist attacks on 9/11 evoked feelings of fear and a hunger for revenge and justice in many Americans. I was one of the angry ones – and I remain angry today. Any massive act of senseless violence that claims so many innocent lives should arouse anger in all decent people and the perpetrators of those acts must be brought to justice.

But the U.S. government’s response to 9/11 went – and continues to go – too far. I recently read an article in the *Guardian* by Glenn Greenwald (who previously worked for the liberal *Salon Magazine*) that exemplified the radical policies that have become the norm in post-9/11 America.

Greenwald wrote that, in February, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism documented that “the CIA’s drone campaign in Pakistan has killed dozens of civilians who had gone to help rescue or were attending funerals.” Specifically, “at least 50 civilians were killed in follow-up strikes when they had gone to help victims.”

The Bureau has documented several instances of this tactic: “On [June 4] U.S. drones attacked rescuers in Waziristan in western



Andy Heintz

Wildcat Ramblings

Pakistan, minutes after the initial strike, killing 16 people, according to the BBC.”

That same month, Christof Heyns, the U.N. special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, arbitrary executions, said that “if there have been secondary drone strikes on rescuers who are helping (the injured) after an initial crime attack, those further attacks are a war crime.”

So it’s painstakingly clear that the CIA officers who carried out these attacks, and President Barack Obama – a man I voted for and will vote for again because of the many things I agree with him about – are guilty of war crimes.

Yet, it would be hypocritical to punish Obama for being implicated in war crimes for the simple reason that war crimes are bound to happen if our country’s first priority is to capture or a kill an enemy that lurks in the shadows and amongst the public in countries all over the world. To refrain from such unpleasant actions as bombing funerals could potentially allow the terrorist in attendance to escape.

In addition, it would be unfair to demonize Obama when past presidents like Ronald Rea-

gan and George W. Bush have approved far more atrocious policies in Iraq, Somalia (less well known, but hideous nonetheless) and Central America without ever being charged with anything. What’s disturbing about many of the policies that have been approved since 9/11 isn’t just their tragic results, but what little dissent there is to the policies in the first place.

There appears to be an unspoken bipartisan agreement between Republicans and the majority of Democrats that Americans are OK with civilian deaths in other countries and civil liberty abuses at home as long as it keeps us safe. This was as true in the Cold War as it is today. And we Americans have given them no reason to think otherwise.

I like and respect Obama for his policy achievements – catching Osama bin Laden (although some accounts of his killing are morally troubling), passing a universal health care bill, repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” rescuing the automobile industry – but bombing funerals is wrong and should be stopped immediately. And the American people should demand that it does.

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Benefits of science fade with time

Smallpox – polio – whooping cough – measles – tetanus – contaminated water – dental caries – the list goes on.

The accomplishments of vaccination, chlorination and fluoridation in this last scientific century are so profound. Yet, many in this next generation are ready to return to the Dark Ages. Why?

Ironically, the success of science eliminates the very experience base that led to the medical breakthroughs and the eradication of many infectious diseases.

My earliest memories are of the fear in my parents’ voices following the radio announcement that polio cases had again shown up in our community. It was 1951 and they closed the public pools. Preschoolers like me stayed at home. The tragedy of polio, often crippling the very young and leaving many Americans in iron lungs threw a shadow over that summer.

When the Jonas Salk polio vaccine was finally released, everyone was relieved. I gladly took my shot and later booster shot, and my parents fears subsided. Even when the Cutter Lab released a bad batch of vaccine where the virus was not fully “killed,” and it caused polio cases, we had faith that the scientists would correct it. Indeed they did. Polio has been eradicated from this continent and heroic efforts are being made to wipe it out in the final corners of the earth.

That indeed happened with smallpox. The last case in the U.S. was 1949. Worldwide vaccination and quarantine ended smallpox in the wild in the 1970s in Somalia. I witnessed the deeply pock-marked face of a smallpox survivor in the streets of Macao in 1976 and



John Richard Schrock

Education Frontlines

understand the tremendous motivation that a population that witnessed this plague would have to end such a disease – so disfiguring and often fatal.

Early American history is laden with the statistics of children who died an early death or were stunted from the damage of contaminated water. Today’s water treatment plants utilize chlorine or ozone to dramatically drop the counts of harmful waterborne bacteria.

And as I travel in Asia or meet with international colleagues from Russia who nearly universally have lost permanent teeth at an early age from lack of fluoridation, I am saddened by their needless pain, suffering and continual discomfort that they will have all of their life.

But we now see concerted efforts to end chlorination, fluoridation and vaccination in the United States. There are several causes. But the main one is the very success of science itself. When a new generation grows up without any direct knowledge of dreaded infectious diseases, they no longer have the awareness or memories to make the trivial needlestick seem needed.

The United States provides its children with one-third the science education of other developed countries. Most never receive any knowledgeable instruction in how our bodies

work and therefore lack the “owner’s manual” knowledge that is common in other developed countries.

Our new generation is jaded by media. Historical footage of cases of smallpox or tetanus or polio are little match for zombie movies and anti-vaccination propaganda.

And the Internet makes it far easier to spread conspiracy theories about “big pharma” and the medical-industrial complex.

Pioneer families who settled the Great Plains often had 10 or more children because so many died in their first few years from tetanus and diarrheal dehydration. They had so many children so that perhaps a few would survive. Today, with modern medicine we can have two children with a reasonable expectation that both will survive.

But with serious infectious disease gone from their experience base, a new generation is susceptible to false claims that vaccines and the like are harmful and were never effective. This is smallpox denial and polio denial.

We live in an age when the press often gives equal time to unequal ideas.

I can only ask: If today’s Internet existed back in the 1940s to 1970s, could we have eradicated smallpox and polio from America?

And do the proponents of forsaking modern medicine really want to assume responsibility for the literally millions of victims on earth who would have died without these vaccinations and modern treatments?

*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.*

Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

