



Other Viewpoints

Kansas must deal with prison abuses

A federal investigation finding “rampant” sexual misconduct and abuse of inmates at the Topeka Correctional Facility for women shamed the state. In response, officials now say they have taken the necessary actions to prevent the problems from recurring.

Like all citizens in America, inmates have constitutional rights. No one should suffer abuse from correctional staff or other prisoners.

Thomas Perez, the assistant U.S. attorney general for civil rights, last week noted the findings of a critical Justice Department investigation in a letter to Gov. Sam Brownback. Perez warned that U.S. Attorney Eric Holder could file a lawsuit if the Justice Department thinks the state is not correcting the problems. However, Kansas Department of Corrections Secretary Ray Robert said that the May 2011 Justice Department audit did not “account for the strides and successes” at the prison in the last 16 months. The changes include additional staffing, increasing the number of security cameras from 250 to 350, providing training to staff, volunteers and inmates, and hiring a prison rape elimination act coordinator in January to ensure the safety of the nearly 700 inmates.

Concerned citizens rely on the state to make needed improvements ensuring the safety of the incarcerated women. State officials must continue to work with the Justice Department to ensure that sexual abuse and other problems do not recur. A civilized society expects its government to fairly and humanely punish lawbreakers. Anything less must not be tolerated.

— The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press

Where to write, call

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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/

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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After pep rallies, will game fever catch?

The Dems, just like the Repubs, have come away from their pep rally with the hope that they have fired up the team.

The crowd was behind them in the rally. The question now is: Will the expanded crowd that wasn't at the convention in person have caught the fever and enthusiasm?

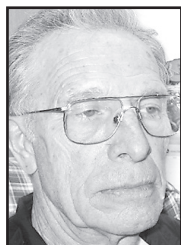
As Dr. Mark Hansen pointed out at the Colby Community College Max Pickerell Lecture the other night, the older generations of both parties tend to be in the center and more moderate than the younger generations.

We – the older generation – are more aware of historical trends. I'm not nearly as excitable as I was some 60 years ago. We have survived a lifetime of failures and successes, and the sun is still rising in the east and setting in the west on a predictable schedule. We have learned to adapt to the changing seasons, heat cycles and cold cycles. We haven't always predicted the conditions with absolute accuracy and haven't always been prepared with proper adaptation.

As all you readers are aware, I am a Democrat. And, contrary to what I keep hearing from a lot of people, there is a distinctive and vast difference in the platforms of the two parties. There are some very basic differences in their economic policies and what role the government should play in our everyday lives.

The Repubs champion the free-market system to regulate business ethics and morals. They tend to want government assistance in policing the personal ethics and morals of the individual. They trust the corporate boards, chief executive officers and upper management to make decisions that set the standards for social responsibility of business. They seem to be blind to the demands of profit over compassionate concern for the masses.

Their system depends on “every man for himself” providing a level playing field and opportunity for all. They don't seem to think a democratic republic form of government should be concerned about monopoly control of the economy. They do seem to be concerned



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

about organized professionals and laborers encroaching upon the standards and freedom of self regulation of business.

The Dems, on the other hand, champion individual freedom and responsibility. They trust individuals to organize themselves to equalize individual power with management and corporate policy. They think government should not control individual choice in matters of religion (theology), sexual orientation, procreation or emotional attachments. They think government should protect majorities from the tyranny of minorities and minorities from the tyranny of majorities. Democrats, in general, respect both the discipline of science and the discipline of religion.

I don't think the Repubs can destroy our nation in the next four years and I wasn't expecting the Dems to create utopia in the last four years. The Dems have not convinced me that every proposal they have made is going to give us heaven on earth. Neither have I been convinced that all of the Repubs proposals will create hell on earth.

I do have a problem with undoing the last 3 1/2 years and returning to the status of our nation at the end of the last administration. So far, I've not seen any significant new policies being proposed by the Republican team. Lowering income taxes and deregulation hadn't worked in those eight years. Your personal freedoms were being taken away and the economy was in a precipitous decline. So, let's try some more of the same?

Whether it is because of government programs or in spite of them, General Motors and

Chrysler are still alive and Osama Bin Laden is dead and Al Qaeda is no longer the dominate force in the Mideast. Your checking account and certificates of deposit are safe and sound. The bank bailouts were actually in the legislative and administrative process before the Dems gained the presidency. Raising the debt ceiling was inevitable before the last election.

It appears to me, if you want the government to control your own personal morals and theology, the insurance companies to control your health care and multinational corporations and holding companies to control the economy, you should join the Republican team. If you want to decide your own morals and theology, have equitable medical and health care and reasonable opportunity to at least maintain middle class economic level, then perhaps you should join the Democrat team.

Obviously, there are many more nuances in both party's platforms. It takes more than a short column to point out all the fine points. If you are really interested in making informed decisions at the voting booth, you need to study both sides and look at the reality of what is fact and what is fiction.

Campaign rhetoric is often taken out of context, making it less than truthful. Our court system depends on both sides presenting their evidence, and then, the judge or jury must weigh all sides of the issue before making their decision. If the court only considers one side's testimony or witnesses, the verdict is suspect. If you vote only on the basis of one side's evaluation of what we need, you run a good chance of not voting for what is in your best interest.

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.

Change seems to step backward

The Obama administration came to Washington with much fanfare promising “change.”

I'm beginning to think that change is all that's going to be left in our pockets after the president's policies are enacted. More taxes, new regulations and hefty fines are all fair game under this president.

Let me give you one new example that just became public.

The Obama administration and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius recently released new guidelines to the states regarding a welfare program called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

You might recall the 1996 welfare reform bill ended welfare as an entitlement. It allowed states, which administer the program, to have the authority to create “welfare to work” programs.

Welfare to work programs encourage recipients to try to get back on their own two feet as soon as possible. In order to receive welfare benefits, recipients must demonstrate efforts to work, improve their jobs skills or obtain further education.

Unfortunately, some states (not Kansas) abused this system in recent years and were willing to count things like smoking cessation, bed rest, journaling and exercise as work re-



U.S. Senator Pat Roberts

• From the Senate

quirements so that more people could continue to receive assistance.

I am certain this is not the kind of “work” taxpayers had in mind.

Just last month, Health and Human Services determined it had the authority to waive welfare to work requirements for the states so that bed rest and journaling would be acceptable standards for all. And the American taxpayer will pick up the tab.

At this rate, can we be far off from taxpayer-funded yoga?

Beyond the ridiculousness, there is also a possible unintended consequence of this unilateral administrative action. It is possible this waiver could increase the number of households now eligible for food stamps, now officially known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

That would be another very expensive prec-

edent to set. As the top Republican on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, which oversees federal nutrition programs, I have asked the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for a thorough analysis of what this may mean for the taxpayer.

At a time when our nation is \$16 trillion in debt, and the nation ranks economic and budget issues at the top of their concerns, we must be much more careful stewards of the federal purse. This action flies in the face of that. You'll be left to pay the tab – so save your change. The Obama administration needs it.

If you would like to know more about issues before the Senate, go to my Web site at roberts.senate.gov. For regular updates, sign up on my home page for a monthly e-newsletter, the Roberts Report.

Pat Roberts has been a U.S. Senator from Kansas since 1997. He currently serves on four senate committees including finance, ethics and agriculture.



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

