



## Other Viewpoints

### Say 'I don't recall' to stonewall queries

Many of the Republican legislators interviewed earlier this year by Shawnee County prosecutors about their participation at private dinners hosted by Gov. Sam Brownback displayed an amazing ignorance of the Kansas Open Meetings Act and very selective, or short, memories.

It makes one wonder if our legislators read the bills they pass each year and, if so, how long they can remember what's in them.

Actually, our experience with such things tells us they do, indeed, usually read the legislation they're working on, although crafty legislators have been known to slip something past their colleagues when bills are amended and voted on after they reach the House and Senate floors.

And, granted, the Open Meetings Act wasn't passed just this session by current legislators. It is one that all elected officials should be familiar with, however, and there is no excuse for legislators to plead ignorance of the law when they're being questioned about possible violations.

As a matter of fact, legislators should be embarrassed about their lack of knowledge on the subject. Most of those questioned about it by two Shawnee County prosecutors indicated they hadn't read the act, which actually covers several statutes.

The Open Meetings Act prohibits the majority of a legislative body, which includes committees, from meeting behind closed doors to discuss official business. Brownback, who as an individual violated no law by holding the gatherings, invited Republican members of several legislative committees to the dinners.

At least one legislator professed to be unaware the act could apply to social events while other legislators acknowledged attending similar gatherings held by lobbyists. That's something we would expect of lobbyists, but legislators should know better. That they apparently aren't embarrassed by their ignorance is astounding.

They also should be embarrassed about their memory problems but apparently are not.

"I don't recall" was a popular response when prosecutors asked legislators about the substance of the discussions that occurred during the governor's dinners and the identity of participants in the discussions. According to transcripts, the phrase or some variation of it was used more than 450 times by the 53 legislators interviewed.

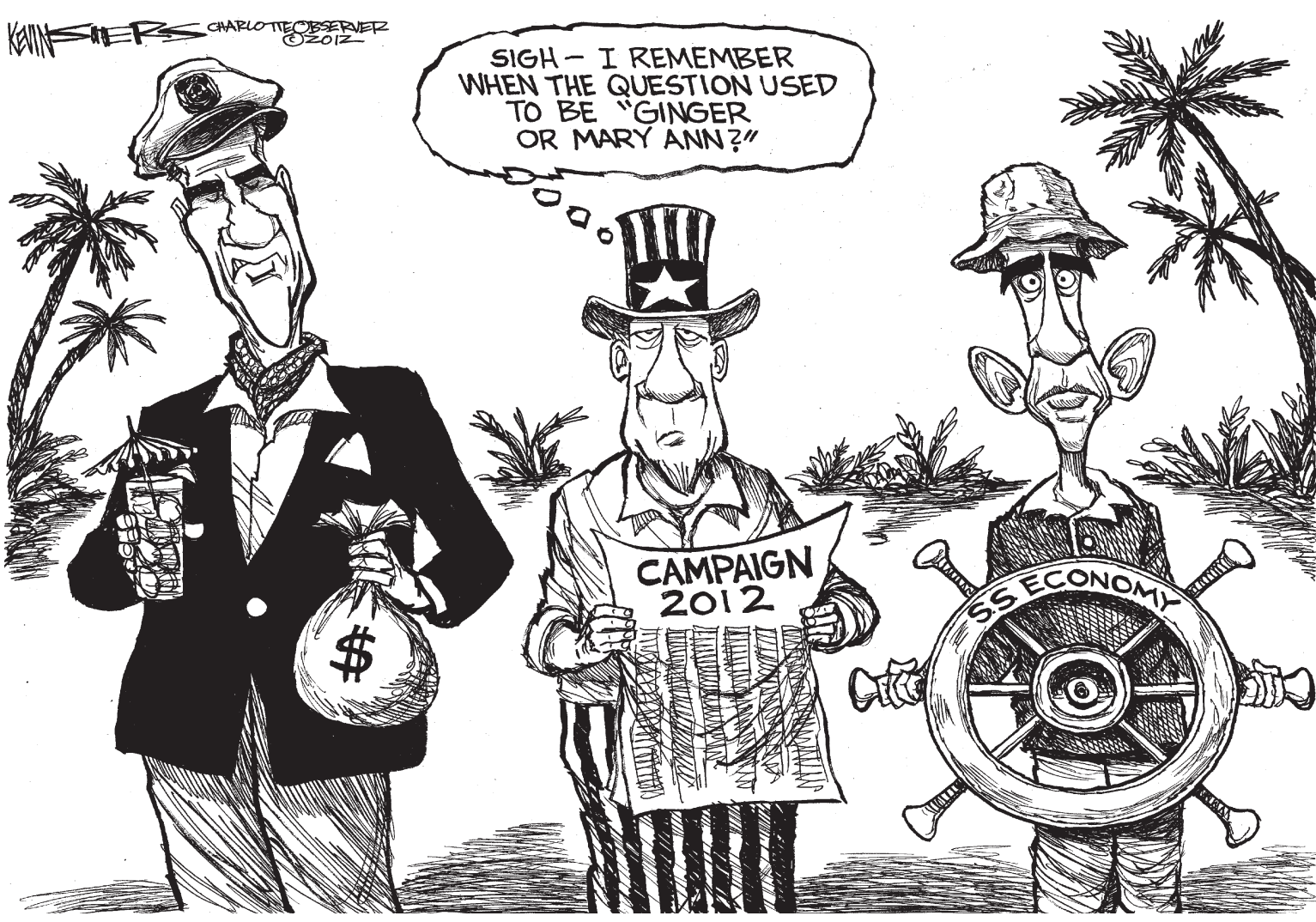
We don't want to burst the governor's bubble, but the legislators' inability to remember what was said at the dinners may be an indication he was wasting his time. Some legislators noted the interviews were being conducted months after the dinner and even said the conversation didn't seem memorable at the time.

For some reason, though, we suspect the legislators, given time to reflect, may now remember details they couldn't recall in the presence of the Shawnee County prosecutors.

The Kansas Press Association's Doug Anstaett has said he thinks the legislators' "collective amnesia" was a form of "stonewalling." We agree.

Shawnee County District Attorney Chad Taylor - who found no substantive Open Meetings Act violations but said legislators' inability to recall details made it difficult to compile evidence - recommended legislators become more familiar with the act through training.

- The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press



### Evolving changes follow society

"I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker." - Helen Adams Keller, lecturer and author (1880-1968)



**Ken Poland**  
• Ken's World

No, for you literary purists, I didn't research and find this quote on my own. I lifted it off the Internet from A.Word.A.Day.

We small-minded little people are the ones who will bring this country back to its greatness. If we, as a nation, have lost it.

Yes, we need great and inspiring leaders. We need honest hard working public servants. But, what we need most is for the common folks of society to start taking responsibility for the ethics and morals that facilitate harmony.

Great leaders cannot force the civilization of mankind. Jesus Christ himself could not change the hearts of men, unless they wanted to be changed. A big stick can force compliance, but it won't create harmony.

All of our presidents and congressmen were children and grew up in society. They learned their morals and ethics at home, in school, and on the playground, just like everyone else. Parents, adult workers, management executives, and chief executive officers will, usually, reflect the standards they grew up with. Social standards don't change overnight.

With a democratic republic form of government, our national government agenda doesn't change immediately with the change of partisan administrations or majorities in Congress. National policies slowly evolve with social

changes in society. Society today is far removed from the society our founding fathers grew up in. Government or religious mandates will not make us into an 18th century society. No, human nature hasn't changed since man came into existence, but environment and social structures have.

Some folks didn't have good examples, while they were growing up. We don't get to choose our birth parents, environment, education opportunities, etc. before we are born. But the society around us can help us overcome the inequities we are faced with. Who is society? You and me. Does that sound like socialism? You bet it does.

Socialism has been made to sound like a nasty word and philosophy. The privilege of wealth and power are, in fact, a form of socialism. Every activity we are involved in has a social facet about it. Religious associations, service clubs, professional associations, sports clubs, etc. etc. - they all are social organizations.

Even the most powerful monarch or dictator has to rely on a social order that allows them to retain their positions. It takes a cooperative effort of those subject to that monarch or dictator's power to finally overthrow and free themselves. Is that a social effort?

Democracy cannot exist without a social order that inspires people to be responsible and involved. The United States cannot, by edict or military power, change the social structures of the Mideast or any other region of the world.

The religious right cannot erase the moral decay of society by threat of eternal damnation or edict of government regulation and mandate. Even the biblical admonition of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" has limitations. Until you have learned how interaction between individuals will set the standards and consequences of actions, this admonition is not foolproof.

The experts have told us that the first three or four years of our lives make grooves in our minds that we spend a lifetime trying to re-groove. By the time we become adults, we cannot claim to be entirely self made. The adage that it takes a village to raise a child is right. It takes involvement of society to create socially acceptable members of society.

Socialism? Perhaps some of us need to broaden our perception of that word. Socialism is not communism. Communism is a form of socialism, just like any other governing structure or economic system. Our political party organizations are defining forms of socialism. The religious right has a social structure. Capitalism, fascism, atheism - they all have social order and standards.

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.

### Republican ticket 'refreshing'

To the Editor,  
I think the Romney/Ryan ticket is very exciting for America! Mitt Romney is a good businessman who knows how to create jobs and put Americans back to work. Paul Ryan is a man of vision who works on solutions to our nation's problems and wants to put America in the right direction. They want to push development of our energy sources, which would create jobs and make us more independent.



**Free Press Letter Drop**  
• Our readers sound off

It is so refreshing to have a politician that tells the truth and means what he says. Ryan's plan for health care doesn't affect people 55 and older, but would save Medicare for the younger generation. President Obama has had nearly four years to tackle our problems. Now, we have found out he took \$716 billion out of Medicare to support Obamacare. That's our money! How does he get by doing that, without the consent of Congress?

The majority of Americans want Obamacare

repealed; they think it's unconstitutional. The Tea Party, after studying the Obamacare plan, finds that it contains \$500 billion of new taxes, the biggest tax increase in America's history. Maybe it's President Obama who that wants to push us all over the cliff, including Medicare.

Paul Ryan worked on a budget with some Democrats' help, along with fellow Republicans, that passed the House, but was dead on arrival at the Senate, controlled by Harry Reid, a Democrat from Nevada. Obama's budget

didn't get one vote in Congress.

President Obama has never gotten out of campaign mode. He is more worried about his job, not the 23 million people who are out of work in America.

Americans have believed in the "American Dream" and have worked hard with determination to create business and create jobs. President Obama said, "...you didn't build that." Yes, we did, in spite of all the government regulations that cripple growth in this country.

We have a president who is out of touch with America.

Our only hope is to get out and vote in large numbers. In a close ballot, voter fraud could steal the election. Is it surprising that Obama's administration is fighting against photo ID requirements? Texas and other states are requiring photo ID to the Supreme Court. Lots of luck!

Pray for our nation.

Marilyn Frisbie, McDonald

### 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/

**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

### Write us

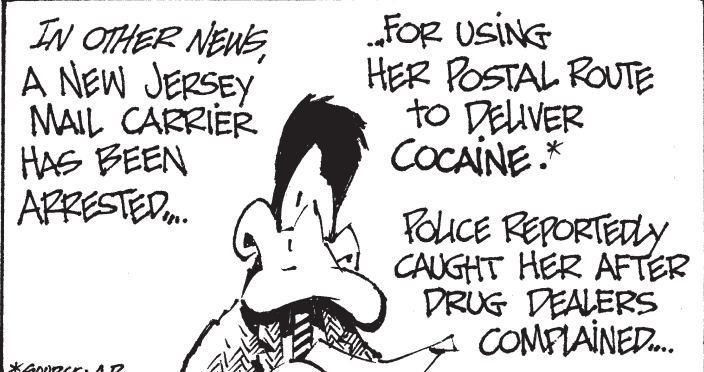
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Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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