



## Other Viewpoints

# Sales tax charges finally equitable

It has taken awhile – more than a year since the issue rose to the surface and that’s considerably longer than it should have – but as of today an issue of unfairness to Kansas retailers apparently will have been resolved.

That’s when the “K-State Official Online Store” will begin to charge state sales tax on purchases by Kansas residents. About time!

It was back in August of 2011 that the *Journal-World* called attention to the fact that the K-State operation, unlike its counterpart at Kansas University, was not charging state sales tax on those purchases of purple gear.

At last, Team-FanShop, the Florida outfit that runs the Kansas State store, confirms that it and the Kansas Department of Revenue have reached an agreement that the store will start collecting sales tax on purchases starting Monday.

When the issue initially was raised, K-State tried to argue that because Team-FanShop didn’t have a physical presence in the state it wasn’t required to collect the tax. That generally is the case, but the revenue department ruled otherwise. In fact, the department pointed out that the online store of a state university by its very nature had a presence in the state. K-State now says it has no objection to the sales tax being levied, but the school should be embarrassed that it took so long to address the situation and that it didn’t just step up instead of being forced by the revenue department and public pressure to do the right thing.

Kansas-based merchants who sell the same or similar items thus have a level playing field now and are not facing a competitive advantage from an Internet retailer that in effect can charge considerably less because of the sales tax disparity.

That problem is solved for one noteworthy situation. Congress should get busy and make sure that appropriate sales taxes are collected on all Internet transactions so that community businesses across the country are not put at the same disadvantages by online retailers – retailers who don’t contribute anything to the thousands of communities in which they operate virtually.

– *The Lawrence Journal-World, via The Associated Press*

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roberts.senate.gov/public/  
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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  
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Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

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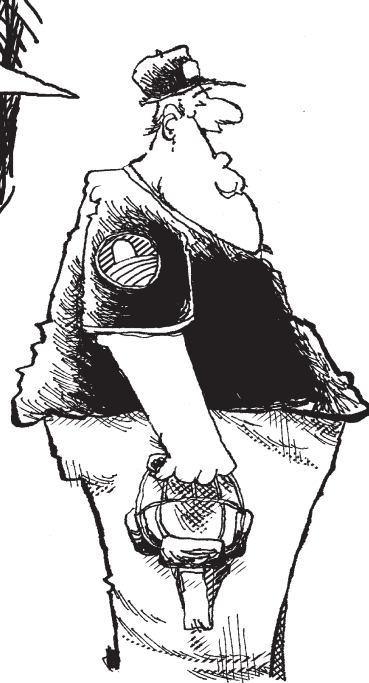
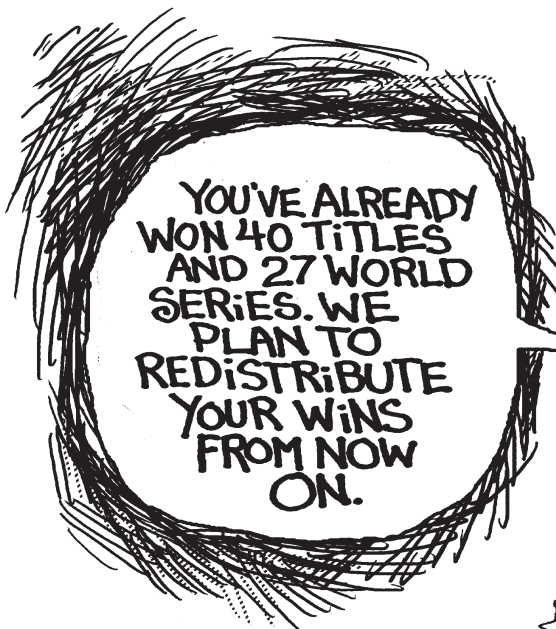
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**THE COLBY FREE PRESS** (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

**PERIODICALS POSTAGE** paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

**THE BUSINESS OFFICE** at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.



IF BASEBALL WAS TRULY AMERICA'S NATIONAL PASTIME.

# Teachers' skills need to be held to light

Requirements for teaching at tech schools and community colleges are lower than for teaching at Kansas high schools in many fields.

To just teach high school biology, K-State requires 39 credit hours, the University of Kansas requires 32, Fort Hays requires 38, Baker requires 34 and Emporia State University requires 44. But you can teach at community colleges and tech schools with just 24 credit hours.

How did this upside-down credentialing occur? Many people were asleep at the wheel.

A decade ago, Kansas academics met in “Core Competency” meetings and recommended that instructors of college courses have a minimum of a master’s degree with 24 credit hours at the master’s level in the field. When the regents university presidents met, only the presidents of Emporia State and Wichita State supported that solid standard. The rest capitulated and dropped to a master’s with 18 hours in the field being taught. Still, that was a whole degree above the current requirement. How did the requirement get dropped a full degree?

In June of 2005, during discussions of concurrent enrollment – where high school students take courses for college credit – the Board of Regents finally settled for a bachelor’s degree with 24 hours in the field being taught. No one mentioned that this requirement was often less – sometimes about half of what is required of most high school teachers. When this was approved for teachers of concurrent en-



**John Richard Schrock**

• Education Frontlines

rollment courses, it likewise applied to tertiary level faculty. Apparently, nobody at that time realized they had lowered the requirements for college teaching below requirements for high school teachers in many fields.

This did not really affect the regents four-year universities because in practice, they require the terminal degree in the academic field, usually a Ph.D. or Ed.D. But the community colleges offering outreach courses and the tech schools who were allowed to expand beyond their technical school jurisdiction, began to utilize this low standard.

Kansas universities also use faculty peer review to carefully examine new professors’ teaching ability and judge new hires on their: 1) active involvement in the profession, 2) ability to keep up on new developments and 3) ability to conduct research. Many Kansas community colleges follow a similar evaluation-by-colleagues to maintain high quality teachers.

But at some community colleges and tech schools, outreach faculty with minimal credentials are hired by administrators without

any faculty review. And no faculty are hotter about this new low bar than the permanent community college faculty who have worked hard to establish a good on-campus reputation. These cheap hires may not only lack the credit hours of coursework to credibly teach university level coursework, but have no active involvement in the academic community or understand modern research developments.

This Oct. 19, representatives from the Kansas academic communities will meet at Kansas State University to discuss “Core Competencies.” The intent of some parties is to force more cheap courses to be accepted for transfer to university programs – more “seamless articulation” where weak courses taught by weak teachers must be accepted by all Kansas universities.

But this is the time for Kansas to restore academic integrity. Teaching at the community college or tech school level should require more, not less, knowledge than teaching high school courses. It is time to restore the requirement of master’s-with-24-credit-hours at master’s level in the field taught.

Kansas needs to salvage its reputation for strong teachers, strong courses and strong degrees.

*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.*

# Newspapers have bright future

There’s an excessive amount of gloom and doom being spread around these days when the talk turns to the future of newspapers.

In fact, the mere mention of the future of newspapers suggests that there might not be one. There is no question that the newspaper business has been disrupted. And yet, what the doomsayers fail to see is that the nation’s newspapers are well on their way to ensuring that a bright future lies ahead.

It has been painful to bring costs in line with revenue and recast the product to reflect the realities of the new media world. But one thing that has not changed is our historic mission of informing and enlightening, agitating and entertaining, protecting and defending the public’s right to know.

Without question, the newspaper of tomorrow will not be the newspaper of yesterday or even the newspaper of today. Change and innovation are pointing us toward a very different future, one that cements our unique role in the communities we serve.

Just a few years ago, we were a print business with digital on the side. Today, we are bringing together print, web and mobile, and opening the possibilities for even greater ad-

## Other Opinions

• **Caroline H. Little**  
Newspaper Assoc.

vancements that now may be only dreams in a young innovator’s mind.

Our digital products are growing fast, and our websites have taken the market lead. Indeed, newspapers are the Internet, or at least a vital and sought-after part of it. Aggregators such as Google News rely on newspapers as their primary source for content. Search engines refer people looking for content back to newspaper websites. Among adults 18 and older, our web audience exceeds those of Yahoo/ABC, MSNBC (now NBCNews.com), The Huffington Post, CNN and CBS.

Newspapers reach more than 100 million adults – nearly 6 in 10 of the U.S. adult Internet population – during a typical month. Consumers age 25 and above still are the core

audience for our print product, but newspapers also reach nearly 60 percent of the critical 18-to-34 demographic in print and online during an average week.

In an era where anyone can say anything and call it news, it is newspaper content that consistently gets the story right and keeps it in context. And a critical part of the industry evolution is the recognition that if you want to separate the serious from the sludge, it might cost you a little money.

Newspapers have proven they can function in print, on websites, in digital partnerships and as part of the social media scene. But they also can do what no one else can do. We are at the heart of our communities. We generate the information and track the local developments that are vital for an informed, engaged citizenry. We offer clarity and perspective, and we provide content that our readers can trust.

Getting to the point we are at now has not been easy. Genuine change never is. But we are far closer to our future than our past, and that future is bright.

*Caroline H. Little is chief executive officer of the Newspaper Association of America in Arlington, Va.*

## 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.

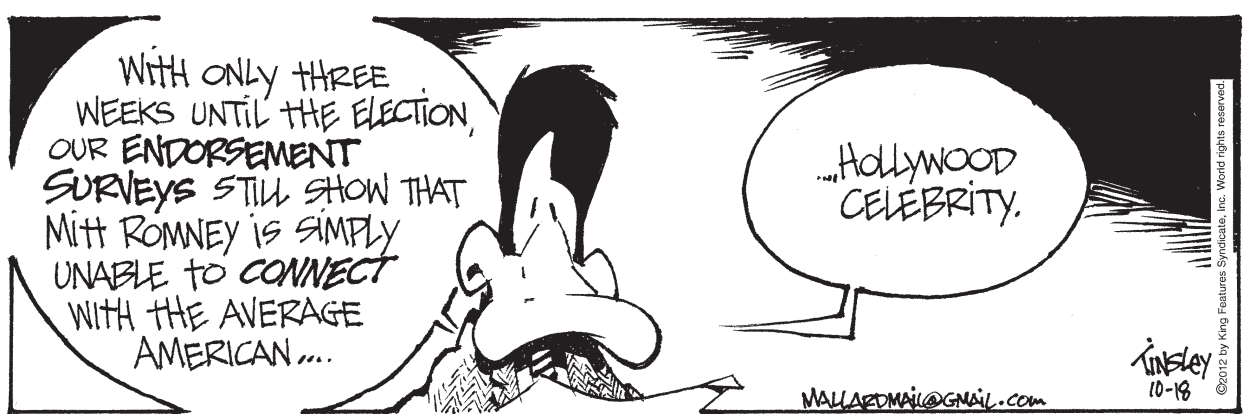
We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

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

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

## Mallard Fillmore

• **Bruce Tinsley**



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