



Other Viewpoints

Ask right question to get good answer

Identifying the exact problem is the key to solving it, just as asking the right question is the key to getting the precise answer. With that in mind, officials have a clear path toward reducing the number of provisional ballots cast in Douglas County – and presumably across the state.

Eliminating voter registration is not the solution. The topic apparently churns its way to the surface as a result of the canvass of votes following November’s general election. Many provisional ballots were cast by Kansans who either showed up at the wrong polling place or whose names were not on the official list.

Douglas County Clerk Jamie Shew, who, by the way, runs a pretty efficient election process, said many of those voters thought they had registered when they were electronically processing driver’s license information, although in many cases the information was not transferred from the Department of Revenue to the county.

(People who have a Kansas driver’s license are to notify the department within 10 days of any change in their address. This can be done over the Internet, and the process contains a step that supposedly enables voters to notify their county election office of this change so that their voter registration information is updated. Officials concede that even when the process is done on paper, problems have occurred.)

The Revenue Department’s computer software change this year has been blamed for many problems encountered by people trying to register their vehicles, but the trouble with the online change of address was a problem before the computer switch.

The department’s ability to process and transfer information will become even more important after the first of the year, when people registering to vote in Kansas for the first time will be required to show proof of citizenship. The department will be required to confirm drivers’ citizenship or legal residency status and share that information with election offices.

Douglas County Commission Chairman Mike Gaughan gets credit for a creative proposal to address the trouble, asking whether it’s possible to eliminate voter registration altogether now that Kansans must present photo IDs at the polling place. Others apparently share that line of thought.

One who doesn’t is Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who points out that many forms of photo ID accepted at polling places don’t contain all the information gathered in the registration process, including an individual’s address, which is needed to make sure that the person is at the correct polling place. He also noted that IDs do not verify whether a person is a convicted felon ineligible to vote. These are legitimate concerns.

If the situation arises from the revenue department’s software or the process being used to transfer information, then the obvious answer is to fix the software or mend the process and somehow close the loop so that verification is provided. That’s a much clearer and more direct attack on the problem than eliminating registration – and unnecessarily inviting other problems.

Fix the problem, folks! Make the process reliable.
– The Lawrence Journal World, via the Associated Press

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansans.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.
Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Sharon Friedlander - Publisher

sriedlander @ nwkansans.com

NEWS

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter

colby.sports @ nwkansans.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor

mballard @ nwkansans.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter

colby.editor @ nwkansans.com

Christina Beringer - Society Reporter

colby.society @ nwkansans.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads @ nwkansans.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative

kballard @ nwkansans.com

Janene Woodall - Advertising Representative

jwoodall @ nwkansans.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design

khunter @ nwkansans.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager

medmondson @ nwkansans.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support @ nwkansans.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager

Gary Stewart, Foreman

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Pressmen

Kris McCool, Judy McKnight, Tracy Traxel,

Sheri Arroyo, Mailing

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

mass murderers: missing pieces.



duffyink.com DUFFY

Decorating bug has hit Haynes house

My house is awash in a sea of decorations. My wife has gone on a binge with the lights and garlands and little trees and whatnot. Every flat surface invites more.

And she’s not done yet.

We haven’t had this much Christmas fancy since the year our house was on the Holiday Homes Tour. And frankly, it’s getting so it has more decorations than most of the houses on the tour this year.

Cynthia started with the outside lights. I was gone that day. We’d gotten the boxes and bins down from the garage attic the day before.

By the time I got home that night, she had most of the bushes in the front yard covered. I pitched in to help fill some holes, but the job was pretty much done. Next day, she was out stringing more white lights on the corner bushes. You’d think three strings each would be enough, but they are big bushes.

Then she replaced the rope lights I’d put on the front walk with C7 lights. I’m not sure why, but they do look better. She even put lights on the dried-up mum plants.

The next time I came home, she was on a ladder, using a long pole and a hook to string lights on what we still call “the little cedar tree.” We discovered the tree 10, 12 years ago, growing at the corner of the old garage. The guy who tore the garage down saved her in a coffee can, and we planted her between the back and side yards.

While she’s still our little cedar, she’s close to 20 feet today. Getting lights up there is a chore, and Cynthia was not having much luck. Most of them sorta fell into a clump. I promised to get out and help fix them, but we went



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

to Lawrence to see our son’s new house instead.

Cynthia was not deterred, however. She just moved indoors. The next week, she started with the tree, then decorated the mantle. That involves moving all the hardback books stored there and replacing them with little trees. Then she puts all our Christmas cards among the little fake evergreens.

She cleared out the fireplace, hauling the logs we never burn and the heavy iron fire basket to the garage. Swept and cleaned, the fireplace is ready for the big ceramic Nativity set whenever she gets another day.

Then she turned her attention again to the tree, an artificial one my mom bought years ago. I thought it was looking a little peaked, but a friend came in and asked if was a real tree. Go figure.

She festooned it with lights and ornaments and tinsel, then wrapped all the packages and put them under it, along with the three leather camels from Tunisia, including the big one named Sweeney, and the alligator she found in the tree. (See her column last week for an explanation.) For good measure, or to complete the tableau, Molly, the diabetic cat, took up residence under the tree, too.

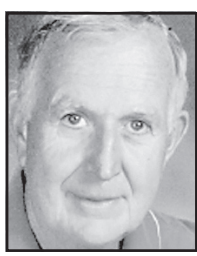
State hopes to save with KanCare

This year, Kansas will spend about \$3.2 billion on Medicaid. With the new KanCare program, the state hopes to save about \$1 billion over five years.

Within KanCare, Kansas has awarded contracts to three Managed Care Organizations – Amerigroup, based in Virginia Beach, Va.; Centene, based in St. Louis; and United Health Care, based in Minnetonka, Minn. Each is charged with building a statewide network of providers for the full range of Medicaid services.

Starting in January, each company will be assigned a proportional share of the Kansans in Medicaid, representative of different regions, age groups and populations, including people with disabilities, the elderly and low-income children. The groups have three-year KanCare contracts.

One way to measure the financial performance of these firms is to determine how much



Ward Cassidy

- This week in Topeka

of its revenue is used to pay for health-care services. This is known as the health benefits expense ratio. Each of the three firms selected for KanCare contracts reported a ratio as part of its financial report to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

These three companies’ ratios range from 81 cents to 85 cents of every premium dollar going to pay for services. The remainder is used for administrative costs and company profit. Kansas did not specify a specific ratio these companies must achieve during the three-year

contract.

Nursing homes that have not contracted with a care manager may continue to have residents’ bills paid for up to a year, so the residents won’t be tossed out if they are living in a facility that isn’t now a contracted provider with any of the three.

Statewide meetings will be starting soon, and there will be an attempt to answer the many questions Kansans have about this new program. I have volunteered to serve on a legislative oversight committee if there is a decision to have one.

Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, a retired school principal and teacher, is the state representative for the 120th District, covering Decatur, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Wallace and Sherman counties and the northwest part of Thomas, including Colby. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

