



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Protesting religion going to extremes

People protesting against religion in government have gone a bit too far this time, we think.

A group called Americans United for Separation of Church and State raised a howl when Gov. Sam Brownback appeared at a religious rally a couple of weeks ago.

"The governor is really overstepping his constitutional bounds," the group said in a release. "He was elected to serve as governor of our state, not our state pastor-in-chief."

So what exactly did the activist group object to?

According to press reports, the governor talked that day about how he turned to God after learning he had cancer in 1995.

"I finally reached up and said, 'God, this life's yours,'" the governor said. "It started a great adventure."

He ended his talk by praying for forgiveness of his sins and the sins of others.

Organizers of the ReignDown USA event denied that they wanted political leaders to enforce any kind of religious belief on the state. The event was designed to promote "humility, prayer and repentance," they said.

What really ticked Americans United off, however, apparently was a proclamation the governor issued beforehand declaring the day of the rally as "a day of restoration."

That amounted to the governor using his office to promote religion, the group said.

"The people of Kansas do not need politicians telling us when, how or whether to pray," Vickie Sandell Stangl, president of the Great Plains Chapter, said in the statement. "If anybody needs to repent, it's Gov. Brownback. He needs to repent for violating the constitutional separation of church and state."

So was the governor promoting religion or just exercising his right to believe?

It's a fine line. American leaders have always proclaimed their piety, at least when it suits them. Most presidents have attended church. Most governors have led prayers and attended religious events. Our founding documents call upon the deity to guide and protect the Republic.

Perhaps Gov. Brownback stands out because he's made no bones about his Roman Catholic beliefs or his conservative approach to religion. He's an attractive target.

We're not here to argue for mixing church and state. School districts should not force students to pray, nor should the government support or promote the church, any church.

We're a free nation, though, and even the governor should be free to believe as he wishes. He shares the First Amendment with the anti-religionists.

But can our leaders pray in public or declare their faith in God? They have since the beginning of the Republic.

Our Constitution is an imperfect document, and its meaning has shifted with time. Where it once shielded slavery and denied women the vote, today it does neither. Public prayer? Our leaders are allowed, but no one is compelled to agree with them. That's part of what freedom means. — Steve Haynes

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail colby.editor@nwkansans.com.

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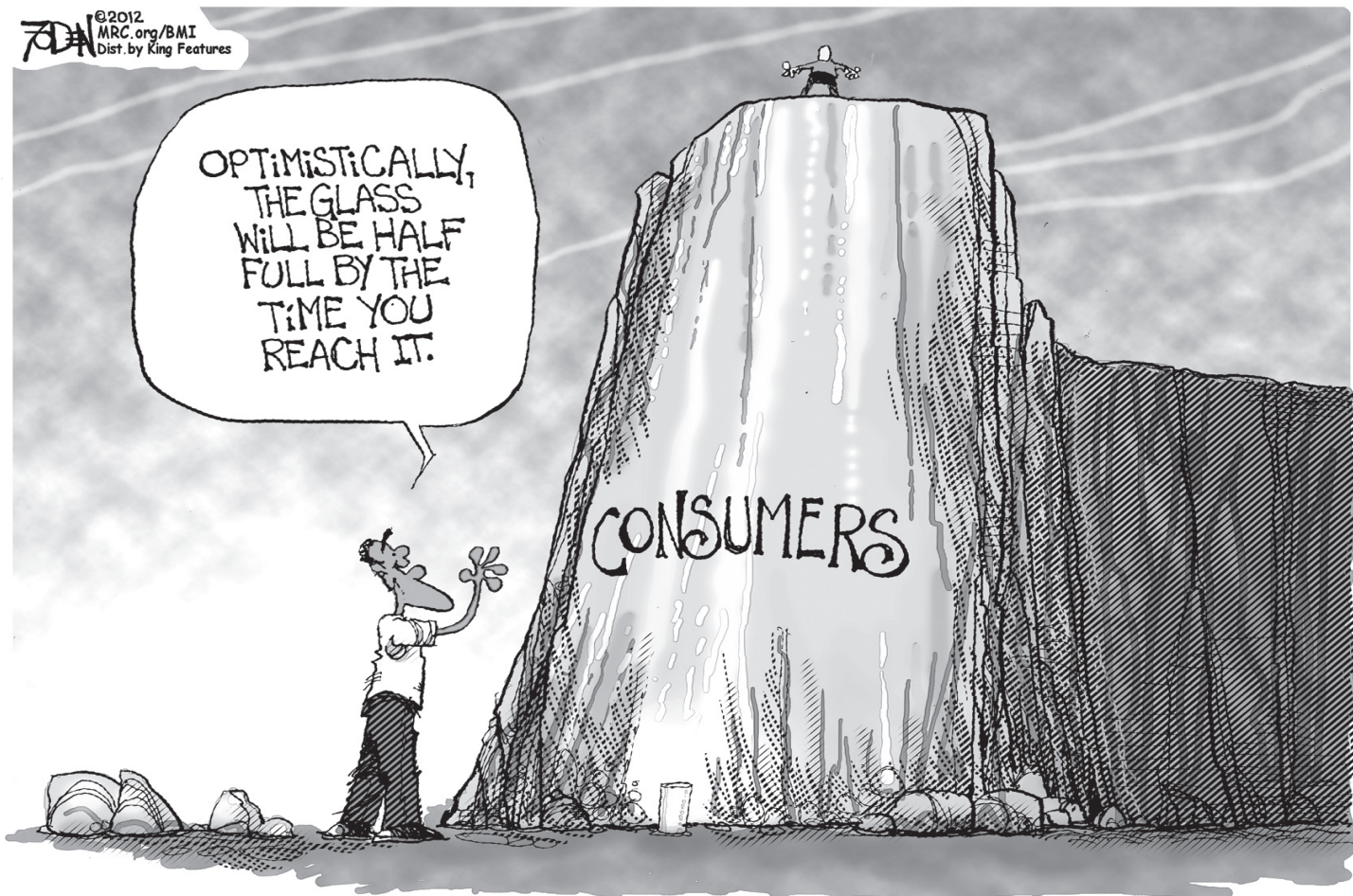
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FISCAL CLIFF DIVING Part 2

### Child killing prompts tears, thought

I cried. I cried harder than I had in two years.

When I heard the news of that man, who I refuse to name in print on principle alone, who killed those children, I was quiet. I left work early and went home. I didn't turn on the news. I opened a beer and sat on the couch to think about it, and I cried. I cried so hard that it scared me, so hard that I had to tell myself to get a grip and just stop.

I didn't talk about it, read or watch anything more for the following weeks. But springing from the tragedy in Connecticut, through the wellspring of my heart and out my fingers is this, that I offer to you, my people, for lack of anything else to give.

Ours is a free society, a brave new world that inspires me, that I love, and that I cherish. And there are a few things I want to say about it.

The best defense against tyranny is a well-armed populace. Thomas Jefferson said that. But as my mother pointed out to me the Sunday before Christmas, Thomas Jefferson never thought that one of his people would take up arms and slaughter his children. There is a problem here, and it goes far deeper than gun control or gun rights. It goes deeper than our hospitals and mental health clinics.

We need our guns; they're important. They feed and protect us, not just from invaders, but also from each other. And we will always have our poor and our sick, and they will always need to be defended, too.

This may seem out of left field, but bear



Stephanie DeCamp

#### • Newcomer's View

with me here: When the Industrial Revolution came along, something came with it that is known as a singularity. Increasingly, our human minds could not advance as fast as our technology, and thus, our society as a whole collapsed for a brief period. An archduke was murdered, and suddenly we were in a war that consumed much of our world. These are the things that happen when we cannot understand or cope with our own rapid development: We freak out. We have to do something, anything to make it all make sense again, and for some reason — maybe because of our very nature — we often turn to violence.

I was 14 when the Columbine Massacre filled the news. I was 16 when the Sept. 11 attacks came. I've come to adulthood in the age of violence, under the umbrella of the age of information and within this all-consuming technological revolution. We live in strange times, but it goes deeper than that — we are living within a cultural singularity.

I don't know what the answer is. And quite frankly, I'm suspicious of those who claim they do. What I do know is this: It's time to

question ourselves. If our lifestyle, if our values and freedoms and country now require the sacrifice and slaughter of innocents, then is the price too high?

I know that something, anything, and perhaps everything needs to change. We can't allow this to happen again, ever. I remember the first one. And I'll never be able to forget this one. It still makes me want to cry, but crying isn't enough. Sending money isn't enough. Passing laws isn't even enough, lest we forget the law of unintended consequences.

I don't know the answer, but I know this: It must stop, and if I find a way — any way — to help make that happen, be it a kind deed or a march on the Capitol or just writing this right now, I'm going to do it.

We need our guns, yes, we do. And we will always be charged with the care (or lack thereof) of our mentally ill. How we reconcile these two needs and our own wants, fears and emotions is up to us from here on out.

Don't look to Washington to remove these problems. Look at yourself, and each other. Something needs to change. The real conversation needs to start now.

Stephanie DeCamp is a reporter for The Oberlin Herald and a Metro State College (Denver) graduate in Spanish and journalism with vast experience in the fast food business. A Kansas City-area native, she is a graduate of Shawnee Mission Northwest High School.

### Resolved: never wear a white bathing suit

Before we all become buried in the new year, let's look at this new beginning with a bit of humor. Plenty of people trot out their lists of resolutions. Often, such lists are as long as their arms and last as long as their pinky.

I've all but given up on New Year resolutions. Seems I can't keep them either. But this year I've decided to do something different. I've compiled a list of "lesser" resolutions — some things I believe I can accomplish in 2013.

Here's what I will try to work into my new year:

- Remember that no time spent with your children is ever wasted.
- Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
- Never laugh at anyone's dream.
- Don't wash a car, mow a yard or select a Christmas tree after dark.
- When traveling, take two big safety pins so you can pin the motel drapes shut.
- Always accept a breath mint if someone offers you one.
- Keep the porch light on until the family is



John Schlageck

#### • Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

in for the night.

- Rehearse a joke before you tell it.
- Always try the house dressing.
- Believe in love at first sight.
- Send your mother-in-law flowers on your spouse's birthday.
- Buy ladders, extension cords and garden hoses longer than you think you'll need.
- Steer clear of any place with a "Ladies Welcome" sign in the window.
- Once in a while invite the person in line behind you to go ahead.
- Exercise patience when behind the wheel of your vehicle — hand gestures are out of the question.
- Own a hammock and use it often.

• Never be photographed holding a cocktail glass.

• Give people more than they expect and do so cheerfully.

• Be as friendly to the janitor as you are to the board chairman.

• Overestimate travel time by 15 percent.

• Never wear a white bathing suit.

• Don't miss a good idea simply because you don't like the source.

• When you say, "I'm sorry," look the person in the eye.

• Trust in God, but always lock your car.

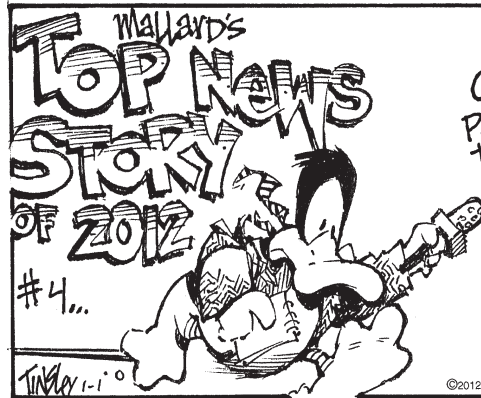
• Have a wonderful 2013.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.



### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



IN JULY, THE MAYORS OF CHICAGO AND BOSTON PLEDGED TO USE THEIR POWER TO BAN "CHICK-FIL-A" RESTAURANTS FROM THEIR CITIES BECAUSE ITS PRESIDENT BELIEVES IN THE "BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE." BOTH MAYORS APPARENTLY NEED TO...



With the indictment of "I BELIEVE IN THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE," the words "I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING YOU SAY..."

