



## Other Viewpoints

# Transparency takes a back seat

In his so-called “Road Map for Kansas,” Gov. Sam Brownback said:

“Government should always be accountable to the people. Accountability begins with transparency. A Brownback Administration will work to ensure that the actions undertaken by the state government are clearly explained and grounded in the equal application of the law....”

While that sounded great, we’ve instead seen deliberate moves to keep Kansans in the dark.

The most recent example came in the governor’s refusal to release the names of applicants for a new position on the Kansas Court of Appeals – even though names of candidates for the court and the state Supreme Court have been disclosed for decades in Kansas.

Another example saw the governor, in the midst of budget and tax-related negotiations this past legislative session, endorse private talks among top Republicans on those issues.

Kansans deserved better as the state wrangled with a severe budget shortfall. Strategies to address massive income-tax cuts and a resulting budget crunch should have been vetted in an open, transparent process.

Also recently, the Kansas Corporation Commission – with a majority of Brownback appointees – avoided holding a public vote to sharply increase water rates for rural Salina residents. Shawnee County District Attorney Chad Taylor filed a lawsuit against the Corporation Commission and its three commissioners individually for allegedly violating the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

Of course, Taylor also was called on last year to investigate violations of the Open Meetings Act by legislators who attended dinners hosted by Brownback at the governor’s mansion. While the governor deemed the events social gatherings, he went too far in inviting select lawmakers to discuss public business in private.

Such private talks and negotiations only fuel skepticism at a time of growing distrust in government. In Topeka, they cast more suspicion on the dealings of Brownback and his ultra-conservative Republican allies.

The governor vowed to run an open and accountable administration. Unfortunately, he’s too often failed to practice what he preached.

The interest in secrecy suggests he has something to hide, and smacks of the kind of domineering behavior that should worry all Kansans.

– *The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press*

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# Forest fire takes organized campaign

Living around a big forest fire, you develop a sense of routine – most of the time.

Fighting one of these fires is more like a military campaign than the skirmishes city or rural firemen face day in and day out. With 1,500 fire fighters and dozens of crews, it takes organized command and control.

Federal agencies fight big fires through an interagency system. Fire crews, flight crews, command teams all stand ready for call as a unit. We’ve seen rigs from the Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and smaller agencies, such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages National Wildlife Refuges.

Three helicopters are based at the Creede airport, less than a mile from our home. Two are red fire-fighting lifters that specialize in towing buckets of water or fire retardant. They come and go for fuel from early morning to near dusk, assuming the weather is OK for flying.

A bright orange rig appears to run errands and take officials out to the fire. It’s not a fire-fighting unit as such. All three have fuel and parts trucks, pilots and ground crews. The red lifters aren’t that big, but they have dual main rotors. It’s fascinating how they can mesh without hitting each other, mounted as they are only a couple of feet apart over the cab.

The lifters come in dragging an empty fabric bucket, set it down on the apron, then land for fuel. Pilots have to take lunch breaks, of course, and between trips to the airport, they fill and dump the bucket several times. Lift is better in the morning, when the air is cool and dense, and sometimes winds or storms keep



**Steve Haynes**

• Along the Sappa

this air force on the ground.

Meantime, fire crews parade up and down the county road to the south, which bypasses the town. After a couple of weeks, the overall crew peaked and individual federal crews and fire companies began to rotate home.

One Forest Service worker said he’d been retired for seven years, but keeps himself available for fire duty. Last year, he said, he worked 77 days all over the West and took the entire month of July off.

After two weeks, crews are supposed to go home. A worker can stay for another week, he said, but after that, you have to take some days off. The next call likely will be to another fire.

For the last 20 years, the federal agencies have worked under joint interagency command, calling in fire crews, aircraft, command teams and all manner of specialists from across the country as needed. Everyone works together and the system is run along military lines, the Forest Service man noted.

With better weather and a little rain last week, the fire behaved better – most days. Last Monday, it took a four-mile “run” to the south, driven through wilderness studded with standing dead spruce trees. Another, similar run Wednesday carried it yet farther into the

wilderness, driven by a 20 mph north wind.

With a wind behind it, the fire explodes into a storm. The smoke and debris above it topped out above the afternoon thunderstorms, an angry, boiling cloud of rolling fire and smoke that could be seen for miles, reaching 20,000 to 30,000 feet.

The next day, all was quiet, with the fire settling back to individual hot spots. It was miles from the town of Creede and from our house, but with a fire of this size, that can be a comfortable illusion.

Just a couple of blocks to the south, across the river at the edge of the timber, fire crews cut trees, cleared brush, erected sprinklers and ran hose lines around a group of houses backed up to the forest.

They were prepared in case the fire made a run back to the north. The blaze is 10 to 12 miles away, but the sight of those hose lines is sobering.

So far, though, the crews have kept the fire away from houses and lodges. The only confirmed structure damage came with the loss of a pump house at a guest ranch belonging to friends of ours. With their cabins safe, they felt lucky to have lost only that.

But literally, the forest around them will never be the same. It will become an interesting place in its own right – a fascinating post-fire habitat – but the “old growth” forest is gone.

*Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.*

# Have causes for revolution returned?

## Other Opinions

• **Harold Pease**  
**Liberty Under Fire**

passed National Defense Authorization Act legalizes military kidnapping of American citizens thought by the president and military to be “terrorist” and shipped to Guantanamo Bay and detained without trial indefinitely. Civil power was and is held to be secondary or non-existent in these examples.

“He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Act of pretended Legislation.” The United Nations was created by treaty. It’s law, often “foreign to our constitution” is becoming recognized universal law with authority to supersede national law. The Supreme Court often references U.N. law to establish constitutionality of U.S. law. A pending case is the U.N. Small Arms Treaty which opponents of gun control fear will be used to nullify our Second Amendment.

“For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent.” Anytime a president offers money to a foreign country by way of treaty, as did President Jimmy Carter in the Panama Canal Treaty, he is taxing us without our consent. Only the House of Representatives, which is excluded from treaty making, can raise a bill of revenue. When the Senate, which is supposed to approve all treaties, and the President offer money in a treaty it “imposes taxes on us without our consent.” Today presidents offer reams of money to foreign countries without a thought to asking the people first, as required by the Constitution.

“For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury.” The National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law on New Years Eve 2011 by President Barack Obama, potentially removes trial by jury altogether for citizens thought by the president to be terrorists – a term never defined. If a trial is held at all it will be out of the country and in a mili-

tary court – without the benefit of the Bill of Rights.

“For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences.” Once again the Defense Authorization Act transports us secretly, unbeknown to our friends and family and potentially without notice to civil authorities, to Cuba for indefinite detention. Nothing that the British did to us in 1776 was more drastic than this.

“For ... altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments.” Our government has been moving from a republic to a democracy and now into socialism for many decades led by both major political parties. At least Barack Obama was honest with us when he promised to “fundamentally change” our government if elected.

“For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.” Our legislatures have been suspended when five things, now very common, happen: 1) when Congress usurps the powers of state governments to themselves, 2) when Congress allows an unelected bureaucracy to add sometimes thousands, of new regulations to a new law, 3) when the president makes law by executive order, 4) when the president appoints so-called czars to administer programs and write new law for areas where the Constitution never gave the federal government any jurisdiction, 5) and when the Supreme Court rules in such a way as to create new law as in Obamacare.

I suppose the “tories” in our day would argue, as they did then, “But our elected government gave us all these laws” (oppressions), thus it is okay because “we did it to ourselves.” That argument was made then as well but fortunately it did not keep the rest of us, the patriots, from revolting nonetheless. Let us revolt by our vote to once again remove the returning offending tyranny and oppressions. Please share.

*Dr. Harold Pease has dedicated his career to studying the writings of the Founding Fathers and applying that knowledge to current events. He has taught history and political science from this perspective for over 25 years at Taft College. To read more of his weekly articles, go to [www.LibertyUnderFire.org](http://www.LibertyUnderFire.org).*