

Other Viewpoints

Lost votes exceed fraud instances

Assault on voter rights has no place in democracy. A lawsuit targeting Kansas' proof-of-citizenship voter registration requirement was to be expected. The American Civil Liberties Union recently notified Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach that it would file a federal lawsuit unless the state stops enforcing a requirement for new voters to provide proof of U.S. citizenship. The group claims the new Kansas requirement doesn't comply with federal election laws. A U.S. Supreme Court decision recently overturned key parts of Arizona's proof-of-citizenship law, which suggests Kansas' law also is on shaky ground. The policy coveted by Kobach and fellow GOP ultra-conservatives went into effect on Jan. 1. Now, new voters aren't legally registered until they've presented a birth certificate, passport or other document demonstrating citizenship.

But thanks to the proof-of-citizenship law, voter registration was left in "suspense" for nearly 15,000 Kansans. The mess has the state claiming prospective voters didn't provide a document necessary to satisfy the requirement, while evidence shows some did indeed show proof of citizenship at a driver's license office or had voted in the past.

Kobach — a key player in a national anti-immigrant movement who pursues policies that disproportionately disenfranchise minorities — says such requirements are needed because we've fallen prey to widespread voter fraud. But in a state with about 1.7 million registered voters, only a handful of cases related to reports of non-citizens voting or attempting to vote have materialized in the past decade, with even fewer convictions.

The proof-of-citizenship requirement in Kansas followed a law requiring voters to show photo identification at the polls, another ultraconservative strategy to discourage voting by sidelining those who may not have appropriate photo ID — the poor, elderly and students, for example — and who tend to favor Democrats on the ballot.

As if making it more difficult to vote isn't troubling enough, the thousands of prospective voters on the new "suspense" list easily could be the difference in tight statewide races — sad proof that the strategy to suppress future votes is gaining momentum in Kansas.

And now, we're left to hope the threat of litigation somehow slows the deliberate, relentless assault on the democratic process.

— The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press

Write us

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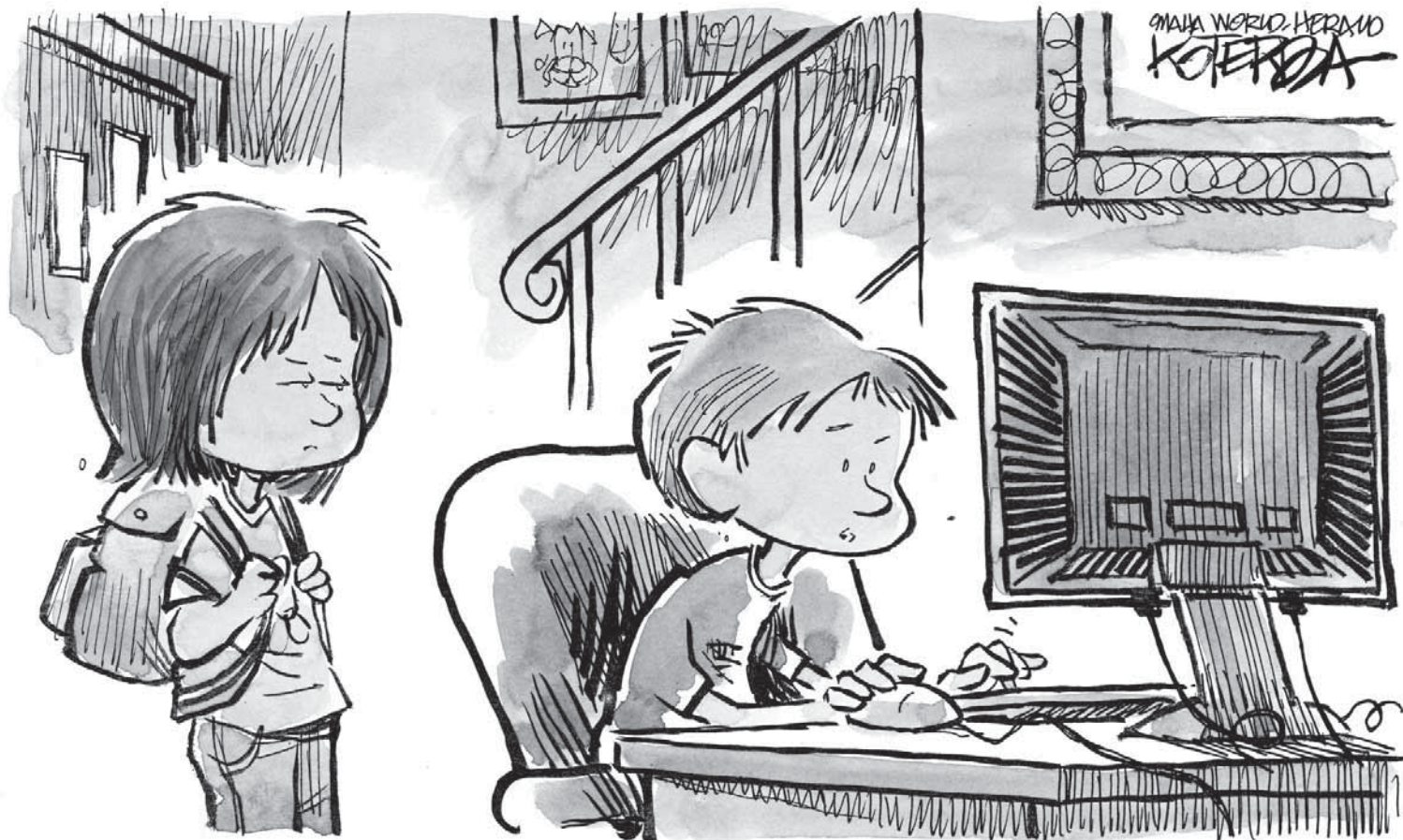
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"I'M NOT SURE WHICH CYBER SURVEILLANCE IS MORE INTIMIDATING... THE NSA SPYING ON ME OR MOM AND DAD MONITORING MY HOMEWORK."

Colby's college; always work in progress

The new school year is upon us, with students descending on college campuses across the country.

There is a general excitement among students and faculty as the slate is clean — anything is possible with the right effort. That sentiment is also true with athletic teams who start the year with no blemishes to their record and the possibility of success given hard work and dedication.

With no offense to my Kansas State and KU friends, no one has done that more successfully on the gridiron than the University of Alabama. That is in no small measure due to Nick Saban and his "process."

Coach Saban wrote about success when he said, "The focus doesn't need to be on the finish line, the focus needs to be on the process of what we need to do every day to play the best football we're capable of playing." Long before, my Dad used to say the reward is in the doing, not the final outcome or praise of others.

I share this with you because people are asking me what we are doing to "fix" the college and when that will happen. The answer to the second question is never — Colby Community College will never reach a point where we will be satisfied that we have no need to improve.

The first question is worthy of explanation, though, so you may better understand some of the issues with which our leadership grapples as we chart a path toward future success across all facets of the college.

Allow me to share the things that we cannot do in an effort to improve, though some might think of these as options.

We cannot cut personnel; not any further. Since I have been here — three years — we have significantly fewer employees. That fact is depressing. We have struggled in a number of areas, most notably maintenance and custodial, to stay on top of operational requirements. If we cut personnel, we would not improve.

Also, we cannot cut the number of vehicles at the college. As with personnel, not any further.

Last year we reduced the fleet by 30 percent. Living in northwest Kansas, the reality is that we must drive in order to carry out the functions of the college. We serve 14 counties and the state capital is 300 miles away. It is a rare day when all the vehicles are not in service during the school year.

Further, we cannot cut our services. Not to our students, employees or the community. Without personal attention and comprehensive services, we lose our most important marketable aspect when compared to regional four-year institutions. I dream of an institution that is different, better and purposeful — but cutting services, we will not be better but worse.

What could we do more effectively?



Steve Vacik

• From the president

Colby Community College could do more with advertising and marketing ourselves. Some of our peer institutions have poured large sums of money into billboards and radio and television commercials. Because of limited financial resources, we have chosen to put more resources into our instructional programs and student services.

Please do not misunderstand me. The college has sought to advertise strategically, especially using social media — which tends to be most effective among traditional-age college students.

But we have a one-person department and the largest service area in the state to try and blanket with information about the college. So you probably will not see the college splashed across the television or every 50 miles along I-70.

The college could also do more in recruiting. And we have taken positive steps in that direction, as we have four full-time recruiters now, as opposed to three last year. Again, given the size of our area for recruiting, which covers multiple states, it is difficult to reach all the students with limited time and resources.

For the upcoming year, our recruiting staff is going to be much more deliberate in our efforts. We plan to win western Kansas first, then move into southern Nebraska, eastern Colorado and metro Kansas. Anything beyond that will be an unanticipated bonus. We can be better and I am confident that we will be.

We could also be more effective in our housing and facilities. Unfortunately, we have 40-year-old residence halls that need to be renovated or replaced.

Today's student wants apartment-style living quarters, top-of-the-line amenities and more privacy. They want state-of-the-art facilities. Without resources, though, what we could do and what we are able to do is very different.

Now, there are some things which we HAVE done and will continue to do, in an effort to improve our college.

We will continue to improve the quality and appropriateness of our instructional programs. As faculty and staff positions have opened in recent years, Colby has worked diligently to recruit and retain the best personnel. But, with salaries competitive across higher education, limited resources make it difficult to retain our employees.

Thanks for the trail

To the editor: Thank you, thank you Colby for the walking trail.

Thank you, thank you to all who have made it possible.

We enjoy each step we take in such a wonderful environment. We know it is going to increase in beauty as the landscape develops.

See you on the trail.

Peggy Frahm, Joyce Hansen, Jeanne Sheen and Jan Wolf, Colby



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

