

Other Viewpoints

Secretary's latest: two-tier voting

Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach just can't seem to quit tinkering with perceived voter ID and fraud issues. One would think that they are all his office deals with, though Kobach's duties go well beyond being the chief elections officer in the state.

Kobach's latest irritant is what he sees as the difference between federal and state elections and who is allowed to vote. The two-tiered system he is proposing would let Kansans who have proved their citizenship vote in congressional and state elections. Those who meet only federal voting standards, which do not have the voter ID requirement, could vote in federal elections but not state.

Say what? That's the Kobach way. It is a convoluted system that clearly underscores the secretary's "my way or the highway" views of making voting a chore instead of an honor.

Both Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court have declared that voters who use the federal form do not have to provide ID to prove their voting rights. But Kobach turns the other way when faced with issues that conflict with his beliefs.

His office sent a memo to all election officials in the state that outlined procedures to identify and track voters who use the federal form for voter registration. Kobach's mandate would create a separate category for voters eligible only to vote in congressional and presidential elections.

"Many counties probably have had very few federal forms submitted over the years," Election Director Brad Bryant stated in a memo to county officials. "(But) this means you should take note when a federal form comes to your office and keep a list of the names of individuals who submit them..."

Few use the federal form, as Bryant noted, which is eerily similar to the scenario when Kobach originally proposed the state's voter ID law. There were only a handful of voter fraud cases, and most hinged on misidentification, not out and out fraud. Kobach made it seem at the time that fraud was rampant in the state when it was not.

Kobach seems intent on making voting less and less appealing and adding to the already burdensome workload of county election officials. Some county officials declined comment in a *Wichita Eagle* story. Others did not hold back.

"It would be a nightmare for us," said Sherman County Clerk Janet Rumpel.

Clearly Kobach wants to assert his unsolicited and questionable political views on federal voting guidelines, which undoubtedly he thinks should include additional proof of citizenship beyond what already is required.

- *The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press*

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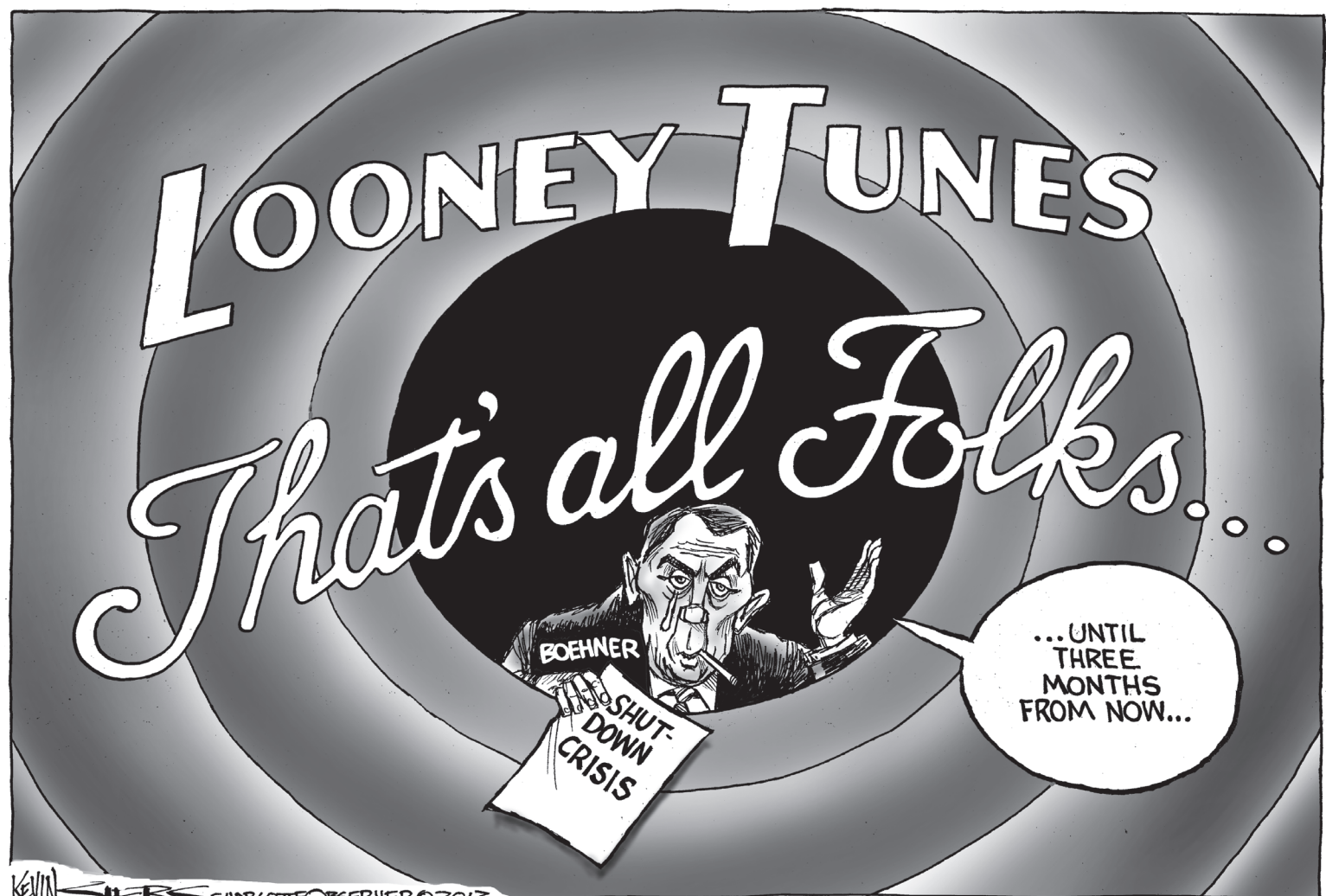
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Fike Park moves into 21st century

This is the last column dedicated to the history of Fike Park, and Opal Linville at the museum has already brought me a copy of her research on the history of the Thomas County Courthouse, so that will be next.



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

A new hospital, Citizen's Medical Center, opened for business in 1982, and the ambulances were moved out of City Hall into a new ambulance garage beside the hospital.

Another building was built just east of the Scout building in 1988 for the use of area senior citizens, a place where they could get together for meals and recreation. It remains an active place.

An elevator was added to the City Hall in 1990 for the handicapped. About that time, it was decided that the park needed to be cleared of some of the older buildings to make room for improvements. In 1991, the screened-in meeting building was torn down and I'm guessing that was when they tore down the band shell and replaced it with a large gazebo, but I have no record of that.

The swim club in Colby began to complain about the temperature of the swimming pool. It was getting cold because the water was leaking out in various places, meaning that new water had to be pumped in more often, and that water was cold. In 1992, the pool was repaired.

In 1993, a picture appeared in the *Colby Free Press* showing city crew building new brick restrooms in the park

"The new facilities will meet federal Americans with Disabilities Act regulations," the paper said, "and will be heated for use during such winter events as Santa City. The use of city crews saves taxpayer money, city officials said."

The Scout Hut was being decorated for Christmas every year as a place for Santa to visit with the area children.

In February 1998, the Beta Sigma Phi Sorority started a project to add new playground equipment to Fike Park. They formed a committee that raised \$25,000. Later that same year, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks approved a grant for the project for \$42,000. The Garvey Foundation donated \$10,000.

Dirt had to be leveled and Ernest Shull donated 1,000 yards of fill dirt to the playground area at the park. Several trees were removed. Many people were involved on weekends and after 5 p.m. throughout these final steps, but the initial overseers were John Bremerkamp, Mike Woofter, Greg Cahoj, David Pabst and city employees Gerry Bieker and Robert Tay-

lor. Some of the old playground equipment was moved to other parks. On March 10, 1999, the new equipment arrived at a total cost of \$84,000. Volunteers helped put it together. This marked the first major improvement to that area of the park in 25 years.

By May 1999, area children were allowed to have their end-of-the-year school parties there and to play on the new equipment. The playground was dedicated on June 25. A sign was placed there naming it the Fun Zone.

In 2010, I'm sure I don't have to remind most of you that the swim club, after a lot of effort, finally got a new water park on South Franklin Ave., just north of the high school. It is probably the busiest place in Colby on hot summer afternoons. It is flanked on the north by a beautiful park-picnic-playground area and a walking trail.

The city removed the old pool and demolished the art deco bath house, which was listed on the National Register of Historical Places for its architecture and the fact it had been built by the federal Works Progress Administration.

Next time, we will start on the history of the courthouse. Please look for it.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Videogame use devastates education

The new edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders was released this spring. The DSM-V ignores the expanding epidemic of videogame addiction that has devastated our boys' education for the last 15 years. Instead, it lists "Internet addiction disorder" in the appendix as a "condition for further study."

The DSM listing is important in the U.S. because it provides legitimacy to mental disorders and some health insurance policies will have to cover treatment. But most of all, it tells society that this behavior is problematic and, similar to smoking, it redirects public opinion.

The first problem with the DSM is that it defines it as "Internet addiction disorder," combining videogame addiction with many other Internet activities including social networking, blogging, online shopping and viewing pornography. By lumping videogaming with other Internet activities, it is easy to protest that it is neither a compulsion or disorder since "everyone does it."

But videogame addiction is a major problem for boys worldwide wherever they have access to videogames, whether online at a PC or handheld. That is why it should not be tied to the Internet or computers. Videogames also come in play stations, consoles, handheld games and cell phones.

And it is called "gameboy" and not "gamegirl" for a reason. The wiring in many boys' brains responds to the beeps and visual stimulation of videogames in a way that girls' brains do not. In 2009, Douglas Gentile published a survey of American 8-to-18 year-olds and found 12 percent of boys were videogame addicted, having at least six symptoms out of 11 (similar to the scale for gambling addiction



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

that the DSM does recognize). Using the same criteria, only three percent of girls were videogame addicts. These videoaddicts reported a dramatic erosion in study, homework, and school involvement.

Yet the psychiatrists claim this correlation is not proof that video games cause a decline in academics. Perhaps boys who are not academic are attracted to video-games as a consequence. Gentile's correlation did not prove causation.

But proof that videogames-cause-a-decline-in-academics was published in the February 2010 issue of *Psychological Science*. Robert Weis and Brittany C. Cerankosky of Denison University measured boys' academic baseline achievement and surveyed their parents and teachers about the boys' behavior. They then gave half of the group of boys playstation videogame units. Academic performance nosedived for the boys with videogames. The boys without videogames continued on with solid schoolwork. This nailed the cause-and-effect relationship. The DSM-V ignores this study.

"The Boy Problem" is the term for this decline in boys entering higher education throughout the developed world. Enrollments in universities in Asia, Europe and the Americas are often between 70 and 80 percent women. The secondary school dropout rate

is much higher for boys as well. Many books have been written in the U.S. attributing this to the "feminization" of the classroom or other causes. But this problem is worldwide. It is boys who populate Internet cafes or live online in their parent's basement.

Education Week just published a survey of high school dropouts and of course failed to ask the right question. But if I apply the ratios from Gentile's study to the U.S. dropout data, videogame addiction could account for nearly 4 million boys dropping out of school in the last 15 years. Other countries take this obvious drain on boys' academics seriously. Only in the United States do we ignore our boys' videogame addiction and swoon over their ability to navigate every new techno-gadget.

It will take another decade to cycle to a new DSM. When that time arrives, I have a new diagnosis that definitely deserves to be listed. It describes our cultural sickness that allows us to bless our next generation of boys who abandon life for cyberspace: Videogame Addiction Disorder Denial Syndrome.

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.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

