

Other **Viewpoints**

Guns and voting just do not mix

If Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt decides that concealed-carry of guns must be allowed at polling places, and churches and schools bow out as a result, the responsibility will be that of the 2013 Legislature, which rushed to expand the gun law with far too little concern for such disruptive consequences.

As the House and Senate voted 104-16 and 32-7, respectively, for the bill last spring and Gov. Sam Brownback signed it, the goal clearly was allowing concealed guns in as many public buildings as possible. The law requires counties, cities and other public entities to welcome concealed-carry permit holders bearing firearms if their buildings do not have "adequate security measures." In most cases, meeting that standard would mean doing unaffordable renovations and hiring security guards. Four-year exemptions were built into the law for public universities, community mental health centers and public health care facilities. But many public entities inevitably will give in and welcome guns, if not now then four years

That will be mission accomplished for lawmakers – though 55 percent of Kansans polled in the Docking Institute of Public Affairs' most recent "Kansas Speaks" survey said they oppose allowing concealed-carry of guns in schools, hospitals and government buildings.

Because the law is ambiguous regarding polling places, Secretary of State Kris Kobach recently requested a legal opinion from Schmidt. Polling places usually are located where concealed guns are not allowed, including churches, public schools, universities and nonprofit organizations. But if the sites are considered property leased by counties or municipalities, either those costly "adequate security measures" would be needed or concealed guns would be welcome. Among the questions for Schmidt is whether it makes a difference if governments pay for use of the sites or use them gratis.

If Schmidt's verdict is that the guns need to be allowed, expect some churches and other private entities to stop being polling places. That will limit the options for some communities. As state Rep. Tom Sawyer, D-Wichita, said: "It's hard enough as it is to come up with a building that's going to be open all day and that's handicapped-accessible." Parking availability is

Guns and voting seem like an uneasy combination at best. As it is, somebody who displays or brandishes a firearm at a poll can be prosecuted for voter intimidation. Even gun-friendly Texas specifically prohibits concealed-carry at the polls.

So it will be a significant change for Kansas if polling places must welcome concealed guns, in some cases trampling on not only the local control of public entities but the property rights of privately owned buildings.

Sedgwick County Commissioner Richard Ranzau, a leader of the local effort to open more public buildings to concealedcarry, said the polling-place issue "is something that is going to have to be sorted out at the state level."

That sorting out should have happened before the law was passed at the Statehouse - where, it should be noted, no such gun mandate applies.

- The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press

Colby Free Press

155 W. Fifth St. Colby, Kan. 67701 (USPS 120-920)

(785) 462-3963 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.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

NEWS

R.B. Headley - Sports Editor

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor mballard @ nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

Heather Alwin - Society Editor

ADVERTISING colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative

Sharon Funk - Advertising Representative

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator support @ nwkansas.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, _abor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper,

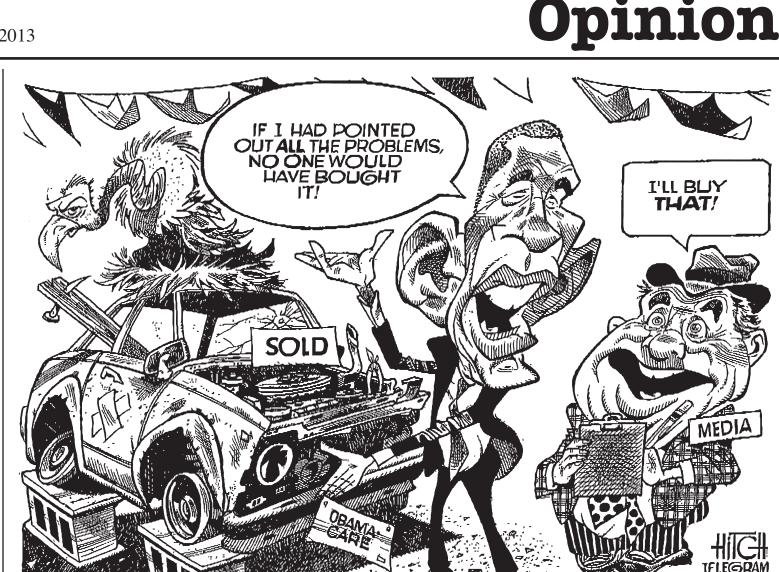
PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to

is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press ssociation and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35,

riday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which

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



Ag secretaries talk past, present policy

With more than three decades of collective service under their belts, six former U.S. agricultural secretaries discussed and cussed climate change, international trade, subsidies, crop insurance, food stamps and a bushel basket full of other ag issues Oct. 21.

As part of Kansas State University's Landon Lecture series, participants included Kansan Dan Glickman, John Block, Mike Espy, Mike Johanns, Ed Schafer and Ann Veneman.

Glickman, who served as ag secretary under President Clinton from 1995 to 2001, said there are great things happening in agriculture.

"Food and agriculture are hot topics today," Glickman told those who packed McCain Auditorium. "They're high up on the agenda, agriculture is part of the international agenda and people all over the world know about this industry."

The farm economy has never been better, Glickman continued.

"After years, and years, and years of low prices and bad economic conditions, we're in an era of a much stronger farm economy," the former Kansas ag secretary noted. "That's not to say there won't still be ups and downs, but the era of agriculture being the weak sister of American economics is over.'

The challenge for farmers will be to double food production by 2050 to help feed an estimated 9 billion people, Block said. Block served as ag secretary under President Reagan from 1981 to 1986.

t or not meet our objectives.

John Schlageck

 Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

tance of hammering out a farm bill but said this wouldn't be enough.

He said this country's farm economy will grow and flourish with an enlightened approach to taxation, university research and world trade. The lack of consensus on a new farm bill

demonstrates the deep philosophical divide in Congress threatening the future of farm legislation, Espy said. He served under Bill Clinton in the early '90s.

The political middle no longer exists, Espy said. Urban Democrats are drawn to food programs and away from production agriculture while rural Republicans push to cut federal programs to the bone.

"The attitude in the House and Senate has changed," Espy continued. "In the line of fire will be agriculture. We've got a real problem,

California's Ann Veneman was sworn in as the first woman Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture on Jan. 20, 2001, Secretary Veneman presided over one of the most "We can't let the critics stop us from using historic times in American agriculture. Her new technology," Block said. "We have to use tenure included record farm income, record is a leading commentator on agriculture and agricultural exports and the creation of stron-Mike Johanns, who served under President ger pest and disease protection systems for the farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a Bush from 2005 to 2008, stressed the imporcountry

During Veneman's tenure, the Food Stamp Program and child nutrition program were reauthorized and funding increased. As secretary, Veneman focused on new approaches to help feed the hungry around the world.

Today she continues this challenge to feed the world as well as reduce obesity.

"In addition to the 842 million people that

are always hungry, the World Health Organization estimates there are more than 1.4 billion in the world who are overweight," Veneman Veneman says this country faces the same challenges associated with obesity that causes

all kinds of additional diseases including diabetes, heart disease, cancer as well as increasing the cost of health care and decreasing individual productivity. "For far too long we've addressed the issue of hunger and malnutrition by throwing calo-

ries at it," the former ag secretary said. "Our focus needs to look at getting nutrition to peo-Schafer, who served under President George

W. Bush, said grains and meats exported throughout the world were accompanied by delivery of American values to countries desperate for stability. 'When you touch the land, you know about

responsibility," Schafer said. "Hungry people make unstable governments. Hungry people don't learn. Hungry people don't work."

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Cutting food stamps would hurt Kansans

With the economy still recovering at a sluggish pace, it's hard to understand why the House of Representatives is so intent on taking a meat cleaver to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps), which keeps millions of people from falling below the poverty level.

The Republican-dominated House approved a bill that, according to the Congressional Budget Office, would remove nearly 4 million people from the program. The House split the agricultural and nutrition pieces of the fiveyear Farm Bill into two parts and proposed making \$40 billion in cuts over a decade to the nutrition part.

The folks who would be hurt if this legislation were to become law include children and working-class families. A Census Bureau report found that food stamps have kept about 4 million people above the poverty level and keep millions more from becoming even more impoverished.

Aside from the moral implications of making extreme cuts to an anti-hunger program that has helped a lot of working families, children, the elderly and the disabled, these cuts make no sense economically. Decreasing the purchasing power of millions of Americans is bound to have a retarding effect on a tepid economic recovery: A 2008 Moody's Analytics study shows that every \$1 spent to help reduce hunger has resulted in \$1.70 in economic

This shows that the impetus behind the Republican-dominated House's determination to slash food stamps is ideological, not eco-



Andy Heintz

 Wildcat Ramblings

nomic. It's based on a false belief that this program allows herds of able-bodied Americans to mooch off the government.

"Politically, it's a great issue," said Congressman Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.), who represents Kansas' Big First District and was among those pushing for larger cuts. "I think most Americans don't think you should be getting something for free, especially for the ablebodied adults.'

While conservatives are correct to want to stop freeloaders from living off the government dole, they greatly overestimate the number of people who make up this notorious group. And, in their overzealous pursuit to purge the lazy and nonambitious from government assistance, they wind up offering bills that would hurt some of the most vulnerable Americans.

"The latest proposal from the House is an about-face on our progress fighting hunger,' wrote former senators Bob Dole (R-Kansas) and Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) in a bipartisan oped in the Los Angeles Times. "It would eliminate food assistance for 4 million to 6 million Americans."

Furthermore, the Tea-Party conservatives

claim that the program is rife with fraud and freeloaders doesn't align with facts. Agricultural Department figures show the program has lower rates of fraud than farm subsidies such as crop insurance.

"SNAP has one of the most rigorous qualitycontrol systems of any public benefit program, and despite the recent growth in caseloads, the share of total SNAP payments that represent overpayments, underpayments or payments to ineligible households reached a record low in fiscal year 2011," according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The Tea Party's fact-free beliefs illuminate what happens when a group chooses to listen to think tanks, cable news networks and talkradio hosts who confirm their basic world view instead of objectively assessing the facts and taking care of the vulnerable people they were elected to represent.

"In a country struggling to emerge from the worst recession since the Depression, this is no time play politics with hunger," Dole and Daschle wrote.

Tea Party-backed Republicans should heed the former senators' sage advice.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at www.orble.com/ just-one-mans-vision, or find him at twitter. com/heintz23.

Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

