



Other Viewpoints

School finance needs resolution

Gov. Sam Brownback says he hopes a recent meeting among select legislators and educators “laid the groundwork” for future discussion about ending the cycle of school finance litigation.

Most Kansans probably would agree, although they may hope the groundwork was laid for discussion and “progress” toward ending the cycle of school finance lawsuits.

The litigation has created tension, if not an outright rift, between lawmakers and many educators that does nothing to solve the overriding question of how much money the state’s public school system needs to properly educate its students.

In 2003, Schools for Fair Funding filed a lawsuit contending the state’s school finance formula was inequitable and that the Legislature wasn’t living up to its constitutional responsibility of making “suitable provision for the finance” of education. The Kansas Supreme Court in 2005 ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and the Legislature in 2006 passed a law designed to allocate additional funding, nearly \$800 million, to education.

The recession interrupted the funding flow, however, and the current lawsuit, seeking another \$400 million annually for education, was filed in 2010. The Kansas Supreme Court is expected to issue its ruling on the case early next year.

Regardless of how wide the rift is between some legislators and some educators, or how wide the gap is between what each side in this dispute considers adequate funding for schools, opening the lines of discussion, and ensuring the line stays open, just makes sense. The governor made a good move by initiating a process that could lead to a better understanding among lawmakers and educators.

The first meeting, conducted last week at the Capitol, reportedly touched on broad ideas rather than specifics, but subsequent meetings will be conducted to identify areas legislators and educators could work on together.

One topic that did receive attention was how increased funding for teacher pensions fit into the school finance formula. Brownback contends increases in the dollars devoted to teacher pensions through the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System under his watch must be considered as increased funding for education. Plaintiffs in the current lawsuit disagree.

No one knows exactly what the Kansas Supreme Court justices will say in their ruling, but the state should get credit for the cost of teacher pensions. Employers, public and private, must factor labor costs, all of them, into their budgets. Those costs include salaries and benefits. To disregard the cost of pensions, a significant expenditure, when computing the state’s contribution to education makes no sense.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 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

sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

R.B. Headley - Sports Editor

colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor

mballard @ nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter

colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

Heather Alwin - Society Editor

colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative

kballard @ nwkansas.com

Sharon Funk - Advertising Representative

sfunk @ nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design

khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager

medmondson @ nwkansas.com

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, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

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



“Look, someone sent us gold, frankincense and myrrh...”

Where did that bird come from?

Other Opinions

Daris Howard Life's Outtakes

I had been visiting Buster and helping him on his computer. When I finished, he asked me if I would be interested in some old hamburger he had in his freezer. “It wouldn’t be any good to eat. You’d have to feed it to your dog.”

I figured our dog would like a change from dry dog food, so we made our way out to Buster’s garage where his freezer was. When he opened it, I was shocked to see a bird there that, at that time, was on the endangered species list.

I gasped. “Buster, what in the world are you doing with that in your freezer?!”

“I found it. It was underneath a power line. Apparently it died of electrocution.”

“What is it doing in your freezer? You can’t have that!”

“But I didn’t kill it. I just found it. It was already dead.”

I explained to him that the law didn’t just say that a person couldn’t kill one, but it was illegal to even have it. I told him it was a felony.

“Buster, you need to take it back and put it right where you found it.”

He seemed reluctant to do so, but he promised me he would take care of it immediately.

I didn’t think any more about it for a year or so. I was made a Cub Scout pack leader and organized many events. For one of them, we were supposed to talk about animals and nature. A man in our community, “Jay,” was a game warden, so we contacted him to see if he would be willing to come and visit with the

boys about animals and conservation.

He was happy to do so. “In fact,” he said, “I have a great idea. I will see if I can get permission to bring our education trailer with the animals that were prepared by a taxidermist for us to use when we go to schools.”

He was able to get permission, and we all looked forward to that night. When the evening arrived, he showed up early. He pulled in with a pickup pulling a large enclosed trailer. We helped him as he hauled the animal collection into the church where we met for our cub scout pack meeting.

There were small animals, including a squirrel and a chipmunk. There were medium sized animals such as a coyote, a rabbit, and a fox. Jay had the head of a few large animals including a moose and an elk. He had many types of birds and a few different types of bats.

As the other cub scout leaders and I would bring one of them into the church, Jay would direct us where he would like them put. By the time we finished, the whole room looked like a forest full of animals.

When the boys arrived, they walked in wide-eyed and excited. Jay did an excellent job telling about each animal and how it lived, what it ate, how it raised its family, and so on. He had some recordings of the sounds some of the animals made. He finished by talking about conservation and what each of us could do to help the animals. He told how some animals are in danger of going extinct and what is being done to protect them. The boys listened intently and the meeting was a great success.

Afterward, as we were eating brownies, I happened to be looking at a bird that looked like the one Buster had had in his freezer. Jay came up beside me. “Isn’t she beautiful?”

I nodded as he continued. “It apparently flew into a power line because we found it beneath one.”

Suddenly, the memory of seeing a bird in a freezer started to come back into my memory as Jay talked. “We always have to have an autopsy done on all endangered species, and it did indeed appear to have been electrocuted. But with this bird there was something really strange – it seemed to have had some kind of freezer burn or something.”

I turned to look at him as he finished. “But I guess we’ll never know why.”

Daris Howard, award-winning, syndicated columnist, playwright, and author, can be contacted at daris@darishoward.com; or go to www.darishoward.com.

Blow to liberty 100 years ago still matters

Other Opinions

Harold Pease Liberty Under Fire

Until 30 years ago we were taught that we were a republic and not a democracy. Today we treat them as the same – a serious mistake.

Two Amendments, the 16th and 17th, both ratified in 1913, laid the groundwork for the destruction of limited government, which is the foundation of a Republic, the Constitution, and liberty. A review of our 100-year history reveals the continued damage to your liberty as a result.

What largely brought about the give-away programs of the 20th century was the now-100-year-old 16th Amendment – the federal income tax. All three 1912 presidential candidates Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson, and their respective parties, wanted this financial water faucet that they could turn on at will. They could purchase anything.

Prior to 1913, the federal government remained mostly faithful to her grants of power in Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, which left them with only four powers: to tax, pay the debts, provide for the general welfare and provide for the common defense. Because the federal government has the tendency to enlarge general welfare and common defense, each had eight qualifiers to harness them more fully. Outside these four powers the federal government had no power to tax or spend.

General welfare then meant everyone equally and at the same time as opposed to “specific welfare” or “privileged welfare” as it is today, targeting those to forfeit and those to receive money. The Constitution did not bar states, counties or cities from having such programs, only the federal government. But the more politicians promised to the people, from the money of others, the easier it was to

get elected and stay elected.

So, how did we cover the expenses of the federal government – even wars – before 1913? Products coming into the country were assessed a fee to market in the U.S. called a tariff. We got producers in other countries to cover our national expenses and thus we were able to spend, on ourselves, every cent of what the federal government now takes.

So why does the government now need a fourth of everything you make and it is still not enough? Because we went off the listed powers of the Constitution and every departure required more taxpayer funding. The answer to less tax is less government and always will be. A side benefit is more freedom.

The freedom lost by the 17th Amendment, ratified on May 31, 1913, is harder to explain and mandates the readers’ understanding of what a republic is. In such there is no federal government over the states. Think of it as a marriage where one party performs domestic duties (the states) and the other foreign policy duties (the federal government). Neither is boss over the other. Neither manages the other. As in any good marriage they are equal but sovereign over their areas of jurisdiction.

The major protector of state sovereignty was the state legislatures who picked two of

their own body to protect state interest from federal intrusion and sent them to the U.S. Senate. The ability to combine to hold the federal government to the listed powers of the Constitution is absolutely critical to remaining a republic and remaining free. The Senate is the only body powerful enough to do so. This is why we have two law-making branches of government, one the Senate: to protect the interest of the states.

All this protection from government’s natural inclination to grow, dominating and controlling everything that it touches, was unwisely removed by the 17th Amendment and states today are not shielded from federal intrusion. Senators are elected precisely as are House of Representative members, by popular vote. In fact, they may not even know of, care about, or be loyal to state issues.

These two 1913 amendments largely destroyed our status as a republic. We can look back and see the trail of damage of both. The 17th removed our shield from federal intrusion and the 16th enticed politicians to feed at the trough of “free” federal money for their own personal elevation, consequently syphoning authority to the federal government.

The result: the federal government has its dominating presence in every aspect of your life and in everything that moves. Only the ill informed can call this freedom.

Dr. Harold Pease has dedicated his career to studying the writings of the Founding Fathers. He has taught history and political science for over 25 years at Taft College. To read more of his weekly articles, go to www.LibertyUnderFire.org.

Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

