

# commentary

from other pens...

## Lack of candidates hampers Democrats

**The Garden City Telegram on recruiting Democratic candidates:**  
When Kansans across the state note that many elections are over on primary night, they're not joking. Even Kansas Democratic leaders acknowledge that many party faithful declare themselves Republicans so they can vote in primary elections.

There are small pockets where Democrats are able to win elective office, but a look at the roster in the Kansas House and Senate shows a disparity that hampers the effectiveness of a two-party legislative process.

Republicans outnumber Democrats by a 2-to-1 margin in Topeka. More telling, however, isn't that Democrats can't seem to garner more seats in the statehouse. It's the party's inability to field candidates in all of the state's legislative districts.

It's not a matter of having a stronger presence throughout Kansas. At this point, it's a matter of having any presence ...

More Democrats in the field won't automatically translate into more Democrats in Topeka. But at least it would give voters a divergent voice. Complacency is the cousin to comfort. When a single party is guaranteed a free ticket to the Statehouse because there is no opposition, complacency has potential to surface.

Energizing more people to the party is necessary, if only to offer voters a choice and engage candidates in meaty discussions of the issues. Such diversity of viewpoints would be good for all of Kansas.

### The Topeka Capital-Journal on Parkinson's research:

Michael J. Fox, who has been raising awareness of Parkinson's disease since his diagnosis a few years ago, might want to check out The University of Kansas Medical Center, where two doctors have helped develop a promising new treatment.

Steven Wilkinson, a neurosurgeon, and Rajesh Pahwa, a neurologist, have treated more than 200 people from 42 states and as far away as Kuwait who have Parkinson's or essential tremor. They are two of the most common neurological movement disorders, affecting about 2 million Americans.

The procedure involves drilling a hole in the brain and implanting an electrode. A wire under the skin is linked to a small battery just under the collarbone. The technology was developed by Medtronic Inc. of Minneapolis.

Sometimes called a brain pacemaker, the system delivers mild electrical stimulation to targeted areas in the brain. The stimulation apparently blocks the signals that cause the tremors.

Although the procedure doesn't work for everyone, for some it has produced miraculous results. Dick Swindler of Lawrence had such severe tremors it was dangerous to stand next to him, but now he plays golf four days a week and chases his grandson around the yard and takes him swimming.

Without the surgery, he most likely would be in a wheelchair today, his wife said.

With stories like that, it's no wonder KUMC has become the nation's leading center for deep brain stimulation. That speaks well not only for the medical center, but also for the medical team that has been perfecting the procedure for the past seven years.

### where to write

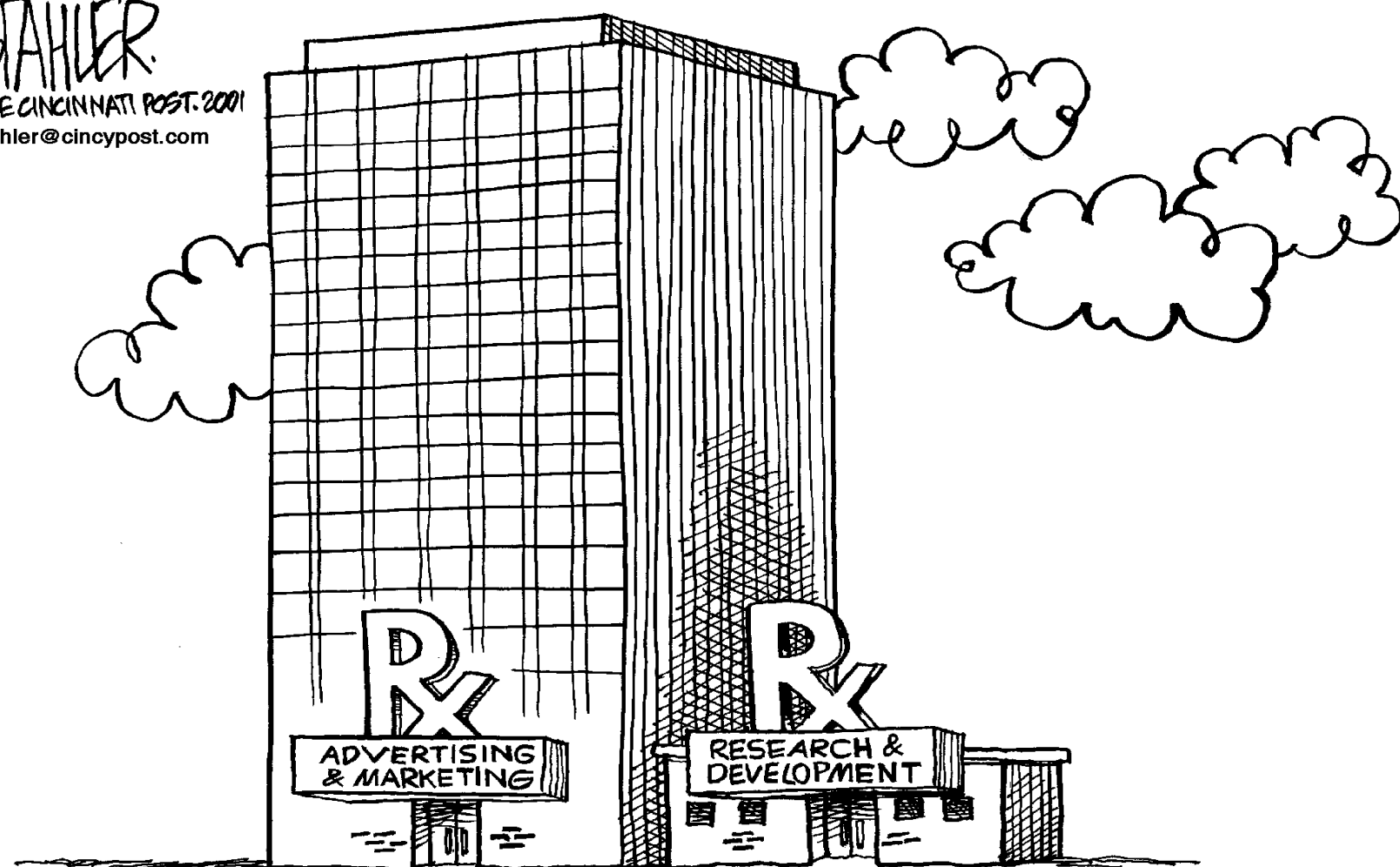
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## There is nothing like fresh from the garden

Steve stepped on the first cucumber of the season last week.

It was delicious. I was weeding the corn and checking for squash while he was tying up the tomatoes vines. We have the cucumbers planted under the tomatoes.

He spotted a nice fat cuke and picked it for me. Then he put it in a safe place.

Of course, you know, those are fateful words. They usually mean that you will never find the item again.

But he found it as he stepped back from tying the back tomato vine securely to its stake.

Crunch! He finished tying the tomatoes, found a couple more cucumbers and brought the whole mess into the kitchen, where I had gone to prepare supper.

"You better eat this one right away," he said. Steve doesn't like cucumbers or radishes, which



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

I also plant in the tomato area, but he always brings in the produce.

I like radishes, but about one a year is fine. Still, every year I sow a whole package of seeds, just like my daddy always did. Of course, my daddy really liked radishes — the long icicle kind. He ate them plain and even made radish sandwiches sometimes. I'll eat my one a year and ignore the rest of the crop — until the tops grow up to my chin and bloom.

When I had ignored the radishes for as long as Steve could stand this year, he grabbed several, cleaned them and put them in a glass of water in

the fridge for me. He's so sweet. Don't tell him they went down the disposal.

I'd already eaten my garden radish for the year. Cucumbers are a different story. I really like cucumbers and enjoy them in salads or just peeled and salted.

I took the stomped cuke, cut off the half that was pulverized, salted it and chomped down. Ahhhh. There is nothing like something fresh from the garden.

Steve asked me if I had had any trouble with sand in my vegetables after I told him I had devoured his offering. I pointed out that since he had been considerate enough to step on the end and not the middle, I had easily cut off the pulverized part.

He looked a little crestfallen. I guess he thought that his aim was off.

Maybe next year he can practice on the radishes first.

## Democrats have worsening 'culture problem'

If Democrats want to win back the presidency and full control of the Congress, they need to get back to "values centrism" and appeal once again to white male, religious and married voters.

So argues the Democratic Leadership Council in its latest policy magazine, Blueprint. The case makes eminent sense, but there's lots of evidence that party leaders aren't listening.

Democrats have adopted a new lingo on guns — "gun control" is out and "sensible gun safety" is in — but on issues such as religion, class warfare and the role of government, they're swerving left again.

In an editorial and a series of articles in the forthcoming issue of Blueprint, the New Democrats argue that the "high-octane populism" being advocated by "traditional liberals" as the key to success is "potentially disastrous" for the party.

In the 2000 election, they say, Al Gore's populist theme of "the people over the powerful" succeeded only in securing the Democratic base, turning off swing voters he should have carried, given the economic good times that prevailed.

The DLC makes no accusations, but it's pretty obvious that, like Gore, Congressional Democrats are basing many of their key policies on opposition to special interests — specifically, oil, insurance companies and "the rich" who will benefit from Bush administration tax cuts.

In an editorial that leads off the magazine, the DLC argues that Democrats have "a culture problem" that antedated former President Bill Clinton's scandals and will continue to damage the party now that he's out of the Oval Office.

"Many voters fear that Democrats are either hostile to or indifferent to people of faith, married people with kids (especially stay-at-home moms), those who serve proudly in the military, those who own guns for self-protection or hunting, and perhaps even white males as a group," the editorial declares.

"This perception is often reinforced by the parallel belief that Democrats are excessively bound by allegiance to interest and advocacy groups that do not share mainstream values in one respect or another."



**morton kondracke**

• commentary

With the two parties now in a tie for the allegiance of voters, the winner of future elections will be the one that can hold and turn out its base, attract swings and even siphon off loyalists to the other side.

That's what President Bush did in 2000 with his compassionate conservative theme, which allowed him to limit Gore's advantage among white women to just 2 points.

Prior to the Monica Lewinsky debacle in his second term, Clinton made inroads among white males and married voters by sounding tough on crime, calling for the hiring of 100,000 more law enforcement officers, and backing welfare reform and V-chips to block television pornography.

He also said (not meaning it, of course) abortion should be "safe, legal and rare." In the end, he vetoed a ban on partial-birth abortion.

Moreover, Clinton declared that "the era of big government is over" and that affirmative action needed to be "mended." Little changed, but he sounded moderate.

Gore, however, reverted to out-and-out populism and suffered for it. He carried only 36 percent of the white-male vote — the same proportion as 1988 candidate Michael Dukakis did.

Non-college educated white men, who ought to be a bedrock Democratic constituency based on economics, went for Bush 63 percent to 34 percent.

Democratic Congressional candidates fared no better than Gore among white males, who supported the GOP in House races by 59 percent to 38 percent and in Senate races by 60 to 38 percent.

Authors of Blueprint articles don't advocate abandonment of traditional stands on abortion or discrimination, but they recommend tactics to pick up support among swing voters.

Exit polls in 2000 revealed that white males sup-

port smaller government, Social Security reform and tax cuts. It's a fair bet that they also support more energy production over conservation and national missile defense, which Democrats oppose.

In upcoming elections, however, Democrats may be able to take away the mantle of fiscal responsibility from Republicans if Bush's tax cuts seem too large.

On religion, though, Democrats continue to trail. Bush carried regular churchgoers 63 percent to 36 percent, while Gore carried those who never attend church by 61 to 30 percent.

With a few exceptions, Democrats show fear and hostility toward Bush's idea of inviting church-based organizations to offer social services, and they oppose vouchers that would allow poor parents to send their children to Catholic schools.

Democrats might be helped politically if Bush decides to ban federal funding of embryonic stem-cell research, as this position would indicate he had caved into arguably extreme religious dogmatism.

On the other hand, Democrats seem to strictly follow a dogma dictated by its own liberal hard-liners, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way and the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League.

In 2000, Gore and Democratic House candidates carried only 44 percent of married voters, among whose main concerns is the moral climate of the country.

It could be that Democrats will get lucky, and a bad economy will give them an advantage in upcoming elections. But more likely, as Blueprint declares on its cover, the key is: "It's the Culture, Stupid!"

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

## The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

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Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [gdnav@nwkansas.com](mailto:gdnav@nwkansas.com)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$22; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. By mail in Kansas, Colorado: three months, \$28; six months, \$50; 12 months, \$95. (All tax included.) Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$25; six months, \$40; 12 months, \$75.

### Incorporating:

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Founded by Thomas McCants  
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**THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR**  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
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