

commentary

from other pens...

Drug tampering strikes at our hope, confidence

Great Bend Tribune on diluted drugs:
When a story gets slathered all over the newspapers and repeated extensively on television it is easy to start glossing over it, but a new development in the Kansas City, Mo., case where a millionaire pharmacist was cutting cancer drugs with saline solution ... is worth noticing.

Robert Courtney was indicted on 20 new counts of tampering with drugs. Now the only question is whether or not his money can save him. After all, you don't see a lot of millionaires doing hard time in prison.

... He was striking right at the hope that at least 150 people were clinging to, but he did more than that.

It may be possible to prosecute him for this, but he struck at the hope and the confidence that sick people ... have in the medical system.

People are going bankrupt in this country, trying to get medical conditions addressed.

Many, if not most, of our senior citizens have to make choices on a routine basis about whether they will visit their grandkids, enjoy other basic rewards for a well spent life, or buy their monthly medicine.

Every time it suits their agenda, the political correct chest thumpers point to a particular crime as a "hate crime" and call for additional penalties.

Well, if such a thing exists, there could be few heinous acts that would qualify as a hate crime than this, than cheating sick people who are already strung to the breaking point by our medical system.

Winfield Daily Courier on public school funding:

If the state board of education does not have a vision for the future of public schools in Kansas, who does?

The board has requested a \$1.2 billion increase in state funding over three years, citing teacher shortages and the need to get teachers' salaries up to the national average.

This is not, as board member Steve Abrams of Arkansas City has been quoted as saying, "foolishness."

It is leadership by raising awareness that our schools are falling behind in attracting and keeping quality teachers, and we can, if we will, do something about it. The board's request is an effort to put the real funding needs of public education on the record for the public and policy-makers.

Apparently, this is not Abrams' kind of leadership. He was one of two board members who voted against the request.

Kansas, by late reports, is short 500 teachers this fall. Small districts and some large, urban districts cannot find teachers in fields needed to fill gaps in their curricula. Growing demands for special education teachers are going unmet.

This state has a well-deserved reputation for a strong public school system from east to west, north to south. That system is vital to our economic future. We need to mobilize our resources to revitalize it and maintain its good reputation.

The state board has traditionally set high goals for future funding of our schools. It has done well to do so again this year, raising our sight when they needed to be raised — in spite of Mr. Abrams.

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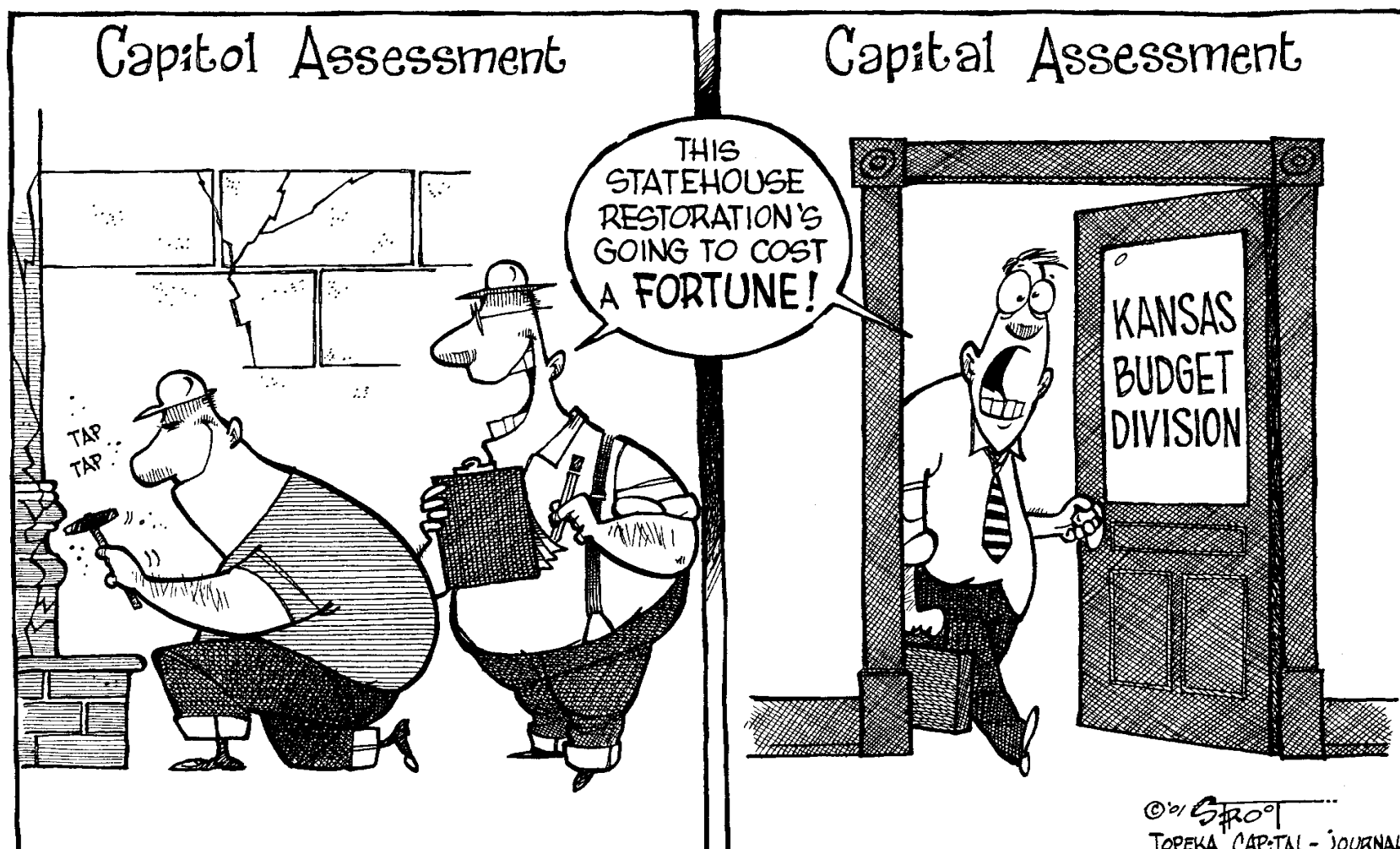
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Baby Solty's and woman's right to choose

When Sacramento County (Calif.) District Attorney Jan Scully announced the murder counts against Nikolay Soltys on Tuesday, she told reporters they might be interested in count two. It read, in part, "... said defendant did unlawfully, and with malice aforethought, murder BABY SOLTYS, a human being."

Baby Soltys was about three inches long at the time of death and weighed about an ounce. It had never taken a breath of air. Baby Soltys was a 3-month-old fetus.

Had Nikolay Soltys' wife chosen to abort the fetus herself, she could have done so without repercussions. Roe v. Wade makes clear that "person" as used in the 14th Amendment does not include the unborn.

But in a handful of states, this same fetus becomes a "human being" for the purposes of prosecuting a defendant who brings about its end. In other words, the law recognizes the fetus as a form of life entitled to protection in some instances but not in others.

This contradiction stopped me in my tracks. How could I reconcile the fact I am fiercely pro-choice but also believe an assailant should be held criminally responsible for ending the life of a fetus?

I began to think of the women I know who had bonded with the life inside them, women who had



joan ryan

• commentary

waited years to get pregnant and treasured the fetus that would become their child. What if a man attacked one of these pregnant women, and the life inside her ended?

The woman loses more than a fetus. She loses the motherhood that was waiting a few months away. She loses her potential child's squeals on the playground slide, his little hand slipping into hers. The person responsible should be prosecuted. Yet, if the same woman had decided to end her own pregnancy, I would support her without reservation.

I had to ask myself why I favor protecting the fetus in one case and not protecting it in another. The answer is choice.

Choice is the principle at the heart of Roe v. Wade. And it is the principle at the heart of California's law, which allows the Sacramento D.A. to prosecute Nikolay Soltys in the death of his wife's fetus.

In one instance, a woman has chosen to end her pregnancy. And in the other, an assailant has cho-

sen for her.

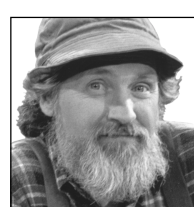
I think it's difficult for some pro-choice women to support any law that gives fetuses the status of people. They fear the anti-abortion folks will use these laws as hammers with which to chip away at Roe v. Wade. After all, they will argue, if a fetus is defined as a human in one law, why not in all laws?

This fear is legitimate. In May, the House approved a bill that would make it a federal offense to injure or kill a fetus during a violent crime against the mother. The act would, for the first time in federal law, define a fetus as a person — baldly contradicting Roe v. Wade and presumably giving anti-abortionists ammunition for a Supreme Court challenge.

While I understand the potential threat, I believe the abortion-rights laws and the so-called fetus-protection laws are not contradictory. The issue among them is not fetal rights, no matter what language the lawmakers want to use. The issue is women's rights. And in that vein, the state laws and even the Republican-backed House bill are, at the core, as pro-choice as Roe v. Wade: They protect the right of a woman to make decisions about her pregnancy for herself by prosecuting those who take that decision out of her hands.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Send comments to her e-mail at joanryan@sfgate.com.

The seat of power



red green

• north of forty

I was in a company office last week where all of the employees share the same bathroom, like they do on "Ally McBeal" and "Hogan's Heroes." There was a big sign on the wall that said, "Guys, this is not the hockey locker room. Please show a little sensitivity."

Well, this message really piqued my curiosity. Obviously, there had been a problem, but what exactly were they talking about? And, more importantly, who are they talking to? My guess is they're talking to the single guys. Any married man has already been through the bathroom learning curve and knows that none of this area is his territory any longer. Not the sinks, not the shower, not the countertop — and especially not the mirror. Any single man entering a communal restroom is coming face to face with the fundamental reality of cohabitational relationships: You can have the girl or the bathroom. Not both.

BORDERLINE FRIENDS

We all have some friends that we don't like very much. Yes, we like them — just not very much. And sometimes we decide to cut them loose for that reason and spend time only with the friends we like a lot. This is a huge mistake. My experience has been that no matter how many or how few friends you have, you will always have some that you don't like very much. Trying to up the average by thinning the herd is a slippery slope. As you decrease your number of somewhat unsatisfactory friends, you automatically increase the standards for the keepers. Eventually, you get down to two friends, and one of them will inadvertently say or do the

wrong thing — and then you're down to one. Once you drop that last one, you're really in trouble. By this time, you've axed so many relatively nice people that you aren't even good enough to pass your own test. Now you start disliking yourself, and that way lies madness.

Don't let it ever get that far. The next time you're with friends you don't like very much, greet them warmly, thank them sincerely, and keep them forever. In 10 years, you'll feel good about yourself. It may even start now.

WARDROBE CHANGES

No matter how much you like certain articles of clothing, there comes a time when you have to get rid of them. Here are a few signs that you've been wearing the same clothes way too long:

- A homeless person offers you a shirt.
- You look at your old high school pictures, and you're wearing the same pants.
- Your sports jacket is in style for the third time since you bought it.
- Your dad's clothes are newer than yours.
- One of your sweaters blew off the clothesline and a neighbor used it to wash his car.
- Teen-agers think you look cool.

LIVE AND IN PERSON

My wife and I were sitting, watching television the other night. We weren't really talking much. Just kind of vegging out, staring at the tube with that glazed look on our faces that comes over most couples who've been married for a while. Suddenly, a news announcer interrupted the show, saying "We take you live" We both sat up and immediately gave the tube our full attention. Now, the story turned out to be about a fire in town caused by an elderly gentleman who had not yet grasped the relationship between cigarette smoking and gasoline.

But the thing that struck me was that we were snapped out of a semi-comatose state by some guy saying "We take you live" It was exciting. And to think we could have had the same effect on each other the whole evening just by striking up a conversation. I was going to mention that idea to my wife, but I wanted to watch the end of the program.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "It's easy to fall asleep when everything gets tired at the same time. I always have a few stragglers." — Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

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