

# commentary

from other pens...

## Ending doctor visas hurts rural hospitals

**The Hutchinson News on doctor waiver program:**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture didn't mean to hurt Kansas communities. It wanted to stop terrorists.

But by ending its J-1 waiver program, the federal agency made it more difficult for cities like Greensburg, Great Bend and Winfield to find doctors.

The agriculture department found a middle ground ... imposing tougher screening procedures to weed out potential terrorists, while promising action on 86 waiver requests to help rural communities hire physicians.

J-1 visas allow foreign medical students to attend graduate school in the United States, but they must go home for two years after completing their training. If requested by a government agency, the U.S. attorney general often grants waivers to J-1 doctors if they agree to work in medically underserved areas.

Because so many rural areas find it difficult to attract doctors, the department requested more than 3,000 J-1 waivers since 1994. Nearly 100 of those physicians worked in Kansas, about 50 still do. ...

The Agriculture Department announced... that it would process 86 pending waiver requests, but before sponsoring a doctor, it will require security clearance from the Justice Department and State Department.

As a result, Great Bend, Greensburg and Winfield should be able to hire their doctors.

But what about the next small Kansas town that needs a physician? The white House says it will assemble a multiagency task force to review the J-1 waiver program after resolving the current applications. But a review isn't enough.

The federal government can screen foreign doctors while continuing the J-1 waiver program — a program that remains the only way many rural communities can ensure local access to health care.

**The Wichita Eagle on governor's race:**

Kansas gubernatorial campaign had been eerily quiet, especially considering the state's \$700 million fiscal chasm. Then one formidable GOP contender called it quits and a likely surrogate took a pass. Suddenly, the race that wasn't is now news — not, unfortunately, for its ideas but for its backbiting and backroom dealing.

Last week's belated decision by Attorney General Carla Stovall to leave the gubernatorial race out of what she described as a lack of "passion to run and to serve" left any newcomers little time for fund-raising and campaigning before the Aug. 6 primary.

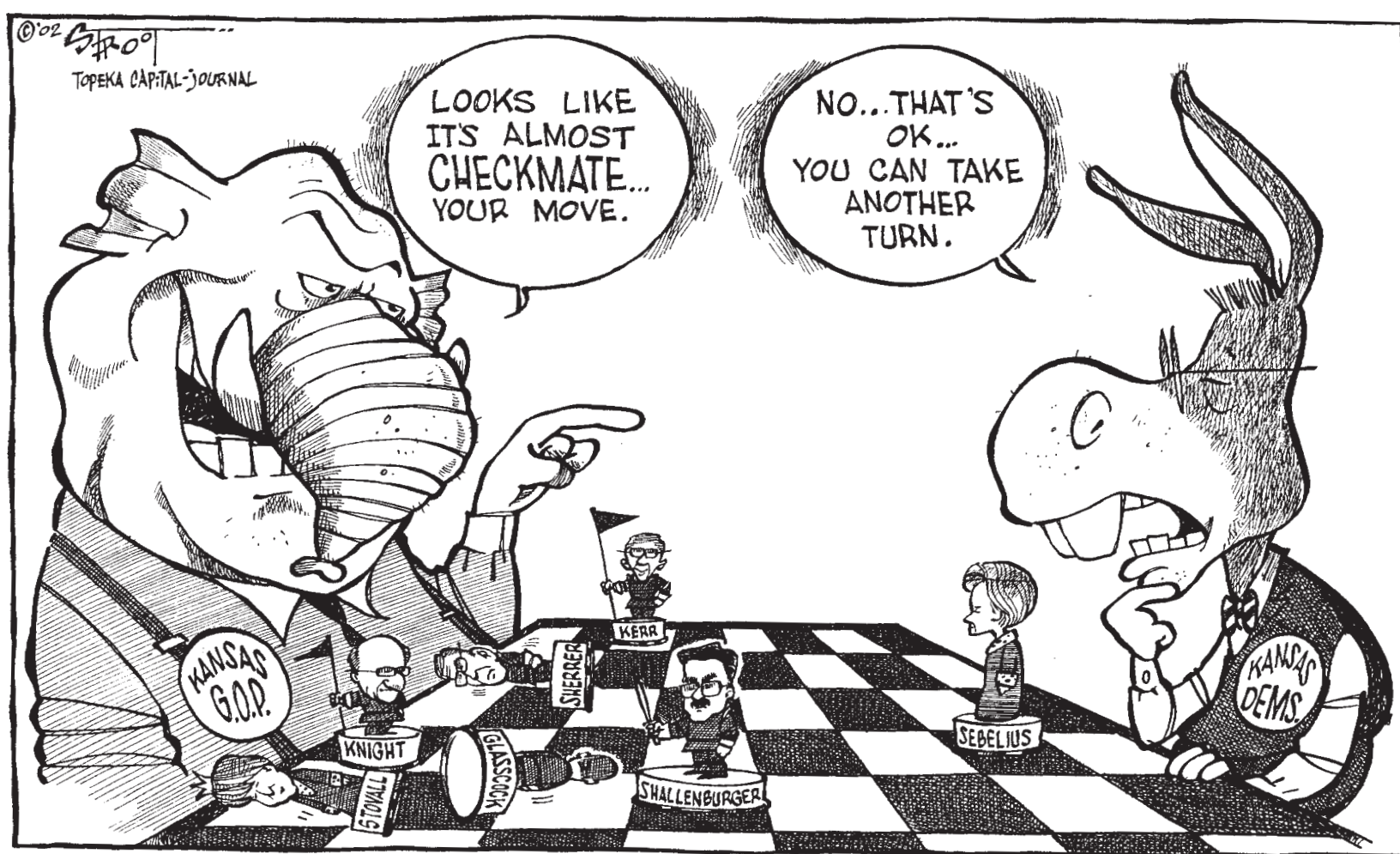
But it was a statement made by Lt. Gov. Gary Sherrer ... that really gave us pause.

"You can sense it out there. This is not going to be a real joyful, upbeat, positive campaign," Mr. Sherrer said. "That's just not going to happen."

Surely it's not too late for current candidates and late arrivals to prove Mr. Sherrer wrong. ...

The layoff toll in the state is mounting, led by Wichita's hard-hit aviation sector. The imbalance between state revenues and spending commitments is unprecedented.

As much as Kansans hate taxes, they want and deserve a well-run state that can cover its bills, take care of its vulnerable citizens and invest in its future. Kansas needs the benefit of a positive, productive race to decide how to best replace the term-limited Gov. Bill Graves, one that will help identify solutions and build consensus about how to proceed if the hard times persist.



## Ask questions before donating to charities

Dear Attorney General Stovall:

My mother continually receives solicitations in the mail for charities. Many of these charities claim to be collecting money for the same disease, health issue, or children's service. Many times they enclose "sweepstakes entry forms" for her to fill out. Attorney General Stovall, can a charity run a sweepstakes, and how do I know if these charities and groups are legitimate?

Dear Kansas Consumer:

With the large number of solicitations being made, I understand the decisions consumers must make when choosing whether or not to donate. My office does not endorse any charity over another, nor do we make any claims as to whether a charity is "legitimate." Consumers must make these decisions themselves. However, information is available to help consumers make informed decisions.

In the State of Kansas, an organization must be registered with the Secretary of State's office if it is going to be soliciting for a charitable purpose within the state. Some groups, such as political organizations, are exempt from this state law. Consumers may check with the Secretary of State's office to see if an organization is registered, or they may look the charity up on the Kansas Charity Check website, [www.kscharitycheck.org](http://www.kscharitycheck.org). My office collaborated with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Department on Aging to create the website so consumers may obtain meaningful information about charitable organizations registered in Kansas.



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

When deciding to give to an organization, you may want to discover what percentage of its budget is spent each year on expenses and fund-raising, and what percentage goes directly to the charitable purpose. This information is available at the Charity Check website. Kansas law does not require that a specific percentage go to the charitable purpose, but consumers should obtain this information before deciding to make a donation. Consumers may also wish to ask the organization to send its most recent annual report. If a company is hesitant to send a report, this may be an indication that the organization has something to hide.

Kansas has a Charitable Organizations and Solicitations Act that prohibits an organization from using deceptive or unconscionable tactics in connection with its solicitations. Violations of the law can include the intentional use in any solicitation of exaggeration as to a material fact, failure to state a material fact, taking advantage of an infirmity to the extent that the consumer cannot reasonably protect his or her own interests, using undue pressure in soliciting, or using donations for other than charitable purposes. Often, the circumstances sur-

rounding each situation are important in determining whether a violation has occurred.

As for your question regarding "sweepstakes," the rule is that any prize promotion used to solicit donations cannot require a donation for a chance to participate. A person must be able to enter without paying anything, and any suggestion that donating will increase odds of winning is prohibited.

One step any consumer can take is to make a written request to the organization asking it to stop sending solicitations. While it is not, by itself, a violation of Kansas law to fail to honor the request, an organization that continues to solicit a consumer after receiving such a request shows that it is more interested in continuing to use pressure for donations than conducting itself in a respectful manner. If the group ignores your request to stop soliciting, you may file a complaint with my Consumer Protection Division. To request a complaint form, call 1-800-432-2310.

Attorney General Carla J. Stovall offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th, 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310. Leave your name, number and subject of your inquiry with the receptionist and your call will be returned promptly.

## The French connection

WASHINGTON — To this American, the political news from France carries a whiff of the 1930s. After decades of fearing the European left, we suddenly confront the ugly face of the right.

The results of last week's French presidential elections showed all the old pre-World War II elements: anti-Semitism, hatred of minorities, armies of the unemployed voting their bitterness at a tired political elite they accuse of betrayal.

Pay attention here. The Fifth Republic, created by the great Charles de Gaulle, is beginning to act like the Third Republic: that weak, defeatist, hopelessly cynical republic that fell so quickly to Adolf Hitler.

The face on the poster is that of Jean-Marie Le Pen, rightist candidate of the ominously named "National Front." Le Pen won 17 percent of the vote last week, second only to incumbent President Jacques Chirac, who won with barely less than 20 percent. The two now face each other in the May 5 run-off.

Le Pen's politics (which are strong), not his chances for victory (which are weak), loom as the issue here. Why would French voters, famous for their bourgeois practicality, cast so many ballots for someone who (a) cannot win and (b) speaks so bluntly against immigration and the street crime he connects with it?

One obvious answer is that the emergence of a large, unassimilated immigrant population from North and West Africa, both areas of former French



chris matthews

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colonization, is causing a severe challenge to a society famous for its ethnic, cultural and linguistic chauvinism.

The second: The center-right and moderate-left political parties have failed to address the country's social and economic problems. As we have learned here in America, those who see their jobs and way of life threatened do not make the best liberals.

The third: Le Pen knows how to talk, especially to the French. During the campaign, he called himself "the candidate of the French people against the candidate of the system." Afterward he came off even stronger.

"We are witnessing the toppling of a decadent, corrupt and ossified political system," he said after his stunning second-place finish that saw him outdraw the well-known Socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin.

What's been the response from the French establishment he has humiliated before the world? Typical.

Chirac says that he will refuse to debate Le Pen. He says it is not "possible" for him to meet with

someone so intolerant, so hateful.

Once again, the establishment will use the tool of moral superiority against the weapon of populist bitterness. Having failed in the primary balloting, it is going with the same gambit in the general election.

With a stupid strategy like that, I predict that Le Pen will double his vote on May 5, proving once again that a candidate with something to say, even if it's ugly, beats the one merely clinging to office.

But needless to say, the emergence of an angry European right presents a potent danger. Back in the 1930s, the whiff of fascism was followed by its horrid reality. Antipathy toward ethnic minorities led to their official extermination. Here at the dawn of a new century, the grand hope is that the political moderates of right and left will beat the extremists in meeting the real political demands of societies facing the double whammy of high unemployment and massive immigration.

Chris Matthews, author of "Now, Let Me Tell You What I Really Think" (Free Press, 2001) and "Hardball" (Touchstone Books, 1999), is a nationally syndicated columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle and the host of "Hardball" on CNBC and MSNBC cable channels.

## The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)  
Member: Kansas Press Association  
The Associated Press

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association  
National Newspaper 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@nwkans.com](mailto:daily@nwkans.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [gdnadv@nwkans.com](mailto:gdnadv@nwkans.com)

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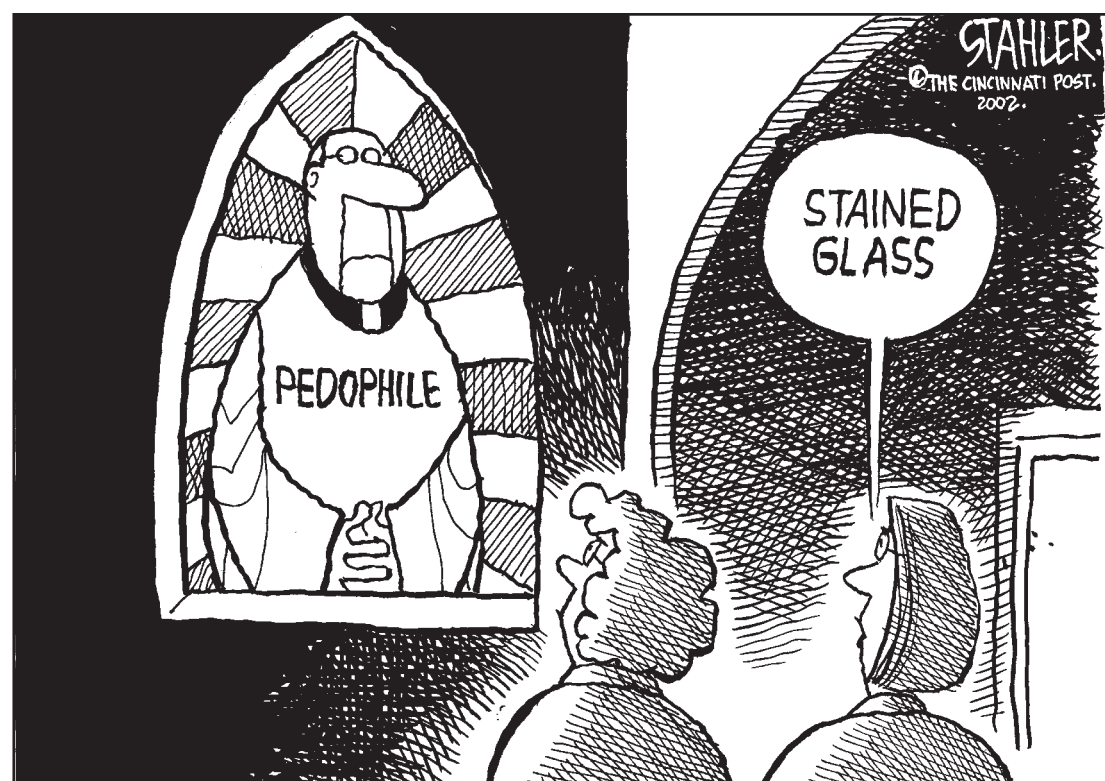
SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$25; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$79. Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. By mail daily in Kansas, Colorado: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

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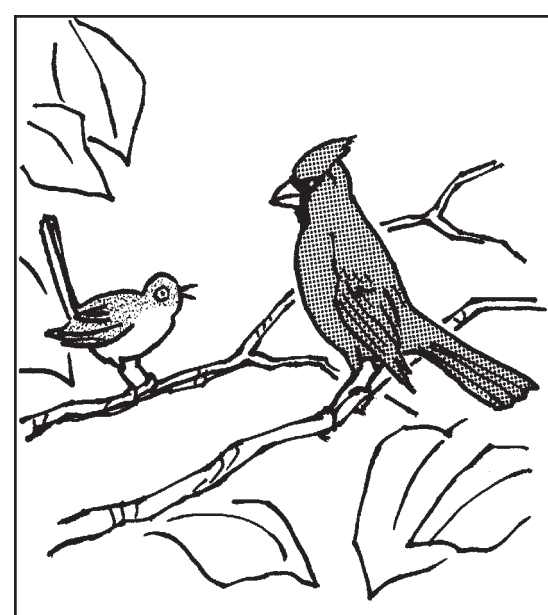
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