

from our viewpoint...

Tragic shooting raises questions

Americans got another jolt to the psyche when word spread about the violent shootings at Virginia Tech on Monday morning.

These shocking events leave us in sorrow that a human being can be so cruel and premeditated to kill 32 people and then commit suicide.

Faced with such news, most of us feel helpless and in an effort to make sense of what we read, hear and watch we have to ask some searching questions.

Why did this happen? Why didn't people know this man was dangerous? What can be done to prevent something like this?

Details of the shooting and the identity of the Korean student who killed the people in the dorm and then went to a classroom building gave us some clues.

The startling part was the revelation by NBC in New York that the killer had stopped at a post office to send a package of writings, photos and videos before continuing his killing spree.

Those examining the writings, photos and videos make it clear the young man was mentally disturbed.

People say focusing on the killer and his motives is doing a disservice to the people he killed. But while the killings are fresh in our minds is the right time to focus on the questions that could prevent the next mass killing.

Investigations over the next several months and possibly years will reveal the details of how the shooting happened and what roles the university and its security office played.

Reports indicate the killer had given many people signs of this pending explosion, but those were either ignored or misread. The university security office and administration apparently ignored alarms raised by fellow students and professors about his deteriorating mental state.

Probably the most disturbing factor in the story is the killer had been arrested more than a year before the mass shootings because of a complaint from a young woman.

The police referred him to the mental health system because they felt he was a danger to himself. His contact with the mental health system, however, did not show up on his records and he was able to legally purchase the two handguns and ammunition he used to kill the students and professors.

Arguments will be made there was no evidence he was a danger to society.

We are not saying rash gun control measures need to be taken in response to these shootings, but it does appear having the contact with mental health providers over a year before should have made it more difficult for the killer to legally buy his weapons.

There is no way to prevent all such heinous acts by outlawing guns, but with the memory fresh in the public minds, it is the proper time to have a public debate.

Responsibility for the actions belong with the person pulling the trigger, but we as a society should be reminded to be more aware of the people in the small part of the world where we live. We need to ask what we would do if we felt someone was behaving in an unhealthy manner.

Would we tell the police or sheriff? Would we have the courage to talk to the person and suggest they get help?

In the days and months ahead, the events from Virginia Tech and the killer will fade from the front pages and the talk shows, but we should remember those who died and continue to search for ways to help those around us who feel depressed, alone and isolated by society. — *Tom Betz*

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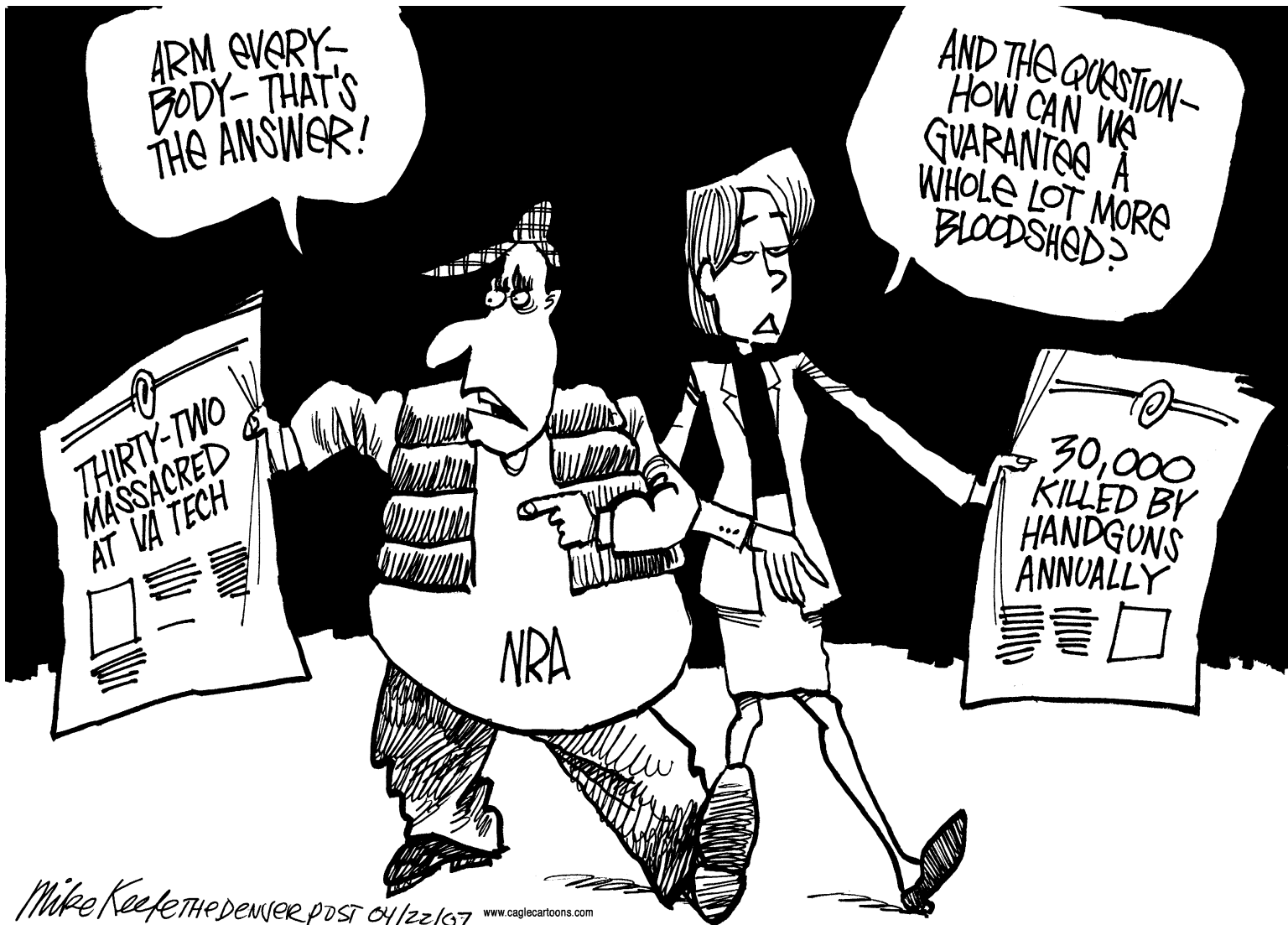
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Daffodils keep blooming after freeze

It's hard to believe that I still have daffodils blooming out in the yard.

After getting hit by the freeze, many of my flowers curled up their petals and called it a year. Others kept a bloom on their stems and just laid low during the cold.

In fact, some of my tulips were practically trying to dig their way back into the ground.

I went out on Thursday night and cut a bunch of tulips and daffodils. All the tulips were lying on the ground but the daffodils were hiding among some lilies.

I read several years ago that if you plant daffodils among your lilies you increase the bloom time without increasing the space needed for your flowers.

It works.

Since the lily bulbs form a circle, you can plant the daffodils in the spaces between them. The daffodils come up and bloom in the early spring just as the lily shoots are starting to emerge. By the time the lilies are fully leafed, the daffodils have stopped blooming and just



cynthia haynes

● open season

blend into the foliage. Then in the summer, the lilies bloom.

This year, the daffodils did their thing and the lily leaves were emerging nicely when the freeze hit. I think the lily leaves protected some of the daffodils, because the flowers kept blooming even though the leaves all turned a sickly white. This means I'll probably have beautiful lily blossoms this summer and a really ugly border of lily greenery along the alley from April to November. Oh well.

As I said, I cut many of the tulips out front and a couple blooming on the side of the house. Over on the south side of the house, I have a couple of red tulips. Out front, everything is yellow.

‘Pay as you go’ doesn’t mean less spending

By **KARL PETERJOHN**

Kansas Taxpayers Network

On the rare occasions the mainstream national news media bothers to cover federal spending and taxes, you are sure to hear the phrase “pay as you go” as the primary talking point of the new congressional Democratic majority.

This is supposed to reassure us now that the profligate “Bridge to Nowhere,” free spending Republicans have been relegated into the minority.

New York City Congressman Charlie Rangel, who now heads the powerful tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, wants to dismantle the most successful legacy of George W. Bush’s administration, the 2001 and 2003 federal tax cuts. These are scheduled to expire because of arcane congressional budgeting rules. However, budgets must be enacted now and not put off until after the 2008 election.

Liberal North Dakota Sen. Byron Dorgan, who heads up the Budget Committee in the Senate, is joining Rep. Rangel in this push. While the national “news” media is focused on Al Sharpton’s take on the Don Imus firing or the latest DNA results from the Bahamas, there is a large federal tax hike in your future as well as increased IRS powers to enforce tax laws.

Congressional liberals want you to “Pay MORE as you go,” and the lower federal income tax rate of 10 percent, increased child credit, and pro growth capital gains and dividend tax rates from the 2003 Bush tax cuts are likely to expire. The left-wing blogosphere is determined to eradicate every last accomplishment of the Bush presidency.

March 28, the Heritage Foundation’s 2008 budget report warned, “The budget blueprint reported out of the House Budget Committee last week and supported by Democratic lead-



from other pens

● commentary

ership is a study in fiscal irresponsibility. The House budget resolution boosts discretionary spending, does nothing to tackle out-of-control entitlement spending and, worst of all, would impose the largest tax increase ever on the American people.”

A few days later, the *Wall Street Journal* warned its readers, “The Bush tax cuts don’t expire until 2010, and Democrats aren’t about to tip their tax hand before the 2008 election. But under cover of zero media attention, Democrats are constructing a budget process that will make a tax increase all but inevitable.

“The ploy here is “pay-as-you-go” budget rules that Democrats are implementing in the name of ‘restoring fiscal responsibility.’ A few journalists even quote that phrase with a straight face. But everyone in Washington knows that ‘paygo’ is all about making tax cuts more difficult and not about slowing the growth of spending.”

The Heritage Foundation report criticized

the Democrat budget: “...the (2008 proposed) budget assumes tax increases of \$900 billion over five years which would be accomplished in part by allowing the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts to expire.”

The U.S. economy has enjoyed solid growth and lowering unemployment rates ever since the 2003 tax cut. Federal budget deficits have fallen despite bipartisan spending growth since 2004. This reduction has occurred because tax revenue grew more rapidly than federal spending.

Fiscally responsible and informed citizens need to know, “that the tax increase fuse has now been lit,” the *Journal* warned April 5. “Do nothing, and taxes will rise as much as they have at any one time since World War II. Democrats have made the decision to obscure this burning fuse and the press corps is ignoring it. But that doesn’t mean the rest of the country has to play along. It’s a debate we should start having now, before the fuse burns down.”

Kansans reading these words have now been warned. Tax and spend has returned with the Democratic majority that now controls Congress.

Karl Peterjohn is the executive director of the Kansas Taxpayers Network and a former California Department of Finance budget analyst and newspaper reporter.

