

from our viewpoint...

A community needs good citizens

A name from out of the past popped up recently in a discussion about what keeps communities together — former Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm, who when he was in office was known as “Governor Gloom.”

Lamm, a three-term governor, gained national prominence for his views on issues such as health care, welfare reform and federal deficits. In 1996, he ventured into third-party politics, making overtures to become the Reform Party presidential candidate. Lamm has been director of the Center for Public Policy and Contemporary Issues at the University of Denver since its founding in 1987.

Recently, he spoke about the strains placed on our sense of community, and gave his own “10 commandments” of community.

Lamm defines community as “an interactive web of human relationships,” not by geography.

“Communities are forged by commitment, dedication and hard work and by tolerance, love and a search for commonalities,” he said. “Our forefathers and foremothers built a community and passed on to us, but it doesn’t mean we’re going to automatically hand it on to our kids.

“Community is a continuing challenge rather than any kind of guarantee.”

Lamm said things like voter apathy or lack of community involvement slowly erode community.

His commandments:

1. Do not take community for granted. Community must be constantly regenerated, revitalized and renewed.
2. A great community needs great leaders, but more importantly, it needs great citizens.
3. A community must generate tolerance and yet set limits on that tolerance. It must balance freedom with social order, right with responsibilities, autonomy with community.
4. A community can be a “Joseph’s coat” of many colors and creeds, but it must have more things in common than differences.
5. A community will endure only as long as it has justice and honors peaceful change.
6. A quality community is one that anticipates the future.
7. A great community is one that has created a great community culture.
8. A community needs a shared culture and shared language.
9. Thou shall not ask what your community can do for you. Thou shall ask what you can do for your community.
10. “I shall not give you a Tenth Commandment. I give you a challenge instead. What else is needed for community?”

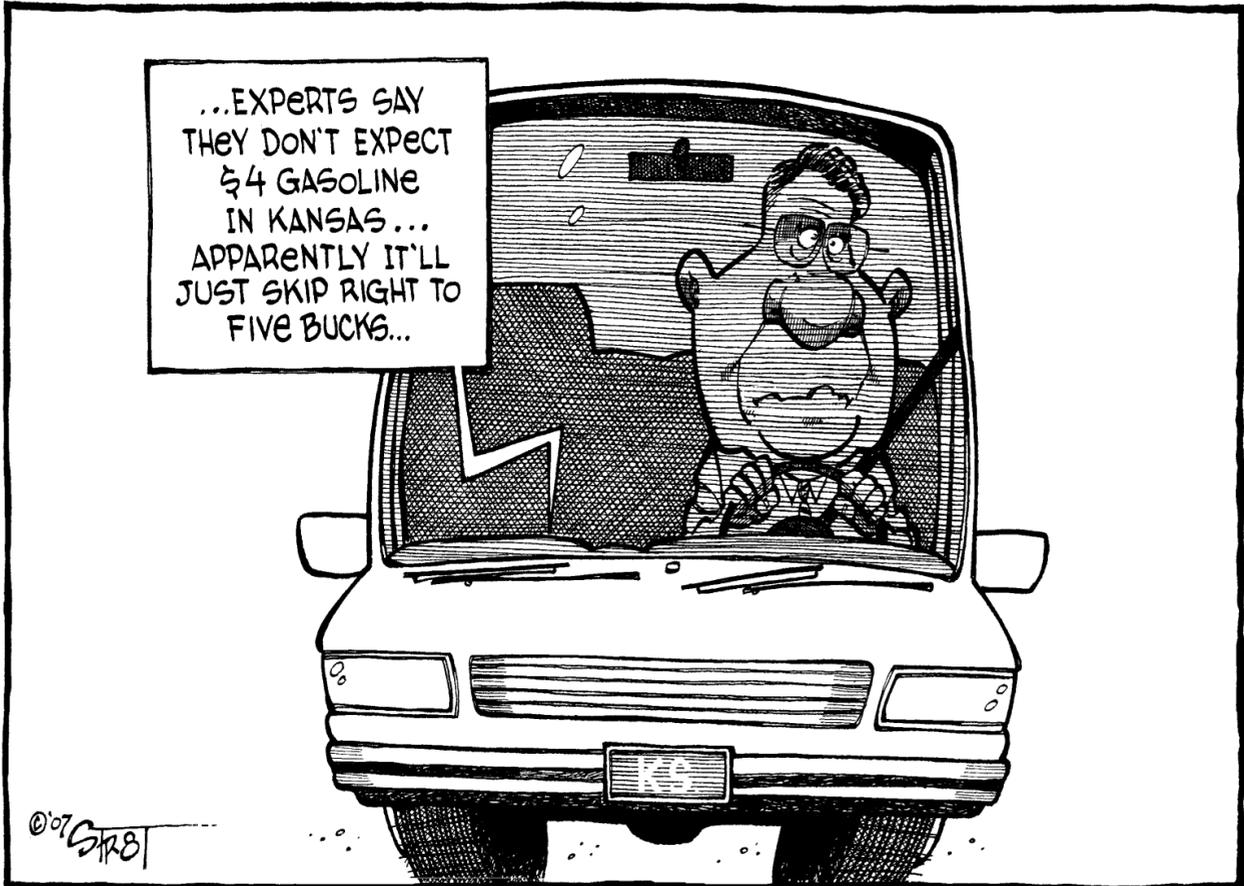
Citizens in Sherman County have two chances in the next week to reflect on these commandments and to step up and become involved.

The first chance will be at 6:30 p.m. on Monday at the Elks Lodge when Shine on Sherman County will hold a 90-minute public forum to explain the program’s goals and the progress it’s made over the past year.

Each of the five action teams will report on its progress since January, and both short-term and long-term projects.

Next Wednesday, the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce will hold a membership drive and open house to encourage more individuals, businesses and organizations to join, from 9 to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. at the Chamber office in the Centennial Building, 10th and Main.

As Lamm said, a community must be constantly regenerated, revitalized and renewed, and now is the time to commit yourself to our community. — Tom Betz



Ripping of taxpayers is name of the game

By John W. Whitehead

In 1941, Senator Harry S. Truman declared, “I have never yet found a contractor who, if not watched, would not leave the government holding the bag.”

Truman was right. Over the years, American taxpayers have been swindled out of billions of dollars. In fact, if there is any absolute maxim by which the federal government seems to operate, it is that the American taxpayer always gets ripped off.

For example, it was recently discovered that in January 2005, \$8.8 billion of American tax dollars sent to Iraq for reconstruction were unaccounted for. It’s no small wonder that such a large amount of money is nowhere to be found. According to congressional testimony by Paul Bremer, who was once in charge of reconstruction of Iraq, the U.S. government had sent record payouts to the tune of \$4 billion of taxpayer money in cold, hard cash to Baghdad on giant pallets aboard military planes. Rep. Henry Waxman zeroed in on the absurdity of the government’s actions when he asked, “Who in their right mind would send 363 tons of cash into a war zone?”

The pallets of cash were just a drop in the bucket. The U.S. government sends billions of taxpayer dollars each year to so-called government contractors, much of which is never accounted for, with the remainder often spent on obscure pet projects.

Indeed, federal spending on government contracts has been on the rise for decades, soaring from \$207 billion in 2000 to about \$400 billion last year. This unprecedented level of government issuance of contracts to private



john whitehead

• rutherford institute

companies is not only fueled by the war in Iraq, domestic security and Hurricane Katrina, but also by a philosophy that encourages outsourcing almost everything the government does.

Many government officials claim that using private enterprise instills efficiency and savings for the U.S. government and the U.S. taxpayer. However, the truth is that the government’s dependence on corporate America breeds corruption and undermines basic notions of our representative democracy. Much of this is due to a lack of congressional oversight. As Rep. Waxman noted, “There has been no cop on the beat. And when there is no cop on the beat, criminals are more willing to engage in crimes.”

Take Iraq, for example. According to the Boston Globe, “American contractors swindled hundreds of millions of dollars in Iraqi funds, but so far there is no way for Iraq’s government to recoup the money.” Millions of dollars of U.S. rebuilding funds have also been wasted. For example, a \$43 million government contract to build a residential camp for Iraqi police trainers resulted in a camp that includes an Olympic-size swimming pool, which has never been used. \$36.4 million was supposedly spent by U.S. officials on armored vehicles, body armor and communications

equipment, but it can’t be accounted for. And approximately 80% of the \$21 billion earmarked by the U.S. government for Iraqi reconstruction has already been spent, but very little can be found to show for it.

Equally disturbing is the way many of these government contracts are issued.

Rather than requiring private companies to compete for government projects through the traditional bidding process, many are awarded no-bid contracts, the end result of aggressive lobbying campaigns. As the New York Times reports, “The most successful contractors are not necessarily those doing the best work, but those who have mastered the special skill of selling to Uncle Sam. The top 20 service contractors have spent nearly \$300 million since 2000 on lobbying and have donated \$23 million to political campaigns.” In fact, the biggest federal contractor in the nation, Lockheed Martin, receives more federal money than the Departments of Justice or Energy.

In the end, these contractors never have to compete with other companies over who can do the best job for the best price, and they still get paid with taxpayer funds. It’s a win-win situation for them and a complete loss for the taxpayer.

As usual, we’re not putting America first, and it’s the taxpayer who is feeling the pinch.

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. He can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org. Information about The Rutherford Institute is available at www.rutherford.org.

Highlights of the state legislative session

The Legislature got school finance out of the way early this year. On Day 2 of the 2007 session, with a strong desire to move forward, money was set aside for the next two years of school funding.

Unlike all other years I have served both in the House and the Senate, we did not wait until the end of the session to debate school finance. Following the legal and financial requirements of last year’s agreement, we placed enough money in reserve to pay for public schools for the next two years.

Here is a summary of major bills passed this year:

SB 244 - Funeral Picketing — This bill created the Kansas Privacy Act, which will prohibit persons from picketing or directed protest within 150 feet of any entrance to any cemetery, church, mortuary or other location where a funeral is held. Public demonstrations will be prohibited from blocking entries or exits from a funeral or impeding a funeral procession. This bill overwhelmingly passed the House and Senate and was signed into law by the governor. It will go into effect after the Kansas Supreme Court or a federal court upholds its constitutionality.

HB 2528 - Conceal Carry Follow-up — For the second time in Gov. Sebelius, tenure, the Kansas Legislature successfully overrode a conceal carry veto. This bill deletes the authority of cities and counties to regulate firearms licenses by zoning measures; repeals the ability of public entities from restricting or prohibiting concealed weapons on public premises; repeals the ability of property owners from restricting or prohibiting concealed weapons; and requires posting of signs at the areas where the law does not allow concealed weapons.

HB 2062 - Alexa’s Law — This bill passed both chambers and was also signed by the governor. It defines an unborn child as a person against whom certain crimes could be committed. The effect will be to allow prosecutors to



ralph ostmeier

• state senator

bring separate criminal charges against people who commit crimes against a pregnant woman and her fetus. This bill contains a provision making clear that it does not apply in cases of abortion.

HB 2264 - Corporate Franchise Tax — Both chambers worked this bill so that corporate franchise tax would be phased out over the next five years. Beginning in 2007, the exemption threshold will be increased from \$100,000 of net worth to \$1 million. The rate subsequently will be reduced from the current \$1.25 per \$1,000 of shareholder equity or net worth to \$.9375 in 2008; \$.625 in 2009; and \$.3125 in 2010. This tax will be repealed altogether in 2011.

SB 66 - Expanded Gaming and Lottery Extension — For me this was, by far, the most disappointing and sad turn of events for Kansans. Following a historical 12-hour filibuster, the Senate voted 21 to 19 to concur with the House and send the Governor a bill that will allow construction of up to four state-owned casinos in Kansas and the installation of slot machines at the three existing horse and dog racing tracks.

This bill will impose a 25-year moratorium on any future expansion of gaming. Possible casino locations, each subject to local voter approval, are Wyandotte County, Sedgwick or Sumner County, Ford County and Crawford or Cherokee County.

HB 2140 - English as Official Kansas Language

This notion was first introduced to the Kansas Legislature more than 11 years ago. After several years of debate, it was finally passed to make English the official language of Kansas.

HB 2237 - Regents Deferred Maintenance — Last, but certainly not least, this issue was definitely the dark horse of the session. This bill creates the State Educational Institution Long-Term Infrastructure Maintenance Program. It excludes new construction of buildings, maintenance of athletic facilities that do not directly support the delivery of academic pursuits, and maintenance of the residences of a president or chancellor.

Beginning in July, the state will make annual appropriations over the next five years to the Board of Regents to repair deferred maintenance projects at state universities. These transfers will total \$90 million in new money, including \$47 million from the state General Fund. There are countless requirements and stipulations that institutions must follow.

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — roberts.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 e-mail address — jerry.moran@mail.house.gov

Kansas Attorney General Paul Morrison, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

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e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

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David Erickson, Wendy Hunthansel

nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

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