

from our viewpoint...

Can rhetoric become solutions?

Elections are supposed to be about issues, but when the smoke clears we are left with the prospect of more of the regular political process and little chance things will change much.

Politics is the art of compromise, which means policy is made in incremental steps to accommodate as many people as possible. That does not mean it is wrong, but that many issues which were specific points in the election are not going to look the same when the political process is done with them.

Issues such as abortion or stem cell research bow more to the emotions and the political power of a vocal minority than to the real sentiment of a majority. These are moral issues, and it is hard to legislate morality. That does not stop the political process. People who want them stopped will flex their political power to bring the law into line with their thinking.

As time and science continue to advance, other issues will test the moral code of our citizens, but as the population changes from decade to decade, the themes will also change and the law will bend in new directions.

Larger issues like health care costs are so complex that an incremental approach will whittle away at the edges of the problem without actually attacking the heart. There are as many plans to deal with the myriad of health care issues as there are members of Congress, and behind them will be the lobbyists for the insurance and drug companies to keep the process moving as slowly as possible.

Those of us who are finding it difficult to stay afloat in the depths of the cost of health insurance will pray that at least once those in office will do the right thing, and find a real solution. It would be great to say there was a simple way to cut the costs and provide adequate health insurance to everyone. The issue is complex enough to find it swamped in the morass of the politics of compromise which helps keep the costs high and reduces the ability of an individual or a small business to help their employees with the benefit of health insurance.

When there is an issue that might have a simple answer, the very idea is met with ridicule and outright laughter. In recent years the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars have been championing the passage of a law to make it a crime to deface or burn the American flag.

The emotions run high with the veterans, who see the flag as the symbol of the country, and the unifying symbol of the brotherhood of veterans who have fought many years for the preservation of the country it represents.

They cannot see anything beyond making it illegal to burn the flag, and do not feel such deprecation of the symbol should be protected by the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech.

A former congresswoman from Colorado, Pat Schroeder, once suggested a simple solution to the issue. She said if you don't want the flag to be burned in protest, declare that all flags are to be made of nonflammable material.

The suggestion was dismissed as being ridiculous, and no one truly looked at it as an alternative.

Making all American flags out of nonflammable material would not change the situation overnight, but it eventually would make it more difficult to burn the flag in protest.

It's a simple solution that would keep the First Amendment intact, and give the veterans organizations a victory in defending their symbol of brotherhood. — Tom Betz



Fall weekends can be just about perfect

Maybe it'll snow, but the weekend was just about perfect.

Saturday was for relaxing. I caught up on reading and took the dog for a ride. She likes that.

Cynthia went to the office to sort out her desk. Sorting out her desk on Saturday is relaxation for Cynthia.

OK, I was reading office memos and press association bulletins. It was more relaxing than actual work.

In the evening, we went out to the valley to walk. It was warm enough for short sleeves, at least when we started.

Along the creek, most of the trees have long shed their leaves, except for the big cottonwoods. They're in full glory to slightly past their prime, bright yellow with a green underlay.

In the golden light of late afternoon, they seem to catch fire. There were some clouds, but the sun dipped below them, and sent golden rays out to kiss the bluffs along the Sappa.

Who cares if the rest of the leaves are gone? We grilled a T-bone for dinner and went to bed



steve haynes

• along the sappa

with the window open. It was like spring.

Sunday, we strolled to church, then walked to the grocery for lettuce. It was cooler, but the day warmed up fast.

Sunday is yard work day and copy editing day for me. For Cynthia, it is mostly sports day.

After lunch, we turned to the yard and garden. I mowed, mostly leaves, but it's all mulch. Cynthia raked, clipped and cleaned. She wanted to get the leaves up along the curb and around the steps.

Of course, she raked them all out for me to mow up. She got the clippings spread out on the garden after she rounded up and bagged the zucchini vines. She found one little squash still growing.

We picked tomatoes, knowing that the killing frost was hard on our heels. Halloween isn't bad for the last harvest, though, and we have three boxes of fruit to ripen this month.

It was another beautiful day to walk, and we went back to the valley. The clouds on the leading edge of a big low system were moving off to the east, and the sun back lighted the remaining cottonwoods.

The dog loves it when we walk in the valley, because there are so many birds. She loves birds, all kinds of birds. She'll chase a dove for a quarter mile.

We felt lucky to have two evenings out in the valley. On the way back, Annie went on point, and there was serious clucking in the cornfield next to the road.

We watched as first one, then another hen pheasant burst out of the corn. Last came the rooster, an easy going-away shot if only the season was on.

Maybe the dog will amount to something after all.

Nonsmokers live longer, have less disease

To the Editor:

All of us want to live long healthy lives, watch our children grow up, have grandchildren of our own, grow old with our loved ones, and just enjoy life to the fullest.

Unfortunately, as a family physician I see mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers, whose time is cut short due to lung cancer, other types of cancer, heart attacks, strokes and chronic lung disease. All of these killers could have been prevented by choosing a healthier lifestyle, by choosing to quit tobacco. Each year, a staggering 440,000 people die in the U.S. from tobacco use. Nearly 1 of every 5 deaths is related to smoking. Cigarettes kill more Americans than alcohol, car accidents, suicide, AIDS, homicide and illegal drugs combined.

The Great American Smoke Out is Thursday. This day marks the opportunity for you to choose a healthier lifestyle and environment for yourself, or the best gift you can give a loved one who smokes — encouragement and support to quit.

I guarantee quitting smoking will make you feel and look better! No more worries about premature skin wrinkling, bad breath, bad-smelling clothes and hair or yellow fingernails. Food will taste better, your sense of smell will be back, and ordinary activities should not leave you out of breath.

Your nonsmoking friends and family will thank you for being considerate of their health by not submitting them to the dangers of second-hand smoke. Pregnant women will also be giving their babies the best possible start by quitting. And men will not have to worry about erectile dysfunction due to smoking. Plus, think of how much money you would be saving. The average cost of cigarettes is estimated at \$3,391 per smoker per year.

Based on data collected from 1995 to 1999, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recently estimated that adult male smokers lost an average of 13.2 years of life and female smokers lost 14.5 years to their habit.



from our readers

• to the editor

No matter what your age or how long you've smoked, quitting will help you live longer. People who stop smoking before age 35 avoid 90 percent of the health risks attributable to tobacco. Even those who quit later in life can significantly reduce their risk of dying at a younger age. Don't let tobacco take another day from you. Act Thursday!

Did you know:

20 minutes after quitting: Your blood pressure drops to a level close to that before the last cigarette. The temperature of your hands and feet increases to normal. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1988, pp. 39, 202)

8 hours after quitting: The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1988, p. 202)

24 hours after quitting: Your chance of a heart attack decreases. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1988, p. 202)

2 weeks to 3 months after quitting: Your circulation improves and your lung function increases up to 30 percent. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1990, pp. 193, 194, 196, 285, 323)

1 to 9 months after quitting: Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath decrease; you regain normal function

in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, and reduce infection. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1990, pp. 304, 307, 319, 322)

1 year after quitting: The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1990, p. vi)

5 years after quitting: Your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker 5-15 years after quitting. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1990, p. 79)

10 years after quitting: The lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker's. The risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas decrease. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1990, p. 110, 147, 152, 155, 159, 172)

15 years after quitting: The risk of coronary heart disease is that of a nonsmoker. (U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1990, p. 79)

I challenge you to take charge of your health, and mark your calendar for Thursday, the Great American Smoke Out, to take the first step in quitting.

Call Kansas Department of Health and Environment Tobacco Use Prevention Program's free Quitline at 1-866-KAN-STOP.

You can visit the Tobacco Free Wichita Coalition's Web Site at <http://tobaccofree-wichita.org/> and the Kansas Academy of Family Physician's Web site at <http://www.kafp-online.org>.

Joe Davison, MD
President Elect
Kansas Academy of Family Physicians

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, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

20510. (202) 225-2715; e-mail address — jerry.moran@mail.house.gov

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — jmorrison@house.state.ks.us

State Sen. Ruth Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7399; e-mail address — clark@senate.state.ks.us

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