

from our viewpoint...

People should know who spent money

With any luck, the dispute over disclosure of money spent by school districts to sue the state over school finance will be headed to court soon.

Kansas taxpayers deserve to know where this money — now more than \$3.2 million in tax funds — went and how it was spent. The lawyer running this sorry show, Alan Rupe of Wichita, at first claimed his organization, known as Schools for Fair Funding, is exempt from the state Open Records Act. How that could be, given that all its money comes apparently from public school districts and thus from the state is hard to figure.

Later, Rupe reportedly offered to disclose much of the financial information if the *Topeka Capital-Journal* would just drop its lawsuit. The paper declined to do that, saying the issue is whether the group is subject to the Open Records law.

The principle here should be clear. Tax money should be accounted for to the taxpayers. Just because this money has been washed through a private corporation doesn't change that; the corporation's sole function is to do the bidding of public school districts.

Rupe apparently claims that some information is protected by what he calls the "attorneyclient" privilege. (Apparently they don't teach spelling or punctuation in law school.)

It's hard to see how that applies, though. If he were working for a single school district, there's no question that his bills would be subject to public review. Matters of legal advice and strategy might not be public, but the bills are and should be.

Rupe, in a letter to the editor, charged that the paper has a broader agenda, and in that, he's on the mark.

Other supposedly private, not-for-profit groups are organized to spend taxpayers' money to lobby positions that taxpayers may or may not agree with. These include the League of Kansas Municipalities, the county commissioners' association, the Kansas Association of School Boards, and dozens of other groups formed by public officials to push their interests in Topeka.

None of them publishes a report on spending, though all of their money comes from tax funds contributed by member governments.

Many legislators doubt the fairness of allowing public agencies to spend money lobbying for more state money, let alone suing the state itself for more as the school group has done.

Back to the first principle again: If it's public money, taken from the taxpayers, then the public gets to know how it's spent.

In that case, a speedy resolution of this suit should benefit taxpayers. Either their right to know will be vindicated by the courts, as it should be, or the Legislature can fix the situation by changing the law.

Taxpayers tired of being sued with their own hard-earned dollars should like that outcome.

So bring it on. — *Steve Haynes*

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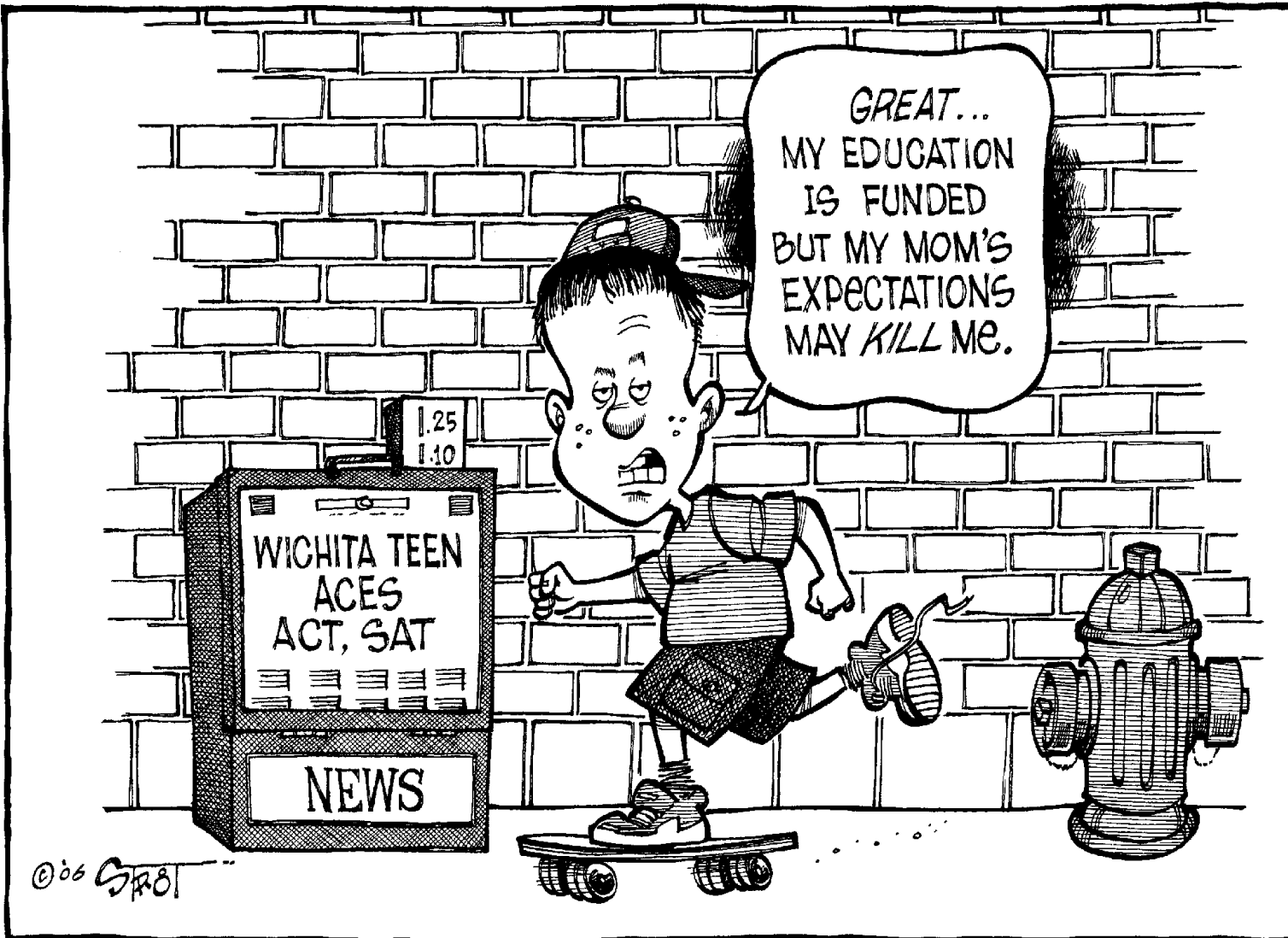
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A time to crow



michael reagan

- making sense

less than total victory and the total destruction of the state of Israel, one would have thought that the international liberal appeasement movement would have applauded Israel for going all-out to defend its people.

It's obvious that this was not to be — the appeasers merely stepped up their rhetoric, demanding that the international community intervene and force Israel to sit down and negotiate with Hezbollah and Hamas and heaven knows who else. There is now a great hue and cry demanding diplomacy and negotiations — all aimed at preventing Israel from finally putting an end to the terrorism that they have for so long endured. Nobody echoes Douglas MacArthur's warning that there is no substitute for victory.

You'd think the appeasers would learn from what happened when MacArthur was prevented from achieving victory in the Korean War. The reality of a crazed North Korea would not exist as a nuclear-armed communist dictatorship had MacArthur been listened to.

The international community, which is content to let the United States and Britain shoulder the burden of fighting the war on Islamic terrorism, stands on the sidelines. Instead of cheering us on, it condemns us for defending them against the terrorism that threatens them as much as it does us.

We were right all along, and that gives us the right to say "we told you so."

Nobody wanted to listen when former Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu and a lot of American conservatives warned that you cannot negotiate with terrorists such as Arafat, Hezbollah and Hamas, or their sponsors in Syria and Iran. We were accused of being warmongers and told that the future of Israel lay not in defending itself, but in making concession after concession to an enemy sworn to demolish the Jewish state and drive its people into the sea.

Goaded by the peace-at-any-price crowd who can never recognize evil when it stares them in the face because they don't recognize that evil exists, Israel attempted to mollify the anti-Israel United Nations and the hand-wringing liberals here and abroad by playing nice with their sworn enemies.

Israel withdrew from Gaza, driving their own people — who had settled there with Israel's approval and encouragement — out of their homes and land. In return for this magnanimous gesture, the terrorists showered missiles on Israeli territory almost daily.

Undaunted by this display of the real and vicious nature of the enemy, Israeli's government pushed on with plans to evacuate the West Bank, and hand it over to what purports to be a Palestinian state aborning.

The response: more missiles raining down on innocent Israeli citizens and more threats to destroy Israel.

When it finally dawned on the Israeli government that appeasement does not work when the enemy refuses to be appeased with anything

Why a beer garden for a family picnic?

To the Editor:

I was surprised to read someone was requesting a permit for a beer garden at the picnic at Chambers Park.

It sounds like a family picnic, so I am not sure how a beer garden fits.

I hear lots of talk around the community about how detrimental underage drinking is to our kids, but the example we give them is we need alcohol at every event to have fun.

I guess I don't get it.

Daylene Oharah

Goodland

To the Editor:

I understand that Sen. Sam Brownback plans



from our readers

- to the editor

to introduce legislation that would give the federal government power to forbid states like Oregon to permit the citizens of their state to die with dignity. I believe that Brownback is on the wrong side of this issue.

My mother, ill with Parkinson's disease, died a horrible death. Parkinson's had made her body stiff and rigid. She suffered months of excruciating pain before she finally died. When

the nurses would turn her pain-wracked body on the hospital bed, mother would shriek and cry out with unbearable pain.

In Kansas, her sons and daughters could not do anything to help her die with dignity. We just had to watch her suffer months of terrible pain. If we had lived in Oregon, we could have helped our mother die with dignity.

Why is Sen. Brownback planning to introduce legislation to deny citizens the right to die with dignity? Is he playing politics with the lives of our citizens, with an attempt to get the vote of the radical right?

The Rev. Gene Tromble

Goodland

