

## BULLY PULPIT

### Party debate

There are several schools of thought concerning standing for what you believe in. Those schools include, but are not limited to, “Pick a hill you’re willing to die on,” proverbially, of course, “Put your money where your mouth is,” and “Stand for what you believe in.”

Well, I did such a thing the other day when, as the newly appointed President of the Linn County Federation of Republican Women, when I worked with our executive committee to fix something that I’ve felt was incorrect in how we dispersed money for scholarships each spring.

In the past, our scholarship brunches were open to any student that walked through the door; this year, we’ve changed the rule that students, or the family of the student if she isn’t registered to vote, must be Republican. I’ve gone to LCRW meetings for years; I’ve donated at each meeting I’ve attended to the scholarship fund. Then, one year, at a scholarship brunch, I watched a staunch Democrat family be chosen to receive one of our Republican scholarships. It’s not about the student; she went on to do great things.

I have lots of friends that are Democrats, it’s not a personal issue – it’s one of “choose the hill you want to die on” and I felt that a Republican Women’s group should be true to the name and give money to students who have the values our party tends to rely on and fight for.

One comment made on the contrary of changing the scholarship was that students don’t know what party they are when they are seniors in high school. Well, maybe that’s why our liberal university professors can mold student’s pliable brains like silly putty and create mini-Bernie Sanders in four years.

I remember sitting in Civics class in Loveland, Colo. looking at a side-by-side comparison chart of what the Democrat Party versus the Republican Party believed; at that point I knew I was a Republican.

I think most 17- to 18-year-old students have a direction in which way they lean, whether they’ve learned it from family or at school.

As the president of an organization that receives money from local Linn County Republicans, I felt it was my duty to make sure our organization gives money to students that, at this point, exude the Republican beliefs the Party stands on.

I believe that the Linn County Democrat organization gives out a scholarship; if a student needs that money to further their education, they have a choice. I’m pretty sure the Democrats would draw the line on giving a scholarship to a Republican student – maybe I’m wrong. Again, put your money where your mouth is and move on.

The reason this Pulpit is coming now is a letter was already sent to area high schools announcing the scholarship without the change explaining who is eligible. A follow-up letter was sent to each of the three high school counselors in hopes they would disperse the scholarship to student bodies so students can make up their minds where they stand.

The LCRW Scholarship Brunch is scheduled for Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m. at the La Cygne Library Community Building. Republican students from area schools are welcome to register to vote if they haven’t or simply attend the brunch; they are welcome to put their name in a bag to potentially be drawn for one for each of the three district \$400 scholarships.

This pulpit was somewhat self-serving, but in light of the change in eligibility, I felt it was necessary. We are either Republicans with a platform or we are Jello bending to whatever swish comes along. I choose to stand on our platform and let people of like mind join us.

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## LETTERS POLICY

Linn County News encourages letters to the editor. They may be mailed, emailed, faxed or hand-delivered. To be published, the letter must:

- Be hand signed.
- Include writer’s name, city and phone number as letters will be verified for authenticity.
- Be 500 words or less.
- Be received by 5 p.m. Monday to appear in that week’s edition.
- We reserve the right to print or not print reader’s contributions.
- No malicious, slanderous or threatening letters will be allowed.
- Letters with political content will not be accepted the week preceding an election as it does not allow time for a response.

Corrections/Clarifications Policy:

- Any corrections or clarifications that need to be published in the Linn County News are published on the Opinion page after such corrections or clarifications are deemed necessary by the publisher.



## Property tax mandates create out-of-balance system

BY WILLIAM BRADLEY

To quote from the Kansas Rural Center Newsletter, “The 2026 Kansas Legislature will struggle the last few weeks of this session to lower property taxes on residential property and find the revenue to fund the change. Surging home values and stagnant commercial assessments have forced homeowners to shoulder a larger share of property taxes. Decades of granting commercial and industrial property tax exemptions have resulted in residential taxpayers paying the lion’s share for schools, roads and emergency services. The velocity of home price increases (especially after the pandemic) has outpaced the higher commercial rate.

In 1985, the Legislature

authorized a statewide reappraisal of all real estate properties. Most properties at that time had not been revalued for many years or longer. This created horrible inequities between similar properties in terms of valuations and taxes. In 1990, by a constitutional amendment, Kansans passed a tax rate for residential property at 11.5 percent of appraised value and the rate for commercial properties at 25 percent. Once the dust settled from these changes, residential property owners paid 38 percent of total property taxes while other classifications, primarily commercial, accounted for the remaining 62 percent. In 2024, residential property owners paid 57 percent of all property taxes while commercial and other property owners

paid 43 percent.

In 2006, any newly acquired commercial or industrial machinery and equipment was exempted from property tax. The Kansas Legislature has removed additional items from tax rolls, including certain business machinery, boats and personal property, often to attract new business. Commercial properties built with Industrial Revenue Bonds or given economic development exemptions by local boards can avoid property taxes for up to 10 years. These exemptions remove possible revenue streams (primarily for counties and cities) that pay for public services and transfer the tax burden to other property types for a period. If a commercial property has its value reduced as part of a hearing with the county

appraiser or the Kansas Board of Tax Appeals, this lower value is maintained for an additional two years. Median home sale prices in Kansas in 2016 were \$159,000. In 2024, the median price was \$305,000. At the same time, commercial loan values have increased by half that rate.

Most of the solutions for narrowing the disparity between residential and commercial property taxes require legislative or constitutional changes. Colorado had the Gallagher Amendment that made it a requirement for residential properties to pay no more than 45 percent of the total property taxes in the state. It was repealed in Colorado in 2020. Kansas lawmakers have proposed the ‘Cap SEE PROPERTY TAX, A3

## The War Against Anonymity

The Mexican government wants to stop people from using cellphones anonymously.

Every mobile phone number in Mexico — some 127 million — must now be biometrically tied to the owner’s identity. Cellphone owners must register their numbers by June 30 or lose signal.

The ID card to which numbers must be linked will in turn be linked, via QR code, to a national registry of biometrically verified records.

Who needs anonymity? Just criminals?

Criminals do use throw-away “burner” phones

when committing crimes. They won’t necessarily be stymied now. Would they hesitate to steal other people’s cell phones, treat them as burners, then throw them away?

Maybe victims would act fast enough to get lost and stolen phones deactivated before thieves could use them, maybe not. Criminals may have several ways to circumvent the new law.

We must remember, after all, that criminals are willing to commit crimes.

The safety of journalists, dissidents hiding from other governments, targets

of abusers and stalkers, and anyone with good reason to keep his identity separate from his phone will be endangered by Mexico’s new mandate.

Some may say that Mexico’s ID database is inaccessible by all but authorized, benign, unbribable government personnel. One problem with this

fairy tale is that not long ago, a cyberhacker used AI to steal 195 million taxpayer and other records from the Mexican government.

Not the first-time hackers have grabbed “secure” data. And what has happened again and again and again and again, can happen again.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.

**Watch for the upcoming National Agriculture Week special section in next week’s Linn County News.**



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