THE JOPLIN **OPINION**

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THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL represents the view of The Joplin Globe's editorial board. Members of the editorial board are: Andy Ostmeyer, editor, aostmeyer@joplinglobe.com; Emily Younker, managing editor, eyounker@joplinglobe.com; and Jerry Willis, design editor, jwillis@ joplinglobe.com.

OUR VIEW

Shades ofJavert in Oklahoma

yan Walters' obsessive pursuit of Summer Boismier can only be described as harassment.

Shades of Javert. And Ahab. The latest ruling left no doubt the state did not prove its case against Boismier. Yet Walters vows to push on.

Boismier was the Norman, Oklahoma, teacher who covered her classroom bookshelves in red paper with messages written in black marker in response to new state laws. The state alleges she wrote "Books the state doesn't want you to read" and "Definitely don't scan me" with an arrow pointing to a QR code to obtain a free Brooklyn Public Library card, where many of the controversial books are available.

Provacative, yes, and unprofessional ... the kind of thing the local superintendent should address. But worthy of this relentlessness by the Oklahoma's top education official? Hardly

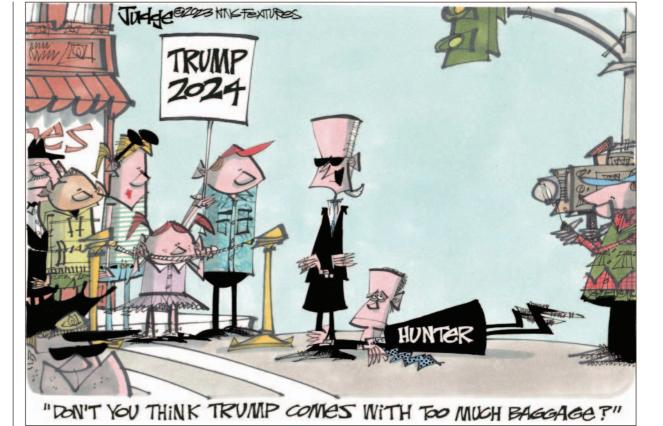
State Superintendent Walters overreacted. And overeached. The State Department of Education complaint also alleges Boismier had three books on her classroom bookshelves that she "intended to make available to students" that Norman Public Schools "regarded as inappropriate" — "Gender Queer," "The Bluest Eye" and "All Boys Aren't Blue." However, according to coverage of the hearing, Boismier, for her part, said she not have "Gender Queer" among the books in her classroom, did not use excerpts of it in class and did not even own a copy of it.

The state, however, said she violated Oklahoma teaching standards by "promoting explicit sexual materials to minors," and by providing "unlawful racist instruction" in such a way that it violates the rules enacted under a new state law that

proponents say prohibits the teaching of "critical race theory." But as we said before: The critical point here is that Boismier didn't give her students any objectionable books. She gave them access to wait for it ... a public library and its online "unbanned books" initiative. Students weren't required to read any of these controversial books, nor did she point out any controversial passages or art in them.

Walters began hunting for Boismier's teaching license, a move the former teacher, who voluntarily resigned her teaching position, has been fighting.

Attorneys for Boismier and the state Board of Education argued their cases Wednesday during a mediation hearing before Assistant Attorney General Liz Stevens, who served as



YOUR VIEW

One question President Biden should be asked

Given the unlikely occurrence of another press conference by our diminished president, this will likely never happen, but if it does ... there is one question I would very much like to see asked. That is: "Do you favor mandatory minimum sentencing for one who purposefully lies when filling out a federal firearms application"? Sometimes I have a problem

controlling my curiosity. Perry Davis

Let parents be the judges

of what is appropriate

Our Missouri secretary of state

claims that our new library rules

help parents protect children. He

claims that librarians should in-

form parents as to what materials

are appropriate or inappropriate

While no one should dispute

that young children should not

materials depicting violence, the

best judges as to what material is

be exposed to pornography or

for their children to read.

Carthage

ments to young children, how are you going to explain what adultery is?

At what age should a child be told that Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny are fictional or that human babies are not delivered by storks?

While librarians may be able to assist parents in selecting appropriate materials for their children it is that parent's obligation to review the material and determine whether or not it is appropriate for his or her child.

Jim Fleischaker Joplin

When in a hole, stop digging

An old saw goes something like this: "After all is said and done, more is said than done."

I read (Globe, June 20) more talk about an old depot and bringing downtown Joplin back to life.

Lots of talk about the homeless while spending real money on trails. None for the mentally ill ones on the streets, but money for the walkers and bikers who can't walk and/or ride in their own neighborhoods.

It reads like Joplin has to go out of state to find a use for the building and try to do something about the buildings downtown that have the shortest life. I heard a statement awhile back that said,"If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging." And then, there is the money. The money to "restore" something when no one seems to know what to do with the something.

that has no visible use and will cost a silo full of money to restore, why not raze the old structure, clean up the mess and quit digging.

Start talking about doing something for the mentally ill people on the streets — the homeless. **David Turner** Lamar

Joplin needs grocery store to compete with Walmart

So now we are going to get a Menard's — just what we needed, another version of what we already have.

I can't help but wonder why it is that we get more of the same kind of stores but cannot get a real full-service grocery store, one that could actually compete with Walmart.

Have you been to the 7th Street Walmart lately? Now they have it set up at checkout with chutes to herd you like cattle where they want you to go. That is, after you dodge pushcarts clogging the aisles filling called-in orders.

The people of this city could and would support an option so I have to wonder why the city has not made it a priority to offer its residents a reasonable and competitive choice as to where to spend their food dollars, as they have with so many other vendors and, heaven knows, eateries.

the administrative law judge.

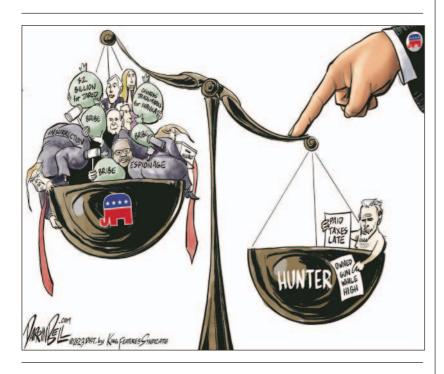
"My ruling today is a recommendation to the State Board of Education. After hearing all the evidence, as to Count 1, I find that State Department of Education has failed to prove, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent willfully committed an act of moral turpitude and has violated the standard of performance and conduct for teachers, according to a statement provided.

"As to Count 2, I find the State Department of Education has failed to prove, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent has willfully violated OAC 210:10-1-23(a), (c)(4), or (c)(8)

Yet, Walters' spokesperson had this to say afterward: "At the next board meeting, it may not be until August, Superintendent Walters will be making a recommendation to the board. He can't speak for each board member, obviously, but he will be recommending that the license is revoked."

Norman Board of Education member, Annette Price criticized Walters for ignoring Wednesday's ruling, according to the Norman Transcript: "To ignore this crucial fact and go after her teaching certification anyway is a flawed attempt to intimidate all Oklahoma educators who work tirelessly to meet the needs of our students."

We recommend Walters get a copy of Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables" or Herman Melville's "Moby Dick." Bet the local public library has them.



Verse

'Let all that you do be done in love.'

1 Corinthians 16:14

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appropriate for a particular child are that child's parents.

Children mature at different rates and what is appropriate for one child may not be appropriate for a different child of the same age. Librarians are not going to be aware of each child's maturity level.

If you teach the Ten Command-

I wonder: If you have a building

Who or what is standing in the way of a reasonable and much-needed choice?

Dianne Slater Joplin

Titan shows allure, terror of the oceans

he submersible Titan is now confirmed lost.

There's a tragic poetry to the debris of the vessel being found 1,700 feet from the bow of the Titanic, the watchword for disaster at sea that has been the object of fascination since it went down in the North Atlantic in 1912.

There have been lots of questions raised about all that led to the loss of the Titan, and the five souls aboard, perhaps most importantly: What were they thinking? How could they have taken such a monumental risk?

They were bolted inside a cramped, 22-foot-long vessel equipped with only enough oxygen for several days that could go farther down in the depths than almost anything that could conceivably rescue them if something went wrong. Why do that?

For the same reason that men have been driven to voyage on the sea, and venture under it when possible, from time immemorial. The quest for adventure, profit, survival and freedom have long motivated these nautical undertakings, and insane risk-taking has often been part of the bargain.

We rightly honor Ferdinand Magellan, but it takes only a cursory review of his famous 1519 voyage circumnavigating the globe — the mutinies, the appalling loss of life, the risky expeditions ashore — to realize he was not operating based on a normal risk-benefit calculus. Sure enough, he was killed in a battle on a Pacific island. The surviving men and ships returned from the epic journey nearly three years

Andy Ostmeyer

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after it began. It wasn't only Europeans, of course, who conquered huge distances. European sailors in as Lincoln Paine relays in his mas-

the 16th century, terpiece "The Sea and Civilization," were shocked by the size of the Pacific, as well as the fact that the majority of the small

world, as Gregg Easterbrook points out in his book,"The Blue Age." Gigantic container vessels, the lifeline of the world economy, are mostly unseen, unless you live near a port. No one thinks of the undersea cables that support the internet. The pipelines under the ocean are similarly invisible.

For all its usefulness, the sea is a hostile and unforgiving environment. The great artist of the sea, the British painter J.M.W. Turner, brings home in his work the overwhelming force of the oceans and the terror when something goes wrong.

The margin for error at great depths especially is nonexistent. The U.S submarine Thresher suffered a cascade of failures and imploded at a depth of roughly 2,300 feet during diving tests in 1963. The implosion took as little as one-twentieth of a second,"too fast to be cognitively recognized by the men within the submarine," as an article in Naval History Magazine puts it. The debris field spread over 33 acres of the ocean floor.

Lincoln Paine quotes an ancient Greek epigram that is unsparing:

"All sea is sea....

Pray if you like for a good voyage home,

But Aristagoras, buried here, has found

The ocean has the manners of an ocean."

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dered of the people on the remote Tuamotu Islands, "Who the devil went and placed them on a small sandbank like this one and as far from the continent as they are?

LOWRY

Columnist

As it happens, no one placed them there — they got there under their own power.

islands dotted across the vastness

were inhabited. One officer won-

Almost three-quarters of the Earth's surface is water, and it is enormously important economically and geo-strategically. According to the National Ocean Service, "In 2017, the U.S. maritime transportation system carried \$1.6 trillion of cargo through U.S. seaports to and from our international trading partners."

As Lincoln Paine notes, without its commitment to what he calls "maritime enterprise," we may never have seen the rise of Western Europe. Today, who ends up controlling the Taiwan Strait may eventually help determine the future of the world.

Yet, it's easy to forget the centrality of the seas to the modern

LOBE COMMENTARY

Build a boutique hotel downtown, and they will come

| hances are, you've never set foot inside one of downtown Joplin's most famous buildings

I don't say this to stir up envy over some new and exclusive locale. I've never set foot inside it, either. That's because it collapsed five years before I was born.

Our local history buffs already know of what I speak. The Connor Hotel, once located on the corner of Fourth and Main streets where our now-former public library sits, still appears on everything from vintage-inspired postcards to Christmas ornaments. Browse through local history publications or blogs and you're sure to see black-and-white photos of its beaux-arts style façade. The Connor's beauty and prestige was only outshone by its ultimate demise; it fell to pieces a day before scheduled demolition, killing two and trapping one, a story that made national headlines in 1978.

It's part of family lore too. My father was inside a day before the collapse and was part of the rescue effort the day after (he remains grateful to not have been there in between).

The Connor Hotel occupies an important part of our history even though it no longer appears in our downtown skyline.

Nor does any other hotel, for that matter.

As I return from vacation (and am already dreaming of the next day-trip or staycation), this missing element stands out.

"Currently, travelers to Joplin are constrained to hotels mainly in the area of Range Line Road and 32nd Street, close to the interstate," says Patrick Tuttle, director of the Joplin Convention and Visitors Bureau, further noting that, "This location contributes to a degree of success for our hoteliers who annually average occupancy rates of 60-65%.



KIMBERLY ZERKEL

Columnist

The CVB supports downtown — their office is located there, plus many downtown businesses are featured on the VisitJoplinMO website. They celebrate Route 66 and the newly-opened Cornell Complex as downtown attractions. Patrick emphasizes that the

CVB "would support a downtown hotel, but without a major draw and more attractions downtown, how a hotel would be sustained long-term is a concern."

While this is logic that someone as starry-eyed as me would do well to adhere to, I want to believe that if we build a boutique hotel downtown, they — both visitors and locals — will come.

Why? Boutique hotels are often destinations unto themselves. More than just a place to park and sleep while traveling, examples such as Hotel Kansas City, Tulsa's Mayo Hotel, or Bentonville's 21c purposefully juxtapose hotels and motels along the highway.

Most call revitalized historic buildings home (anyone know of a neighborhood that has those?). They attract those eager to take in the sometimes quirky but oftentimes glamorous interiors, now considered the perfect backdrop for weddings, friends' weekends, honeymoons, or your weekly

But those kinds of amenities



The Connor Hotel dominated Joplin's downtown skyline for decades. GLOBE FILE

ists — perhaps why the 2021 plan of transforming the Robertson Building into a Radisson hotel has stagnated.

This is, of course, a truly frustrating chicken-or-egg situation: We can't prove a downtown boutique hotel will be successful until one opens, and they won't open until someone has proven they are successful.

Lori Haun, executive director of Downtown Joplin Alliance, says that a downtown hotel remains

a high priority for DJA and has information that can potentially break the cycle.

'We have seen the addition of a few Airbnbs," she states," which are consistently full."

Jill Halbach, director of the Post Art Library, vice president of the Missouri Preservation Board of Directors and chairperson of the Joplin Historic Preservation Commission, was proud to help welcome the 24th annual Missouri Preservation Conference

to Joplin earlier this month. She states, however, that the common complaint amongst the 100-plus visitors was the lack of lodging downtown, where the conference was held.

Executive Director of Connect-2Culture, Emily Frankoski, often hears similar complaints from performers and patrons alike.

"Artists are always asking us whether they can walk to the venue or if it's close to the hotel. You most definitely cannot. Also, I know many patrons have mentioned they would like to have a hotel downtown so they can enjoy the show, downtown businesses, and restaurants by foot."

In conversations I've had with medical students, a common feature on their wishlist is a downtown hotel for parents to stay in while visiting.

Are these wishes and complaints enough? Surely businesses have opened with far less a guarantee for success.

Yet I understand the hesitation. Recent downtown business closures — many based on personal rather than economic reasons have made me question whether my enthusiasm for downtown Joplin isn't just plain old naivete.

Could a downtown hotel be sustained? Aren't the examples I've named above located in larger metropolitan areas with more to do, see, eat and experience?

But I have to believe that what I long for is longed for by others, as well. Who will be the first (in this century, anyway) to step out and take the risk of opening a hotel downtown?

Word on the street is that they're going to be wildly successful

I'll take a corner room with a view, please.

KIMBERLY ZERKEL can be reached at news@joplinglobe.com.

Sports gaming companies have stiffed Kansas — entirely legally

olks who imagine dark conspiracies in Kansas politics — meetings behind closed doors devising sinister plans — should consider the possibility that legislators are just bad at their jobs.

For evidence, read the blockbuster story by Marco Schaden, published last week on the Wichita and Kansas City Beacon websites. The headline alone will make your head explode."The month the



rules and

have thought lawmakers would have

preme Court's 2018 ruling overturning a federal ban, change seemed inevitable. But lawmakers had a choice about how to regulate and tax the industry. They didn't make sensible decisions.

Our legislative leaders like to style themselves as moral crusaders. We heard them pontificate about some agendas and parental rights and the evils of the LGBTQ community all last session. One representative said some students needed Jesus

money instead of free-play money," Roberts said."I mean, that's fraud or something. That's advertising money. That's money to hook the player in, money to entice them to play and to get them started. That's not right."

Indeed, wrote the Times' Eric Lipton and Kenneth P. Vogel in November, "these tactics have been banned in some countries because of their potential to hook people predisposed to combacco and gambling cause social or medical harms. But we also know that people want to drink and smoke and gamble, so outright bans only serve to criminalize everyday behavior. We therefore levy hefty taxes on these substances and behaviors, imposing an extra cost on those who choose to indulge.

That cost serves two distinct purposes. First, it harmful behaviors. Second,

Afterward, everyone can enjoy a cigar and cocktail while betting on the football game

In this case, however, Kansas lawmakers were played.

Rather than admit its failure, the Legislature simply turned its back on the issue in the 2023 session. As big gaming companies fleeced Kansans, Senate President Ty Masterson and House Speaker Dan Hawkins fodissuades some people from cused on restricting food aid to needy Kansans, promising private school vouchers and trying to pass a flat tax. Never mind the fact that if they had levied sufficient taxes on sports gambling, these legislative leaders could have eased the path of their favored tax policy. It wouldn't have been that difficult. But only if you actually know how politics and government works. At this point, none of us should assume that Kansas lawmakers have the slightest clue.

has different

WIRESTONE

Columnist been ashamed after The

collects a more consistent amount month after month. You might

Instagram reels. Features such as rooftop bars, day-pass swimming pools, lobby coffee shops and fine dining restaurants also make them an ideal meeting place for locals.

come with a hefty price tag. And even the largest hotel companies in the world would think twice before investing in a location that has yet to prove it can attract tour-

other states.

The federal

government,

meanwhile,

Chiefs won the Super Bowl, Kansans bet \$194 million on sports but the state got only \$1,134.

That's not a typo.

That's a .00058% return for the state from all the wagers placed by state residents in February. Put another way, the state collected a whopping \$5.85 for each \$1 million wagered.

Because of the way legislators wrote the sports gaming law they passed in 2022, companies have been able to avoid taxation through entirely legal means. They can deduct the cost of promotions in Kansas, skirting taxes they have to pay in

New York Times reported how gambling lobbyists exerted outsized influence in bending state law to their will. You might have thought senators and representatives would have addressed the obvious problem during the 2023 session.

But you'd be wrong. As Schaden reports, despite interest from a few in Topeka, no one ultimately did anything

A Legislature that knows what it's doing wouldn't set itself up for such an embarrassing revelation.

Sports gaming would have come to Kansas eventually. After the U.S. Suin their lives before any pesky science and math.

But I'll tell you about an actual social evil, one that wounds and bankrupts families and individuals: problem gambling.

Gaming interests, in the words of the Times, showered lawmakers "with donations, gifts and dubious arguments." So forget about the regular Kansans left behind.

Stephenie Roberts, a social worker and gambling addiction counselor in Wichita, told the Beacon that gaming promotions caused real problems.

"I call that get-into-debt

pulsive gambling." Kansas lawmakers appar-

ently weren't swayed by the experts or even common sense. Those we elected decided not only to permit such promotions, but to hand out tax benefits for using them.

What geniuses.

Can you really imagine these folks implementing some dastardly plan harming Kansans? I'd be impressed if they can find their offices in the Statehouse.

Here's how taxes on morally problematic sectors of the economy should work. We know that alcohol, toit allows the government to fund programs to help those most harmed by drinking and smoking and gambling. In a perfect world, we could ban harmful behavior totally, but the failed experiment of Prohibition in the United States showed that such approaches backfire. (This also explains why cannabis will eventually be fully legalized, but that's for another time).

Both Republicans and Democrats have something to like in levying sin taxes. The GOP can raise revenue from sources other than a progressive income tax. Democrats can fund do-gooder social programs.

CLAY WIRESTONE is Kansas Reflector opinion editor. This column first appeared in the Kansas Reflector.

One man, one birthday, wheat harvest and a family of thanks

was already 40-plus years upon this Earth before I was finally able to see my dad get a proper birthday celebration. That's the price you pay when your birth-day falls in the middle of June on a Kansas wheat farm. Birthday cake, presents and family gatherings were either before, if not yet ready to cut, or after, when cutting was finally done. When over half your next year's income depends upon two weeks in June, birthday's tend to take a back seat to reality.

For those not familiar with what happens on a wheat farm at harvest time, all I can say is, "You do, literally, have to be there.

The waiting with anticipation the week before as the winds blow ... the sun shines (hopefully)... the heads on those "amber waves of grain" tilt down as if bowing to the combine they know is coming... and the worry from the cellar at 2 a.m. as thunderheads you'd watched form all day unleash their fury on a year's worth of work and there isn't a damn thing you can do about it.

Then comes that first "test cut" for moisture content, the field check from the bin and then the first truckload to the elevator to verify. And Good Lord willing, the elevator results match the field sample and the curtain opens on the most intricate choreography between man and machine ever seen with human eyes — massive Ferguson red, Case orange, Gleaner silver, and the only colors to ever fly on the old home place: John Deere green, each displaying their colors with pride.

CALDWELL

the color, no matter the make, on their own farms they were treated like gods. Take care of them and they

Yet, no matter

machines of Massey

would reward you with a breakdown free harvest, but take them for granted and they'd throw a gear or a bearing in the middle of nowhere at the absolute worst time

What just a few decades earlier had taken farm hands wielding sickles to cut down the stalks then bundle those stalks, and then feed those bundles into the threshing machine was now condensed to one man on a machine.

Raising and lowering the header, setting the rotation of the reel, hydrostatic drive matching ground speed to crop density. Said drive providing the added benefit of immediate reverse to pull back from wet ground before the embarrassment of having to call on the radio for the tractor and a pull. A waste of precious time — \overline{t} ime that there was never enough of during

Wheat harvest is a summer ritual for many in Kansas.

harvest.) Getting the cylinder gap just right so not to crush those kernels of gold that would determine how many presents under the tree come Christmas or whether that new cultivator would come or if we'd be welding the old one back together for another year.

When the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted that, "Change is the only constant in life," he had no way of knowing he was describing the daily life

of a Kansas wheat farmer 2,500 years in the future.

GLOBE FILE

We had wet years, dry years, early years, late years, hailed-out years, "pickup reel" years (when storms had broken the straw and the grain heads laid just above the ground but could still be salvaged by "picks" grabbing and lifting it into the header) and in between them all, just enough good years to keep us going.

It's certainly not a life for the

weak. But it's also a life like no other, a life that on one hand leaves you helpless against the whims of Mother Nature, yet on the other delivers all the joys and wonders that make her who she is, a life that when it's too wet for the fields you can grab the poles and hit the ponds and creeks for a catfish supper.

It's a life that lets you walk through the back pasture and in a couple of hours bag enough quail or dove to fill a couple of iron skillets and present a meal better than any five-star chef. It's a life that gives you snow drifts 4 feet high, sleigh rides in the pasture and every branch of every tree dusted in white.

Dad passed four years ago, but to a one we agreed as a family that we'd keep the birthday gatherings. There are a couple of little ones who don't remember him, but they will remember their cousins, the swimming, the corn hole, water gun fights, and hideand-seek for the ages.

In the end, isn't that what its all about? Family

I may not be a man of great material wealth, but thanks to the sweat and determination of one man, I'm one of the richest men on the planet.

Happy birthday, Dad.

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Columnist