



Member 2020  
**Republican**

Published by  
Faimon Publications, LLC  
324 Hudson, P.O. Box A,  
Burlington, KS 66839-0218  
(ISSN 145-700)

Published Thursdays.  
Periodicals postage paid at  
Burlington, Kansas. Phone  
(620) 364-5325; Fax (620)  
364-2607.

Postmaster: Send change of  
address forms to P.O. Box A,  
Burlington, KS 66839-0218.

Official newspaper for  
Coffey County, the cities of  
Burlington, New Strawn,  
LeRoy, Gridley, Lebo,  
Hartford and Waverly;  
Lebo-Waverly USD 243,  
Burlington USD 244,  
LeRoy-Gridley USD 245.

Member of the Kansas  
Press Association, National  
Federation of Independent  
Businesses, Coffey County  
Chamber of Commerce.

#### STAFF

##### Publishers

Chris and Catherine Faimon

Managing Editor  
Mark Petterson

Sports Reporter  
Katie McMurray

Reporter  
Ida Wilson

Advertising Consultant  
Christina Stohs

Ad Design  
Bradley Rice

Circulation Mgr./Classifieds  
Denise Sibley  
Katherine Austin

Distribution  
John Knachel  
Brenda Futrell

#### SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Subscriptions must be paid  
in advance. Rates include  
applicable taxes.

#### SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:

Mail Delivery: Coffey  
County, Westphalia and  
Hartford, \$36/1 year;

Elsewhere in Kansas,  
\$39/1 year;  
Outside Kansas (in U.S.),  
\$50/1 year.

Online subscription,  
\$30/1 year.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Coffey County Republican encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to:  
Coffey County Republican,  
Drawer A,  
Burlington, KS 66839;

or by email to  
ccrepub@gmail.com

• We do not publish  
anonymous letters.

• We do not publish  
form letters or letters  
about topics which do  
not pertain to our area.  
Thank-yous from this  
area should be submitted  
to the classifieds  
desk.

• Letters will not be  
censored, but will be  
read and edited for  
form and style and  
legality. We will not  
publish attacks on  
individuals or businesses  
which do not pertain  
to public issues.

Please limit the length  
to 300 words.

Contact  
**The Republican**  
Phone: (620) 364-5325  
Fax: (620) 364-2607  
Email:  
ccrepub@gmail.com  
Mail letters to:  
Coffey County Republican  
Drawer A,  
Burlington, KS 66839



## 229 years ago, America became . . . America

Dec. 15 marks a hidden holiday, as uncelebrated as it is unappreciated. It was 229 years ago that the United States ratified the Bill of Rights, ensuring unprecedented freedom for the people of an emerging nation.



**Ken Paulson**  
Middle Tennessee  
State University

Bill of Rights Day has actually been a national holiday since Nov. 28, 1941 when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt designated Dec. 15 "Bill of Rights Day." Roosevelt had big plans, envisioning flag-flying and ceremonies nationwide. Roosevelt observed that Adolf Hitler feared "our freedom of speech, press and religion." Unfortunately, the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7 erased all the ambitious plans to mark the date. There's no time to celebrate freedom when you're fighting to preserve it.

That was almost 80 years ago, and America continues to take the Bill of Rights for granted. At just 500 words, it packs more than 20 rights into 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Moreover, a promise of a Bill of Rights was the key to getting the Constitution ratified in the first place.

Given that there won't be cake or gifts or greeting cards, the best way to celebrate Bill of Rights Day is simply to reflect on its importance. And depending upon your personal priorities, some liberties may loom larger than others.

The National Rifle Association touts the Second Amendment as America's "first freedom." That's either bad math or poetic license, but you get the point. If our government took those freedoms away, you might have to wrest those back with "the right to bear arms."

Americans with a deep and abiding faith are grateful for the freedom to worship and be free of government interference with their faith.

Those who treasure personal privacy and the sanctity of their homes would be thankful for the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures.

Those who have been accused of a crime would welcome the fair trial guarantees contained in the Sixth Amendment.

All of these liberties are critical to the kind of nation we are, founded on freedom and fairness.

I am particularly grateful, though, for the one-two punch of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Together they protect our free expression and safeguard the entire Bill of Rights.

The preamble to the Constitution set forth the goal of "a more perfect union." The phrase was both aspirational and wise. There was no way a fledgling country could get everything right, let alone draw up a blueprint that would guarantee the liberty of every American.

And of course, the Constitution didn't. Slavery was left intact and women were left without a voice or vote. As lofty as America's ideals were, there were still inequities and injustices to address.

It would take centuries of free speech and press to illuminate and address the needs of this imperfect union. Although critics of the contemporary press – which includes newspapers, radio stations, television stations, websites and every other form of informational media – like to use phrases like "fake news," the truth is that the newspapers of 1791 were far more biased than their modern descendants.

They were largely political organs full

of outrage, exaggeration and lies. Yet it was in that very environment that the American people demanded a free press be a part of the Bill of Rights. They saw it as a check on a new and powerful central government and a protection against abuse of the Constitution and yes, the new Bill of Rights. Journalists who do their jobs well today are fulfilling the mission set forth for them in 1791.

The most impressive thing about the Bill of Rights is that a document written 229 years ago remains so vital, vibrant and essential.

The aggressive journalists empowered by the First Amendment have gone on to monitor and irritate every president from John Adams to Donald Trump. The assembled citizens who spoke out against slavery and demanded universal suffrage have contemporary counterparts demanding racial justice today. Those 10 amendments have served us well.

Of course, when it comes to patriotic holidays, none rival Independence Day. But that holiday recalls a nation just starting out, committing in general terms to a nation founded on liberty.

On Dec. 15, 1791, the first generation of Americans fulfilled that promise. We could love our country, but also voice our concerns about its actions and priorities. That honest exchange of ideas – fueled by freedom of press, speech and assembly – can make for dissonance and division in our politics.

But it also makes for the strongest and most enduring nation on the face of the earth.

—Ken Paulson is the director of the Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. Learn more about the First Amendment at [freespeechcenter.org](http://freespeechcenter.org)

## Thinking before we speak

Many parents have told their children to "think before you speak." It probably followed our having insulted a friend or relative when we really didn't mean to. And "I didn't mean to!" just doesn't cut it.

#### Education Frontlines



**John Schrock**  
Educator

Today, some folks believe that "freedom of speech" means anyone can say anything they please and expect others to listen and understand exactly what they meant. But what we thought we said is often not what the listener understood. We do not all have the same experiences and therefore the words we use do not all have exactly the same meanings.

Precise communication is the key skill of a teacher. A teacher who explains a concept in class may see in their puzzled eyes that some do not understand. But if that teacher merely repeats the explanation again, word for word – well, they are a lousy teacher. Good teachers look for examples in students' lives that make a concept meaningful. That is often why the most effective teacher in a rural school is one who grew up on a farm. They choose words that hold meaning for students with similar experiences.

I learned this requirement of good communication the hard way. On the first day of my college introductory speech class, I was pulled and enrolled in varsity debate. They had an odd number in varsity debate

(one was left without a debate partner). We returned from the first tournament with a low score. The professor gently coached me. Do not call the opponents "they." Always address the substance of the question. Never attack the person. Never question the motives of the opposition. Use examples others clearly understand. –And so on. With each debate, I listened carefully. At the end of the semester, we took first place in the tournament.

That debate coach was Dr. Otis J. Aggert. The lessons he taught us were about being respectful and compassionate human beings when we spoke. Most important, he helped us to understand that it was not enough to know what we meant when we spoke. What was most important was what the listener understood when they heard us. And if the listener did not understand what we meant, it was the speaker's responsibility to re-word and speak again to be correctly understood.

Whether you are talking with a friend, teaching students, or are a government official addressing the public, it is the speaker's responsibility to select words carefully so there is no misunderstanding.

Today we see a big contrast among national speakers. For pre-planned speeches, they should have considered how their audience will understand their words. That is why a well-written speech takes time and leaves all listeners with a clear message. When the speaker takes questions from the audience we will see a great speaker pause. Great communicators such as President Reagan and Presi-

dent Obama hesitated as they carefully selected the precise words to use so there would be no misunderstanding among listeners. They were not being "politically correct" – choosing "proper" words to appeal to political groups. They were being responsible – carefully selecting words that would be correctly understood. Being accurate. Avoiding ambiguity.

Today, good speakers such as Anthony Fauci speak carefully; and if he is misunderstood, he is careful to correct his message. Others who call for the public to "rise up" or "stand by" fail miserably.

Professor Aggert had actually codified an Oath for Speakers. His students knew the principles well. But today, many speakers violate these tenants of honest communication:

- ▶ "...I will remember at all times the inherent dignity of humans, for that is more important than any other concern;
- ▶ And I will strive when speaking publicly to be adequately informed, for I have no right to disseminate ignorance;
- ▶ To think straight, for I have no right to promote confusion;
- ▶ To be fully honest both in letter and spirit, and to be socially responsible;
- ▶ As I bear in mind the welfare of those who may be affected by my speaking."

There is a freedom of speech, but there is no freedom from consequences. If a speaker disseminates ignorance, promotes confusion, is dishonest and disregards human dignity, we have the full freedom to walk away, and leave them alone babbling to themselves.

## Moving forward

This year, this week, we start our 103rd year at Kansas Farm Bureau having just finished our business session at our

*Insight*  
102nd annual meeting. One hundred and three is a big number and a lot of years. Dare I say no year has been quite like the one we just finished up.

Note that I did not say it was our hardest year. It was not even our first pandemic at Kansas Farm Bureau, but it was a year a lot of us would like to move past and put in the rearview mirror.

Yes, there have been harder years in the ag community. Years of more extreme drought, heat, rain or pests. I am sure we have seen years with worse markets and more trying times. Maybe not, bad years and good years are so personal to each of us. If you were touched by COVID-19, 2020 may very well have been your worst year ever, and if that is the case, my heart goes out to you.

My point is 2020 was not a good year, and I am sure that most of us hope that 2021 will be a much better one. The one thing I do know is those of us in agriculture have learned to deal with adversity and keep moving forward. We know how to absorb the blow of a bad year and pick ourselves up and keep, keeping on. That is what we do, that is who we are and that is why agriculture is the backbone of the United States.

What will 2021 look like? Who knows? I have seen long-range forecasts, but I do not put much faith in them. As far as the pandemic goes, we have no idea, even the experts are split on what the next 12 months will look like. But I do know this. We will plant the next crop this spring, we will help new lambs, calves, pigs, goats, chickens and horses come into this world. We will persevere with the faith of a farmer and rancher because that is what we do.

We will go to the field and to the pasture with the same optimism that our parents and grandparents carried with them, even through the toughest of times. I also know Kansas Farm Bureau will be right there alongside us making sure our voices are heard in Washington D.C. and Topeka. That voice is one each of us have a note in, coming up from the grassroots and making sure those of us who feed the world are heard.

No, I had no idea what was ahead of us at this time last year, but we made it through it, and I have no idea what is ahead of us in 2021. We will change and adapt just like we have for the previous 102 years, and we can all be proud knowing that we are part of an organization leading the way when it comes to ensuring our farms and ranches survive and thrive no matter what the year brings.

—*Insight* is a weekly column published by Kansas Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm organization whose mission is to strengthen agriculture and the lives of Kansans through advocacy, education and service.

#### Letters to the Editor

## Veterans support

Dear Editor:  
I would like to thank the people of Coffey County for the recognition and support given to armed forces veterans. Evidence of this includes Honor Flights, the cities putting up banners along the streets, Memorial Day ceremonies, and people thanking us for our service. I also received cards of thanks from students, which was sincerely appreciated. Thanks again for your support.

**Frank Brush**  
Burlington