

### Determining climate change is a science

This year is said to be "on track" to be the hottest on record, surpassing 2005, and that supposedly is another indicator of climate change. And maybe it is.

The "best science" of today says so. But remember, we've only been keeping weather records for a couple of hundred years, reliably for a century. And those start in the waning days of the "Little Ice Age," a cooling period stretching from the 17th century to the 19th when many glaciers and the arctic ice pack grew.

There have been times when the Earth was much warmer and, during real ice ages, much colder. And when the Earth is very warm, it will be very wet, almost uninhabitable.

Then remember also, the "best science" of the day once told us the world was flat and ulcers were caused by bad diet and stress.

We know today that the world is more or less round, that bacteria cause most ulcers and that cancer can be cured.

The question is, what don't we know today that we ought to know, especially about climate?

Civilization thrived during those cool centuries, especially in the less-hospitable northern climates. Does that mean civilization won't thrive in a warmer era? And if that's true, is there anything we can do about it?

Perhaps cold weather suppresses tropical diseases and generates economic activity. Who knows?

Hotter, drier weather could put an end to the productivity of the Great Plains and kill crops, leaving a hungry world. Call it nature's way of limiting population, if you will, but instinct tells us men will figure out how to grow food for the world. American farmers are pretty good at that.

Common sense says we should do what we can to abate climate change, and for the most part, we are. We should be judicious, careful not to ruin the world economy while we chase elusive targets of global warming.

If some people had their way, we'd be reduced to little more than subsistence farmers, scratching out a living on small plots of ground from "renewable" crops, barely enough in good time to feed us and our pet cattle (for by then, eating animals surely would be banned).

But that's not going to happen: we're not going to give up our electronic gizmos, our cheap food and our civilized ways, are we?

So we had best be judicious in our measures. We should do whatever we can to make our way of life "climate neutral," but guard against either destroying our quality of life or going so far overboard that we tip the scale toward cooler days.

It's unlikely that men could do enough to create another ice age, even a "little" one, but the possibility is no better than continued global warming.

Even then, the best guess is that climate will continue to change, as it always has, becoming cooler and warmer in turns none of us will live long enough to understand.

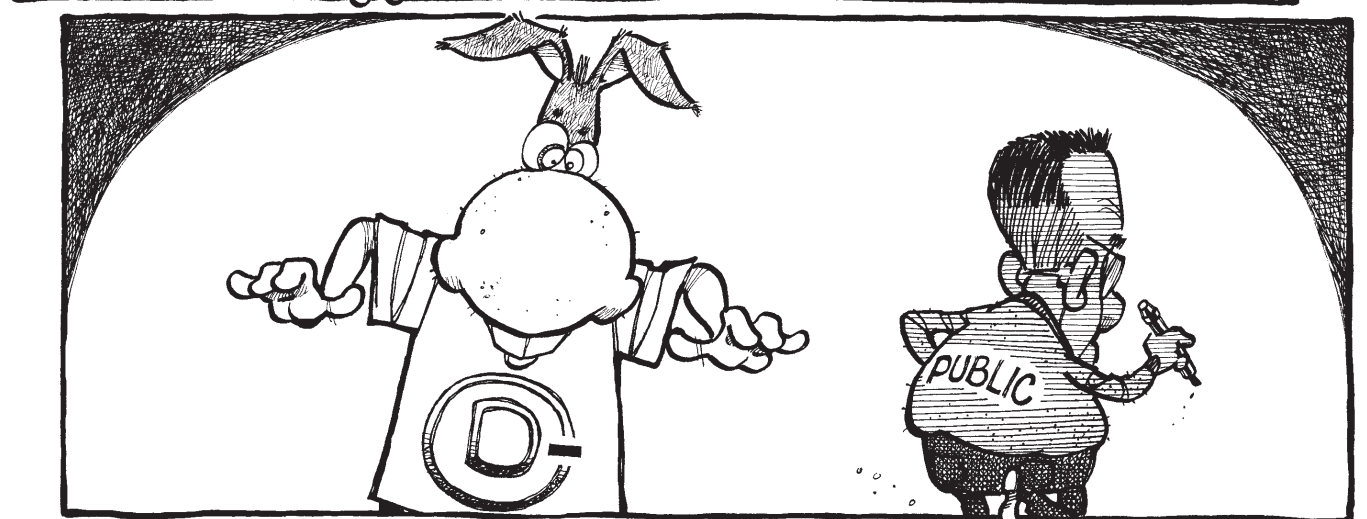
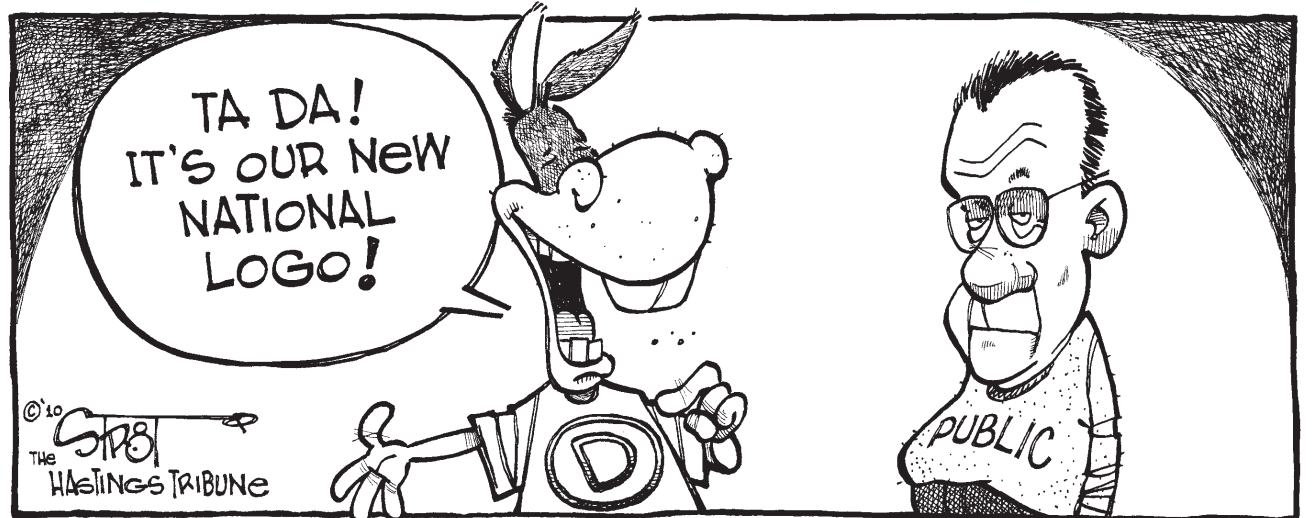
We barely understand what's happening today, and odds are, much of what we know isn't really correct. As in many things, we have part of the picture.

Reduce greenhouse gasses? Sure.

End production agriculture, ban electricity, go back to bikes and horse?

Not gonna happen.

Steve Haynes



### Lest we forget those who gave all for us

To those of us who were in our teens and 20s during the mid 1960s and '70's, Vietnam was "our war". It wasn't a pretty war, nor a popular one. The country was split. There was no ticker-tape parade nor hero's welcome home. There were protests and marches; flag-burnings and cowards heading north. But, still they served. Young, handsome, virile men with their lives spread out ahead of them. They went to war. And, lots of them (58,267) died.

Let's not forget the women who served. Almost 7,500 women went to Vietnam. Eight died.

Why am I waxing nostalgic about a war that ended more than 35 years ago? Perhaps because I was given the honor of writing the stories of four native sons who died over there. I interviewed four families whose son, brother, husband or father gave their lives that others might be

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



a way, he was a casualty of that war. His scars aren't visible, but, he was wounded just the same. I know our marriage was a casualty of that war. Who knows how many other lives were impacted by the horrors of that war and the demons those veterans fight silently in their dreams.

The Vietnam Moving Wall will be in Norton Sept. 23-27. It will be open 24 hours a day with people on hand to help locate names, operate the computer program that accompanies the Wall or help make rubbings of a loved one's name.

Admission is free. It's always open. There are no steps to climb. The weather prediction looks favorable. So there are no excuses why you can't pay your respects to those who died. Forget, for a moment, if you opposed the war or supported it. A visit to the Wall is no political statement. Just come and remember. Touch a name, even if you didn't know him.

free. Each family shared how their loved one felt about the war. Some volunteered; some were drafted; most were "gung ho" to go into battle; some just wanted to get it over with; but all felt it was their duty as Americans. I was humbled and proud. I didn't get through a single interview without tearing up. A reporter is not supposed to get emotionally involved. You know... just the facts. But, I took this assignment personally. My first husband, the father of my children, is a Vietnam veteran. And, in

### God's country is right here in Kansas

By John Schlageck,  
Kansas Farm Bureau

You might get plenty of arguments from people across Kansas as to the exact location of God's country. Without a doubt our state has many beautiful locations and more importantly wonderful inhabitants.

On a recent trip to far northwestern Kansas in mid August, I visited one of these jewels. My destination was the Blanka family farm and ranch located in Cheyenne County. The Blankas live less than three miles from the Nebraska border and approximately 22 miles from the Colorado line.

If you're not familiar with this part of our state the topography is flat, fertile, sandy loam farmland on the tops and bottoms of rolling hills. With plenty of rain this spring and summer the hills were lush and green with grass. Cattle grazed contentedly.

Shawna Blanka's family moved to Cheyenne County, northeast of St. Francis about 1887. In 1914 her great grandfather built the home where she and her family live today with concrete blocks and sand from the Republican River - two miles from their doorstep.

Oh, and if having a river that close isn't enough, less than a strong stone's throw from their open porch on the left side of the house is "Hell's Canyon." This view is the Blanka's favorite.

Hell's Canyon is surrounded by flat farm ground and then the land breaks off and falls nearly 300 feet to the bottom.

### Insight John Schlageck

The sides of the canyon are covered with grass and yucca plants. The steep slopes angle down in the canyon at a 30-percent grade.

The day I visited the temperature climbed to a balmy 73 degrees by noon. A cool northwesterly rustled through the tall cottonwoods - truly a day from heaven.

"We kinda like it out here," Shawna said. "The hills, the crops, the big skies and the peacefulness. That's what we wake up to every day and come home to every night."

Don't get her wrong, the Blankas aren't merely vacationing out here on the great High Plains. But living in this land of wide-open spaces, short grass and low humidity oftentimes feels like it.

The Blankas remain busy from sunup to sundown. Shawn, Shawna and their two boys, Shakotah and Shadryon run a several thousand-acre dryland wheat, corn and irrigated corn, alfalfa and grass-land operation. They also run 400 head of momma cows, finish out the majority of their calves each year, not to mention caring for more than 20 hay burners (horses) and nearly 70 goats. They farm and ranch in partnership with Shawna's parents, Tom and Donna Stevens.

The boys' names, you might ask? According to Shawna, it's a "western

thing." She also wanted to continue with the "Sh" sound.

The western thing and family tradition also account for the horses.

"Grandpa got me going on a horse before I could walk," Shawna recalls. "I started competing when I was five and rodeoed through college. I just haven't been able to stop."

Shawna still uses the horses to herd cows and barrel race on the rodeo circuit. Her two boys have also learned to ride.

Both love the solitude this big-sky country affords. Like their mom, they love the opportunity to ride with the wind and exercise their independence. You might say they're already firmly entrenched in a world steeped in self sufficiency.

Shakotah and Shadryon have expressed an interest in making farming and ranching their vocation. The boys could be the fifth generation to farm and ranch in Cheyenne County.

"That'd be the best thing that could happen," he says. "There's nothing we'd like to see more than our two boys being a part of this family tradition."

And what better place to do so than the fertile wind-swept country of the great High Plains?

That's right. God's country. John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.



Thumbs Up to the Norton Football team for helping to move a piano from the school to my home. Called in.

Thumbs Up to Larry Black and Jeff Nielsen for a great job announcing the Norton Homecoming game last Friday. You did a wonderful job and it was great having you back in the booth. Called in.

Thank you to the Norton Telegram for printing the Treasure Hunt Guide. Faxed in.

Thumbs Up to Carolyn Applegate, you do an awesome job coordinating US 36 Treasure Hunt. Many thanks. Faxed in.

Thumbs Up to the great people who continue to support The Haven, you made the ice cream social a big success. Brought in.

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