

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Great schools are an economic tool

From The Kansas City Star

Kansas lawmakers who oppose reasonable support for public schools are running out of excuses.

A new report says the state needs to spend an additional \$316 million next year simply to enable schools to comply with its own laws governing education.

The figure would rise to \$400 million if schools are seriously expected to meet performance standards set by the state Board of Education.

The findings, by the Legislative Division of Post Audit, reinforce what school board members and administrators have said for years — that public school districts, especially in poverty-stricken areas, can't properly educate children on the limited money the state appropriates.

While many lawmakers seemed resigned to finding more money, others talked about rewriting laws that set educational standards. Legislator Brenda Landwehr of Wichita described the report's conclusions as "assumptions and guesstimates," and said more fact-finding is needed.

But further resistance would be unproductive. The Legislature placed great faith in the study by its audit team, and the Kansas Supreme Court has indicated it will have little patience for delays.

Education funding has consumed the Legislature for the last three sessions. Lawmakers would do themselves and the public a huge favor by using the latest report as a tool to improve both overall funding and the formula that governs distribution of the money.

This is the time for (Gov. Kathleen) Sebelius and legislative leaders to draw up a plan that will treat taxpayers fairly and guarantee a high-quality education to all students.

Like nearly everything in Kansas government, any discussion of economic success returns to the issue of school funding. Great schools are a proven economic tool. It's past time for politicians to acknowledge that and fund the schools properly.

About those letters . . .

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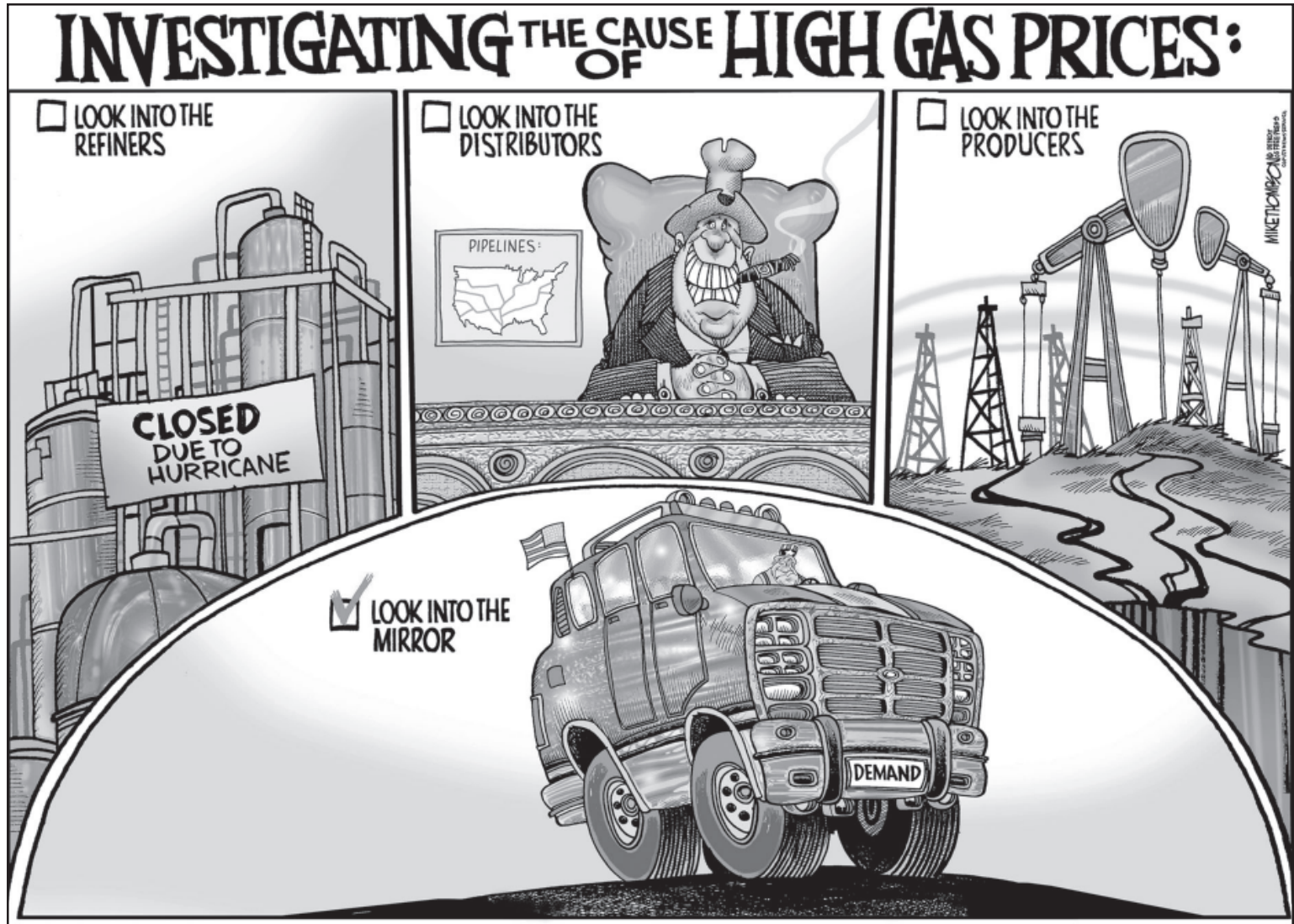
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Making a difference

If you haven't yet watched the documentary "Beyond the Gates of Splendor" I'd strongly suggest doing so.

The 40-minute documentary tells the story of the spearing deaths of five Christian missionaries in the Amazon basin of Ecuador Jan. 8, 1956.

Sunday marked the 50th anniversary of the deaths of Nate Saint, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully and Jim Elliot. Their deaths at the hands of Waodani tribesmen captured world-wide church culture and media attention at the time. Steve Saint, son of Nate Saint and bush pilot who made the first friendly contact with the tribe, narrates the documentary.

No human having ever made contact with the Waodani tribe, Nate Saint developed and carried out a plan of flying his plane in small circles while dangling a basket of gifts from it for the tribe. He and his fellow missionaries, encouraged by their families, spent hours making contact with the tribe to share with them their love of God.

Watching the film and seeing Saint depicted flying his bush plane made me think about growing up with my mom helping buy similar planes for similar purposes.

When mom was alive she was a member of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, LWML for short, and I'll never forget her tiny little mite box which rested on our kitchen window sill. It was in that mite box Mom put coins which were later added to a larger pool of money to buy bush planes as part of the Lutheran Association of Missionary Pilots (LAMP).

I contacted the organization and the administrator of it told me while the group purchased



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

five planes, only one is currently being used and it is in Alaska. She said today's method of reaching native tribes is the same as the one used by the missionaries' families to reach the Waodani - living among.

It's what happened the 13 weeks prior to that fateful Sunday which captured my attention the most. Those 13 weeks set in place that first touch of humans and God's love for the tribesmen. Those 13 weeks set in place proof that some things stay the same over time, as one of the tribesmen having been taught to fly by Steve Saint carries on Nate Saint's work.

Would I be so forgiving to teach someone who's family had been party to my parent's death to fly a plane?

Would I leave the comforts of my home in the United States to live in a jungle?

Would I share God's love with people who may not even know God exists?

I'd hope I would.

Watching the documentary made me ask myself, "Would I give my life for God as those five men did on Jan. 8, 1956?"

I was 10-months-old when the men were speared to death. I not only asked myself if I'd die for the Lord, I asked myself if I could muster enough forgiveness as the Nate Saint family did to live with those who killed one of my

loved ones. The documentary's companion movie "End of the Spear," which opens in theaters nation-wide Jan. 20, will tell the story from the tribe's perspective.

On Sunday my pastor said that there are four lessons to be learned from the documentary. Those lessons are the power of forgiveness, the power of love, the power of leaving a positive legacy, the power of God's word to transform individual people and an entire society.

Nate Saint and his companion missionaries' deaths and subsequent lives their families lived did all four of these things.

Their lives now, through these two films, teach us about forgiveness, love, legacy and transformation.

My pastor said through forgiveness hatred is "neutralized."

"We don't live for ourselves, we live to impact others," he said.

New Year's Day my pastor's son, also a pastor, preached at our church. The young minister dared the congregation to live the new year in six ways. He dared us to dream, encourage others, be positive ourselves, take time to rest in God's presence, love ourselves and others, and be passionate about something in our lives.

After watching "Beyond the Gates of Splendor," the young man's dad dared the congregation in a seventh area: dare to make contact.

Have an influence on the culture in which we live and share God's love with those around us. We don't have to fly to the Amazon to do it, we can influence those around us.

Are we willing to make contact?

Alito: A defeat for working women

By Martha Burk

When most people think about women's rights and the Supreme Court, abortion is the first thing on the list. Though organized women's groups are vehemently opposed to the confirmation of Samuel Alito to the high court because he is almost certain to vote to overturn Roe v. Wade, the right to privacy is not the only thing on the line for women.

In nominating Alito, President George W. Bush abandoned the idea of advancing gender fairness on the Court after his own side hounded Harriet Meirs into withdrawing.

Conservatives feared she would bring a woman's point of view to the bench, as have retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and the only female who will be left standing if Alito is confirmed, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. There's no substitute for personal experience, and both O'Connor and Ginsburg suffered sex discrimination in trying to get an education and a decent job practicing law afterward.

O'Connor was offered only legal secretary positions after getting her law degree. Ginsburg was asked by the law school dean what it felt like to occupy a place that could have gone to a deserving man, and she was refused even an interview for law clerk af-

ter graduating. The stated reason? Her gender. Those kinds of experiences undoubtedly played a role in Ginsburg's consistently pro-woman rulings and O'Connor's upholding of principles underlying women's rights in the workplace.

Alito's confirmation, if it happens, could also have profound implications for working women, only from the opposite point of view. Like the other seven men on the Court, he's never experienced sex discrimination first hand, so he doesn't see it as a problem. His record is clear - big business rules. During his 15 years on the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, he compiled a stunning record of backing corporations over workers in sex and race discrimination cases. He has bragged that he is "particularly proud" of his work in opposing affirmative action, and never expressed regret for joining a militantly anti-woman club dedicated to keeping women out of Princeton.

This mindset does not bode well for female employment rights. One case that could come before the Court in the near future just happens to be the largest sex discrimination suit in history, *Dukes v. Wal-Mart*.

Current and former female employees of the nation's largest employer are seeking

class-action status to pursue pay and promotion discrimination claims. They've won in lower courts, and Wal-Mart is, of course, appealing. If the case reaches the Supremes, a vote against the women could effectively torpedo female workplace rights for a generation.

Just as the Court itself is hugely gender unbalanced, so is the Judiciary Committee that will hold hearings on Alito's confirmation. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) brings the only female perspective among the 18 members who will vote on whether Alito's confirmation goes to the full Senate.

I'd bet money none of these 17 men have ever experienced sex discrimination either, so the topic is not likely to be high on their list of concerns. News reports do say some, including the Republicans, are very disturbed that Alito has backed the idea that domestic spying on Americans without a court order is OK. That may be the only hope for scuttling a nomination that otherwise will be a clear defeat for women at work.

Martha Burk is author of "Cult of Power: Sex Discrimination in Corporate America and What Can Be Done About It," released this spring from Scribner.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

