

# Opinion

## A Kansas Viewpoint

### Power plant to create problems

From The Salina Journal

We support large-scale projects in other parts of the state that promise economic development. But the proposed coal-burning electric plants for Finney County are a dubious idea that, in the long run, will harm the county and central Kansas — including Salina.

Sunflower Electric, Hays, has joined with power companies from neighboring states and is seeking permits to build three plants that will produce 2,100 megawatts of electricity. Plans are to join the new plants with Sunflower's existing Holcomb facility, making it one of the largest energy suppliers in the Midwest.

New plants would provide hundreds of jobs during construction and operations. They would generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in property taxes through their lifetime, reducing the tax load on county residents. Those are significant benefits.

Despite those positives, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment should put a hold on Sunflower's permit request. Coal is a dirty fuel, releasing more CO<sub>2</sub> than natural gas or petroleum, according to Salina's Wes Jackson, founder of The Land Institute. The plants will emit an estimated 15 million to 18 million tons of carbon annually. Congress recognizes the dangers of coal and new regulations are under discussion.

Apparently Sunflower wants to get this project under way before those restrictions are in place. ...Pollution from dirty fuel and aquifer depletion should be enough to stop this project.

Now add this: Less than 10 percent of the power generated would remain in Kansas. The rest would feed out-of-state utilities. It is a great deal for those companies. They make money selling power while sticking Kansas with pollution, depleted water wells and dry river beds.

The project should be delayed until Sunflower can deliver clean emissions and protect Kansas water supplies. Clean air and adequate water are more important than profits.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail [jvannostrand@nwkansan.com](mailto:jvannostrand@nwkansan.com) or [pdecker@nwkansan.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansan.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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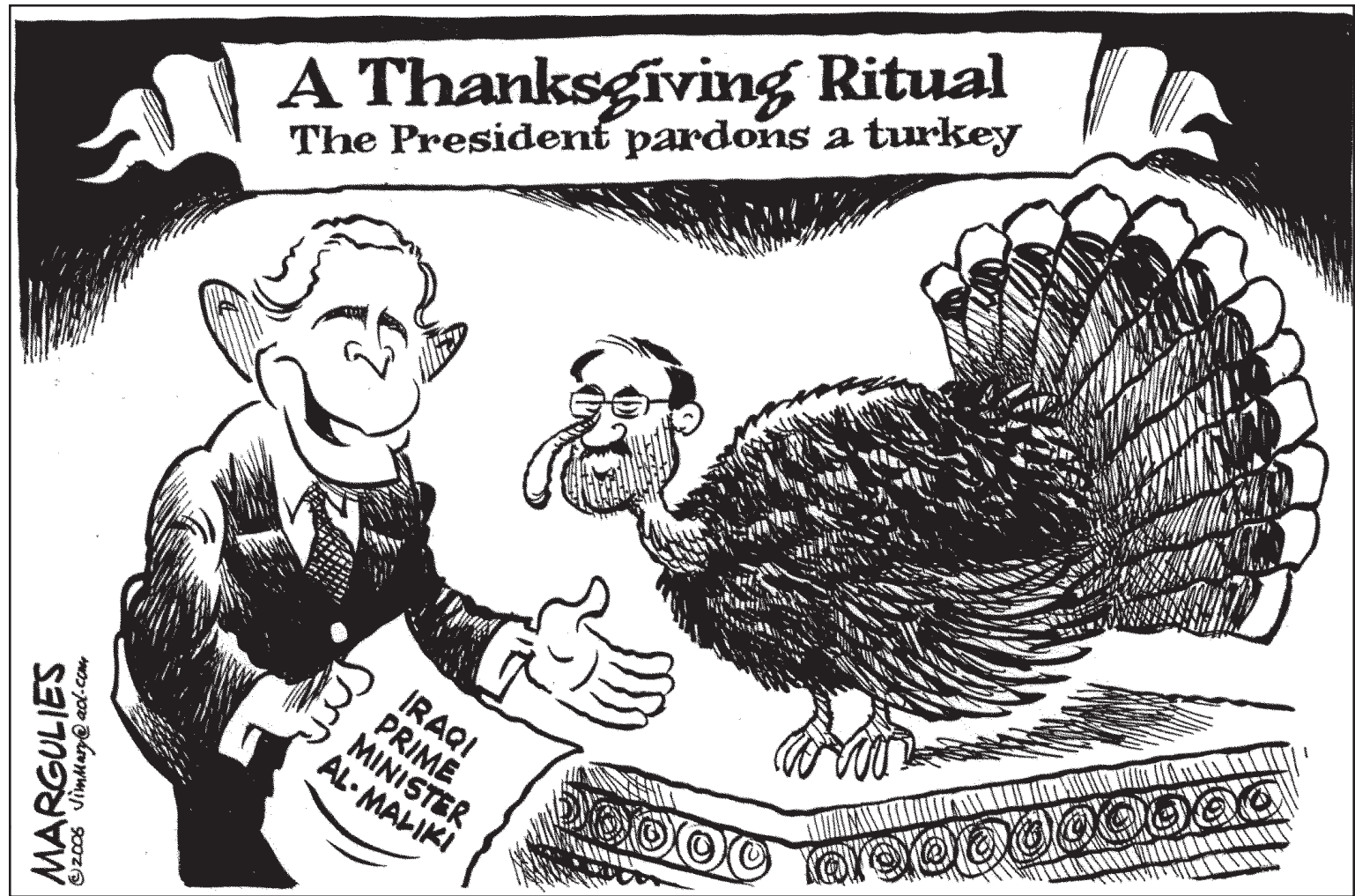
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### The public's right to know

Not only will the state of Kansas be on the map for its stance on public schools and the battle over evolution, Sheridan County will be on the map for its handling of the election process.

County Commissioners David Zimmerman, Keith Kennedy and Ron Schamberger are toying with the public's right to know what they are doing and they are gagging the public's voice — the ballot.

Zimmerman, Kennedy and Schamberger on Saturday denied the public's right to know they canvassed recounted votes from the Nov. 7 general election. A special meeting at 1 p.m. Saturday was not announced to the public.

Decatur County Attorney Steve Hirsch attended the special meeting, filling in for Sheridan County Mike Haas who was out of town.

According to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, when the public's right to know what elected officials are doing is violated, state law allows a \$500 fine for each violation. But the kicker is a county or district attorney is the one which must prosecute the violation before a district judge.

Haas isn't talking about whether he'll take the



**Jan Katz Ackerman**

#### • From Where I stand

commissioners to task about not telling Hirsch the Colby Free Press files a formal request to be notified about all meetings. That's yet to be seen.

County Clerk Paula Bielser was out of town when the meeting took place. Bielser knows who is on the list to be notified about meetings, but her deputy, Lea Herl, filled in for her and was not aware of who is on the notification list.

Not only did Hirsch fill in for Haas and Herl fill in for Bielser, Sheridan County Treasurer Esther Bainter filled in for Schamberger who couldn't canvass the votes because he was one of the candidates.

Whew, lots of people filling in for people who

should have been at that meeting. A meeting the public should have known about, even if it took place on a Saturday.

What a mess. See my point about Sheridan County being on the map. I'd bet Sheridan County is topic of lots of lunches this week in Topeka.

Votes from all elections have to be certified with the secretary of state's office, and Sheridan County's from the Nov. 7 general election recount have not been certified with the state.

While not the magnitude of the evolution issue, in my opinion when the commissioners opted not to certify the election, they gagged the public's voice.

Voting is a freedom American's should not take lightly.

There are several ways to handle Sheridan County's election mess, one of which has recall election written all over it.

And when the dust settles from this battle, I hope the voter's voice is loud and clear.

Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press.

### Giving thanks

On Thursday, I will most likely spend the holiday with various family members at my mother's home in Newton. At least that is the plan unless the Lord changes it.

I have to go to a meeting in Wichita on Tuesday, so I will be there until I leave for home on Thursday or early Friday morning.

Many others will be following suit, including many from our congregation. Some are leaving as early as Monday, while others are waiting until Wednesday. Some will be back by Friday. Others will not yet be back until Sunday.

There are others who, though they are not leaving town, are looking forward to a family get-together on Thursday.

I know Christmas is bigger, and more important to some, but it seems that Thanksgiving is the holiday where we all get together. Perhaps it is the extended amount of time off, so that working families can get away for that four-day weekend.

Maybe it is the lack of commercialization. It seems stores skip right from Halloween to Christmas and leave Thanksgiving peacefully alone in the middle, giving people time to renew ties without commercialism or expectations of huge credit card bills (that will come soon enough.)

I have to admit that my normal Thanksgiving celebration is not particularly social, but I guess that is to be expected from one who lives alone and has never been comfortable in a crowded room.



**Jay Kelley**

#### • Speaking MyMind

I usually spend the morning hunting, then go home and spend the afternoon reading, catching up on some work, or just puttering around the house.

This year will be one of those different years. There will be innumerable people at my mother's house: her family, my step-father's family and whoever else they have invited.

Apparently there is a social butterfly gene in my mother's family that I must have missed, but it will still be fun.

More importantly, it will be a time for giving thanks.

For one thing, my step-dad's youngest son is home from Iraq and that is enough cause for thanks all by itself.

Then there is the fact that many family members are scattered about and don't really see each other often enough.

Bob, my mother's husband, is trying to put together a pheasant hunting trip Thursday morning with about six of us. There will inevitably be some talk about football.

Mom's house has become the gathering place

as was her mother's before. The setting has been updated, but the atmosphere is the same. Family and friends gathered together to celebrate the bounty and refresh the relationships God has given us.

Yes, there is much for which to be thankful. There are the material blessings I have been given. I have the ability to drive my own car to Wichita, but many do not even have shoes, much less a car.

I will leave a warm house to go to another warm house, yet many families live together without heat, lights or even clean water.

There is the family who will welcome me home. There are many who have no family, perhaps because of some terrible tragedy. Even sadder, there are those whose families either do not care or commit unspeakable crimes against them.

I could go on about the advantages most of us have: education, opportunity and freedom many do not know. Yet, we too often take it for granted.

Yes, we need to do something about those who do not have the blessings we have been given. It should not, however, be guilt which drives us. It should be a profound gratefulness to God for what He has given us and the understanding that our blessings were meant to be shared.

So, let's be thankful. As for me, I'm going to pretend I like crowded rooms for a while.

Jay Kelley is a local writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is [jkelly@st-tel.net](mailto:jkelly@st-tel.net).

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