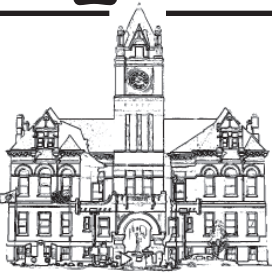


Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

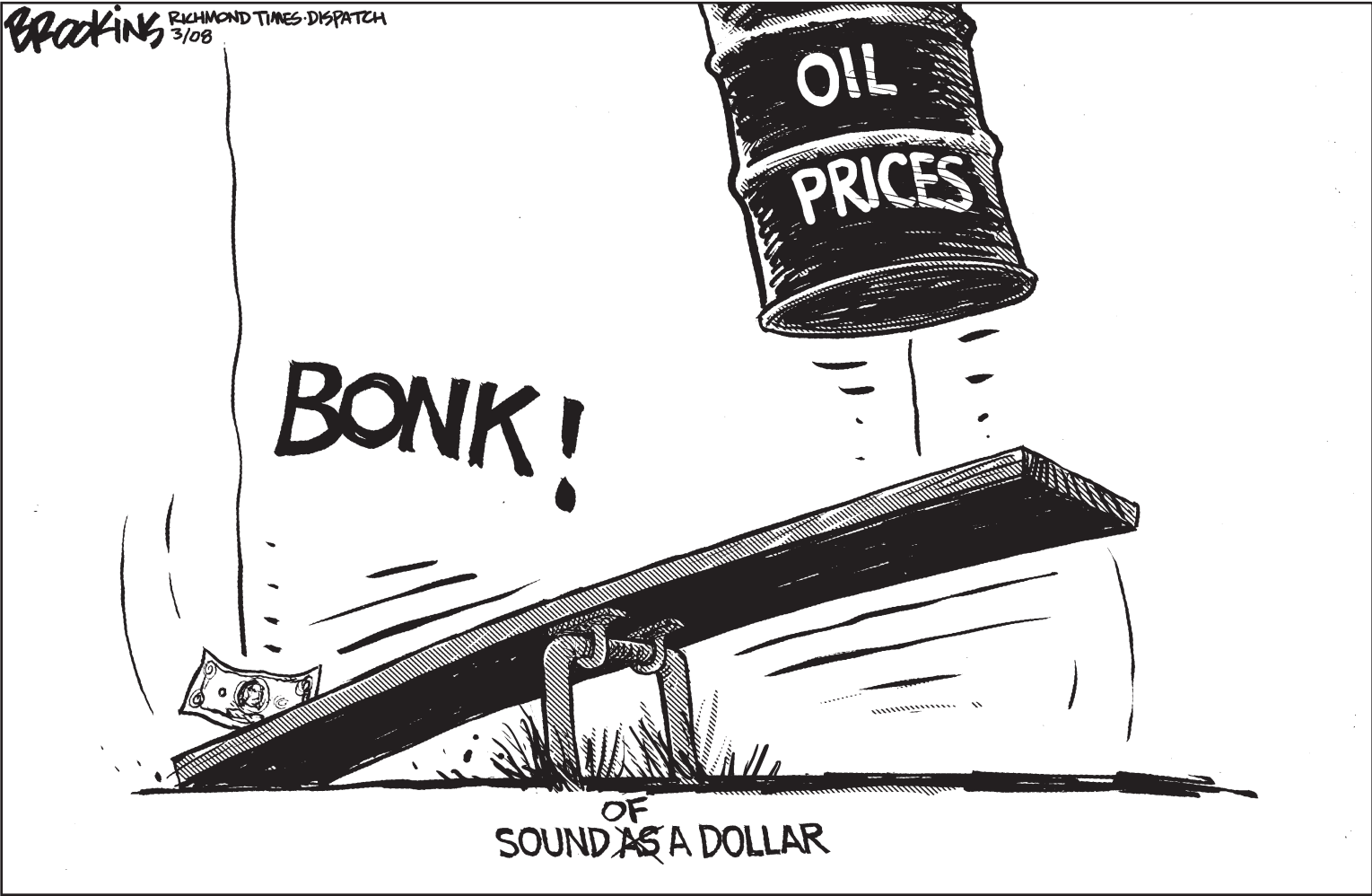
Half-measures won't protect air

From The Wichita Eagle
The science is clear: Smoking bans save lives. Far less certain, though, is whether city and state leaders can find the courage to pass meaningful smoke-free laws.
So far, it doesn't look encouraging. Lawmakers aren't willing to quit cold turkey. Instead, they're blowing smoke on the issue.
In Topeka, a Senate bill to enact a statewide smoke-free law is languishing in committee after being watered down to near meaninglessness.
Lawmakers included so many exemptions in the bill — for bars, casinos, nursing homes, cigar bars and tobacco shops — that even clean-air supporters couldn't see the point of passing it. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and other legislative leaders say it's on "life support."
In Wichita, the City Council, after a promising start, has retreated to crafting a "compromise" proposal that would exempt bars as well as restaurants that have a separate and supposedly airtight smoking room.
Employees could sign a waiver to give up their right to a healthy workplace.
Granted, compromise is central to the political process. But on this issue, the impulse to make everybody happy only compromises the health of Kansans.
... In several cities that have passed such bans, the rate of heart attacks has plummeted. There's also compelling evidence that smoke-free laws encourage adults to quit smoking and discourage children from starting.
At the same time, a review of the research found only mixed and uncertain evidence about the economic impact of smoking bans on businesses. Most studies of bans do not show a significant impact on restaurant, bar and gaming revenue.
Our political leaders need to do the right thing and take a firm stand for clean air. Half-measures won't protect public health.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.



Are you a baby person?



Jan Katz Ackerman
• From Where I stand

Twice this week I've received e-mails with photos of babies attached. While that may not seem out of the ordinary for most folks, it's something I'd normally pass by because I'm not a baby person.
Or am I?
The first photo was from a business associate in Florida who just returned to work and wanted me to see her new baby. Born in January, the baby is as cute as a button, bald as one too. But, she stole my heart. There she was, sitting on her mommy's lap sucking her thumb. I'm saving that photo to insert in her graduation card.
I've never met her mom other than over the phone, but doing business with her for the past three years we've become friends. Making the baby afghan for her was my pleasure, and I'm sure to send birthday, Christmas and Easter cards on an annual basis.
I don't know what it was, but the two of us ladies have become friends and while we live half a country away from each other that bond of friendship grows. And now, with the birth of the baby, my heart is softening toward babies. A surprise to me.
Don't get me wrong, I'm the mother of two. My oldest is my son and the youngest, a daughter. No grandchildren, just a grandcat, Gus. Anyway, back to babies.
The second photo was from my oldest niece.
There, looking at my computer screen I saw my great-nephew. Open mouth and showing off his first four teeth and one bubble. Such a cutie.
The little guy had a smile as wide as his face, and again, my heart melted as I looked at him and remembered moments with his mom when she was that age. Not yet 1-year-old, but on top of the world.
And then I opened photo number three. I was a baby person.
My nephew was sitting in his high chair, leaned to the right, arm tucked under his head, fast asleep. Such a sweet baby.
I thought back to a similar photo of my son in just about the same setting. What baby hasn't fallen asleep in his or her high chair? I don't know what it is that was so different about looking at this latest photo of a baby sleeping in a high chair, but it appears that I'm softening toward babies.
Never a babysitter as a youth or young

adult, I went to college to attain a secondary education degree. I love being around teenagers, those older than 14 that is. Babies and I, other than my own two, have never mixed. Until now. These recent baby photos have me looking at children in a new light. Cute to look at, nice to cuddle, but still able to send them home.
However, my niece and her baby plan to visit Hoxie this summer, and I'm looking forward to it with great anticipation. Can't wait to see how many more teeth and bubbles he'll bring to the picture.
Just goes to prove, even hearts like mine can soften toward babies.
One particular baby I'm so very happy that made his mark on this old world was born more than 2,000 years ago. There, lying in a manger, his birth would set the world on a new path. A path that takes us to Sunday, the day we celebrate his resurrection after having been nailed to a cross to die for our sins. Had that little baby not been born, we would have been doomed to a life of fire and damnation.
Oh, how I now look at babies so differently than before.
Thank God for each and every one of them. Happy Easter and please celebrate it in the church of your choice.
— Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

Congress extends Farm Bill one month

By Rep. Jerry Moran
This week, Congress passed a short-term extension of the 2002 Farm Bill for the second time in four months.
Disagreement over funding levels has held up the farm bill process since before Christmas. Farmers and ranchers deserve more certainty than the inaction of Congress has given them. I was hopeful we would not get to this point, but this is what happens when the well-being of farmers and ranchers is not a high priority in Washington, D.C.
House Improves Ethics Enforcement
The House passed a measure this week to strengthen congressional ethics enforcement. For the first time ever, an outside board will be established made up of individuals who are not Members of Congress to investigate alleged ethics violations by representatives.
Members of Congress should be held to a high ethical standard. I supported this action to increase the openness and accountability of the ethics process to the American people.
The independent Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) will consist of six members who will screen allegations of wrongdoing made against House Members and pass these concerns to the House Ethics Committee for further consideration and action.
Working to Improve Rail Service
There are more than 500 short line and regional railroads operating over 50,000 miles of track in our country today. Short line railroads are the arteries Kansas producers use

to get their commodities to market. Without these important transportation pathways, Kansas farmers would have a much more difficult time shipping commodities.
Legislation I introduced became law in 2004 that gave short line railroads an incentive to invest in maintaining their rail lines. These incentives spurred investment in the more than 2,000 miles of short line rails in Kansas.
According to a Kansas Department of Transportation study, short lines in western Kansas save the state \$49.5 million annually. In Washington, D.C., this week, I was honored to receive an award from the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. The provisions encouraging investment have since expired and I am again working to extend tax incentives that will improve rail service in our state.
Visiting with Kansas Rural Leaders
I had the opportunity this week to speak to the Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership (KARL) Class IX when the group was in Washington, D.C. for its National Study Tour. KARL is a leadership program that brings together Kansas' agricultural and rural leaders to enhance communication skills and broaden perspectives.
Class IX participants range in age from 25-55 years old and come from a wide range of business enterprises related to the agricultural industry and rural community development. Thanks to KARL President Jack Lindquist for the opportunity to visit with the group. I

hope the group's time in our nation's capital will help the members become more effective leaders and advocates for rural America.
Members of this year's class that were in this week included Brooks Brenn of Herndon, Josh Jennings of Colby and Brian Waugh of Oakley.
Kansas Farm Bureau County Presidents
On Tuesday, I had the privilege of speaking at the Kansas Farm Bureau County President's Annual Washington, D.C., banquet. I enjoyed seeing so many friendly and familiar faces from across Kansas. County Farm Bureau presidents are leaders in their local farm communities and I was glad to have the opportunity to discuss current policy issues with them during their time in our nation's capital.
Big First Listening Tour Continues
From Capitol Hill to Bunker Hill, I will continue my Listening Tour.
My upcoming schedule is below.

Monday, March 24
Greeley County Tour Stop, Tribune
Time: 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. MDT / 12:00-1:00 p.m. CDT
Location: Greeley County Hospital Lobby, 506 Third St.

Wednesday, March 26
Logan County Tour Stop, Oakley
Time: 3:45-4:45 p.m.
Location: Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center, Room A, 703 W. 2nd St.

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

