

Other Viewpoints

Shifting winds fit new situation

Kansas Democrats are wrong in trying to paint Sen. Sam Brownback as an opponent of a \$1.8 million federal grant for a rail spur for Hutchinson's new Siemens wind turbine plant.

Yes, it is true that Brownback, a candidate for governor, voted against the \$787 billion economic stimulus bill that Congress passed in February. A sliver of that money later was earmarked for construction of the Siemens spur.

Brownback, Kansas' senior senator, had no way of knowing in February which projects in Kansas would benefit from stimulus money. He voted against the act on principle, but likely knew full well some of the money would finance projects he could support.

Kansas Democrats don't see it that way. They recently called Brownback hypocritical because of a statement he issued that noted his approval of infrastructure development in Hutchinson, most notably the rail spur for the wind turbine plant....

If the news is that politicians are hypocritical, then that is not news at all.

Democratic and Republican politicians alike trip over each other in rushing to take credit for federally financed projects in their home states. Sometimes their votes in Congress don't necessarily jibe with their celebratory press releases.

But it is misleading for Democrats to denounce Brownback as a hypocrite simply because of his support of one stimulus project paid for by a bill he voted against. There likely will be other stimulus-financed projects the senator celebrates. He as much said so in February when explaining his vote in Congress....

Instead of looking under every rock to undermine and discredit Brownback, Kansas Democrats instead ought to focus their efforts on more positive endeavors, such as finding a viable and worthy Democratic opponent to run against him in the 2010 Kansas governor's race.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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Ships, new and old, part of port's charm

We got to spend most of the week in Mobile, Ala., a one-time sleepy southern port city that seems to be slowly coming to life, at least partly due to investments by the state employee's retirement fund.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

The combined Retirement Systems of Alabama (separate funds for teachers, state employees and judges) maintain most of their money in stocks and bonds, as most such operations do. But they put a small, if significant, share into real estate and business investments, many of them designed to boost the economy of their own state.

The agency has put millions into resort and business hotels across Alabama from Auburn to Mobile. These in turn bring visitors, conventioners and others to the state to spend money.

Another major focus is the "trail" of Robert Trent Jones-designed golf courses which have become a major draw. The Mobile riverfront has two big Marriott hotels towering over the quay where, thanks partly to state investment, Carnival cruise liners dock once a week or so. The retirement system also owns the historic Battle House downtown. (The systems also invest in several dozen small-town newspapers through a company known as Community Newspaper Holdings Inc.)

All that investment seems to be sparking a gradual revival of Mobile's old downtown, where an entertainment district is developing along Dauphin Street. Restaurants range from the traditional Wintzell's Oyster House to sushi and trendy pizza, bars from college hangouts to fine wine.

From the hotel window, you can see the outlines of old slips where Liberty ships and landing craft took form during World War II. Port activity declined after that, but Carnival,

tourism and the remaining defense work are changing that.

You can see two eras of naval history from the window: The historic battleship USS Alabama sits in 17 feet of mud out in the bay to the east, where she's been an attraction since the people of her namesake state raised more than \$1 million to save her from scrapping in 1964.

The mammoth ship is the star of a military history collection that includes aircraft, from a float plane once used on a battleship to modern jets, plus tanks, artillery and a World War II submarine. There's a preserved B-52 in Vietnam-era camouflage, a World War II Navy Corsair and an Air Force F-16.

Us boys could have spent a day or two on the ships. On the Alabama, you can take marked tours or just wander through the amazing spaces, from the bridge down to the engine rooms and the berthing areas. Much of the ship is open and available.

Then, you'd need another day for the planes and tanks. Great stuff.

But berthed on the river is one of the Navy's newest weapons systems, known as a littoral combat ship. LCS 2, to be the Independence, is



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

It may be a big pickup, but it doesn't come even half-way up the gun turret of the USS Alabama. A caterer had parked his rig after unloading food and gear; concrete bridges allow vehicles to drive right up onto the battleship's expansive fantail. The Alabama's been moored in Mobile Bay since the 1960s.

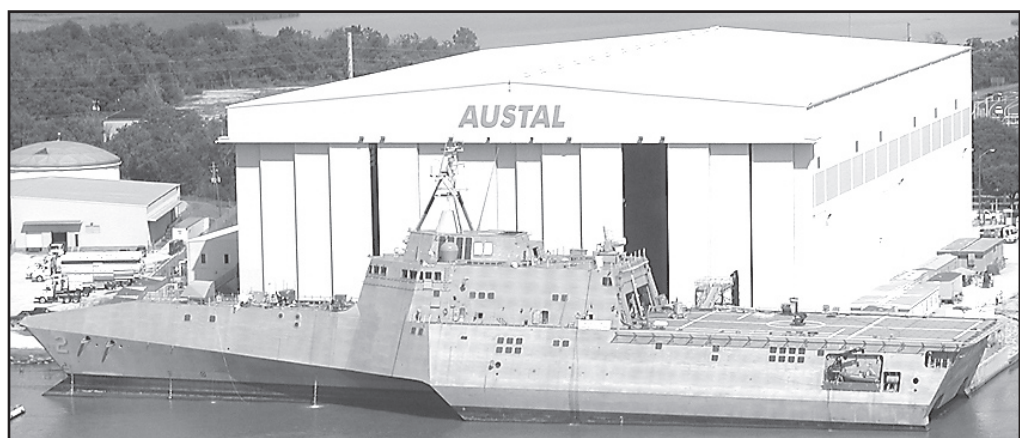
berthed at the Austal shipyard for refitting after builder's trials. This version, built by a team led by General Dynamics, will compete with a version being built by Lockheed-Martin. Both are capable of going close in to shallow waters where larger ships would be in danger, and of sprinting to 45 knots (about 52 mph).

And those of us who got to see it where pretty impressed by the catamaran hull, angular stealthy profile and anti-radar surface coating. "Can you take a picture of that?" someone asked.

Guess you can when it's parked on the river. I'm sure the Chinese already have.

After visiting the Alabama, strolling along Dauphin (Everyone here says "hi" as they pass. Everyone.) and downing some oysters at Wintzell's, we went out for shrimp and crab at a place on the causeway. It's not Aspen or Telluride, but it is not bad duty either, sailor.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains — and ships.



One of the Navy's prototype littoral combat ships, Independence, LCS 2, looked sleek and fast, which it is, docked in Mobile, Ala., after sea trials. Smaller than a destroyer, the ship can run 45 to 50 knots (about 55 mph) and fight close in shallow water.

'40 Days for Life' aims to end abortion

To the Editor:

On Wednesday, Sept. 23, the largest "40 Days for Life" prayer campaign in history was launched in 212 cities across 45 American states, five Canadian provinces and Denmark.

Responding to national director David Beiret's question, "What is 40 Days for Life?" Bishop Richard Malone of Portland, Maine, offered about the best one-sentence answer I've seen: "40 Days for Life is the work of the Holy Spirit, a divine inspiration in the ongoing effort to end the plague of abortion," he said.

For 40 intense days, tens of thousands of



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

faithful volunteers will be praying, fasting, holding peaceful vigils outside abortion facilities and spreading the pro-life message through

community outreach.

Thankfully, we do not have any abortion clinics in western Kansas, but we can join these prayer warriors throughout these 40 days with individual or group prayer. This campaign is ecumenical and supported by people of all faiths. Go to 40daysforlife.com to sign up to have the daily message sent right to your e-mail address.

I urge you to participate in this prayer campaign as we strive to eliminate the terrible scourge of abortion from our beloved country.

Joan Albers, Colby

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

