



Free Press Viewpoint

Freedom loses some more ground

Bit by bit, America drifts and slides toward becoming a high-tech police state. Bit by bit, freedoms slip away. And it always sounds like a good idea. There is no enemy on the left – or on the right. The threat comes from the bureaucracy, the security apparatus, from authoritarian thinkers on either side of the aisle.

Think this is silly? Then why are all the supposedly conservative Republicans in Topeka patting themselves on the back for passing a law forcing all Kansans to show a photo ID card before they can vote? Election fraud's never been a problem here. What's next? Roving checkpoints where police ask for citizenship papers, as in some communist dictatorship from the Cold War era? Oh, we call those drunk-driver check points. Hunting license checkpoints. Drug interdiction lanes.

If you think our liberties are not fading, try to get on an airplane without your ID. If you're stopped for some traffic infraction, the officer is likely to chat you up. He may ask where you've been. If you're hesitant, he might ask if you'd mind him searching the car.

It's loads of fun, having your car unpacked and dismantled while you sit beside the road.

The other day, Homeland Security agents took over the train depot in Savannah, Ga. They stopped and searched anyone who entered, whether they intended to board a train or not.

Who knows if the Transportation Security Administration has that authority. But rail security sounds like a good idea. Government computers track your movements, your bank accounts, much of your life. And the government can access private computers – at the phone company or the bank or the credit-card company, the airlines, a hundred other firms – and track the rest of your ways.

All this is done for the best of reasons. For our own good. Airport security is vital in the age of terrorism. Transportation Security agents, someone points out, have never caught a terrorist. They have "caught" thousands of people for minor criminal offenses, however.

Isn't election security "vital to democracy?" How did we ever get by without it for two centuries. Still, it sound like "a good idea." Same for "enhanced" border security, with computers tracking not only the comings and goings of foreigners, but of Americans as well.

Your bank is under orders to track your finances, especially cash you might come across, and report if you exceed certain limits. You might be a drug dealer or tax evader, after all. And we all want them caught, right?

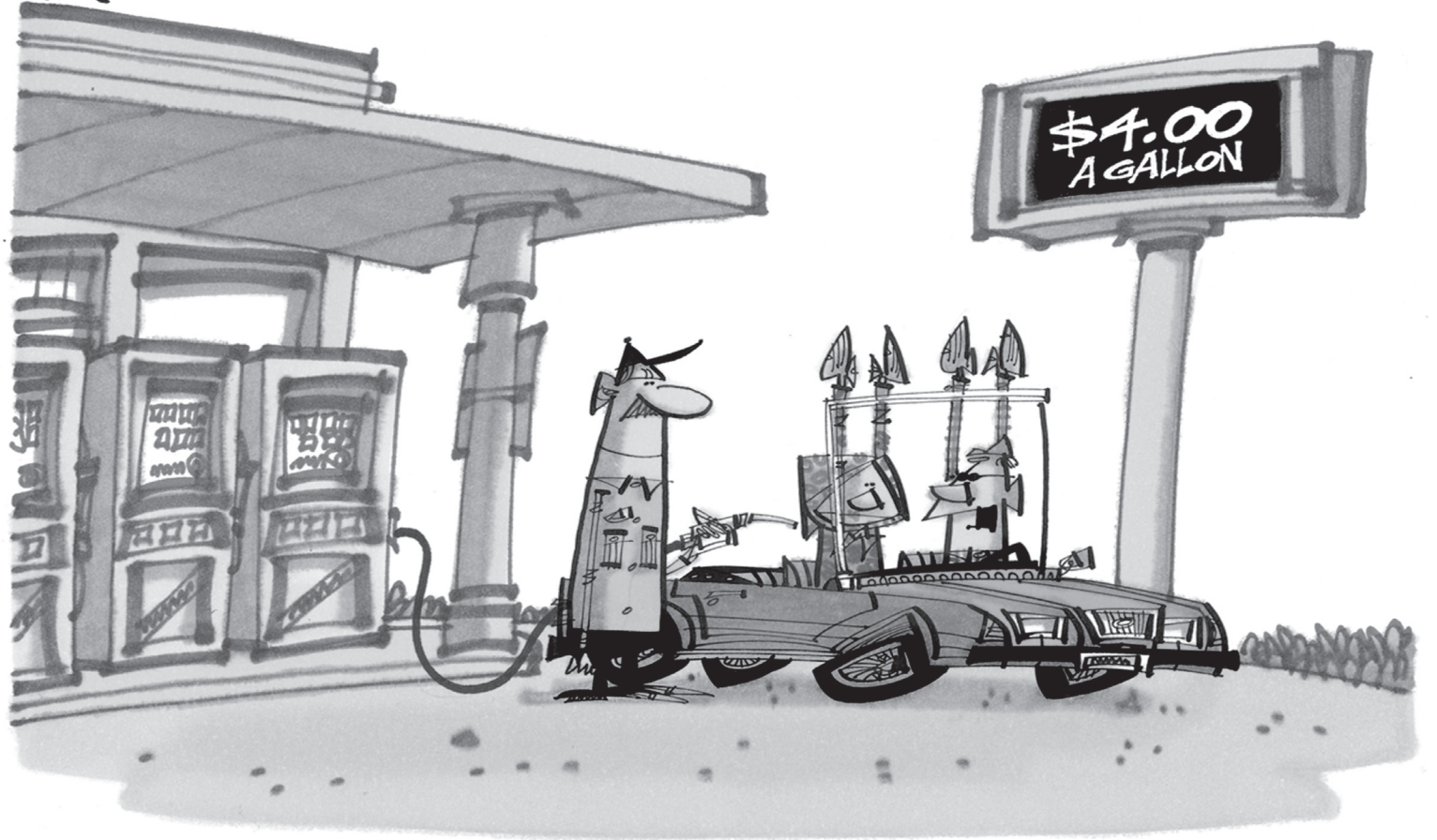
But when does "enhanced" security impinge on our rights, especially the right to privacy? When is security too much? Will we wake up one morning and find out that, instead of the government serving us, with all those computers, cameras, records and files, that we must serve the government?

If that day comes, when it comes, it will be far too late to complain. Records will be made; action taken. No, the time to defend liberty, as always, is today. Each policy, from the grossly misnamed "Patriot Act," to the latest "voter security" laws, needs to be questioned.

The best level of government involvement in our lives is the least possible. We need to avoid the point where ever-tighter security of all kinds becomes a straightjacket for America.

Ask questions today, not tomorrow. – Steve Haynes

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"REMEMBER WHEN PEOPLE USED TO ROB GAS STATIONS?"

Spring tilling yields surprise harvest

I planted some carrots last year. As the season progressed and the vegetables started rolling in, I got more and more behind on weeding and picking.

It got so the garden was a time-consuming monster that spat vegetables at me every time I walked out the door.

Don't get me wrong. We loved the vegetables.

It's just that we suddenly had dozens of peppers, too many tomatoes and squash we couldn't even give away. Add to that the corn, green beans, broccoli and cucumbers and we had more than we could eat and almost more than we could give away.

Now, remember, I don't can. I'll cut up some of the peppers to freeze and stuff others for later use. I dried a few of the cherry tomatoes but still haven't figured out what to do with them.

I was just plain overwhelmed and it was time to dig the carrots.

Steve suggested that I could just leave the ones I didn't need in the ground. He had read that you could leave some root vegetable like



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

carrots in the ground until you were ready to use them.

Sounded ideal to me. (It also sounded like he had been reading the helpful hints in my women's magazines, but I let that pass.)

So I left them. And left them. Eventually, I ran out of carrots and decided to dig a few up.

By then, however, it had frozen and the ground was like iron. I tried a hand digger, a shovel and a potato fork. I finally pried some out of the ground using a screwdriver and a hammer. Talk about your hard-to-get produce.

I figured that the carrots that I had were what I was going to get and the rest would freeze in the ground and be mulch for next year.

Nope. When Steve was tilling the back of the garden, orange lumps started appearing. Now, my carrots weren't what you find in the store. Most of them looked more like the "baby" variety.

But the carrots that came up with the tiller were in good shape, except of course for the ones that got sliced and diced in the process. I went out and gathered up a basketful of carrots. They were tasty. Oh, about half had to be tossed out because they were too damaged to keep. The other half have gone into a couple of batches of homemade soup and some slaw.

I'm not sure if this is really the best way to store carrots, but it worked for me. And this year, I'm sure I'll get to them before the freeze.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

U.S. needs to achieve energy security

Rising gas prices and recent events in the Middle East have demonstrated once again the importance of having access to an ample domestic energy supply oil which is both affordable and reliable.

Higher fuel prices increase operating costs for Kansas businesses and are particularly challenging for those living in rural Kansas, who drive long distances each day to work and school.

For the United States to remain competitive in the global market and meet our country's energy needs, Congress must develop a comprehensive national energy policy. No single form of energy can provide the answer.

To reduce our dependence on foreign sources, we must develop domestic resources of oil, natural gas and coal; encourage the development of renewable energy sources; and promote conservation.

President Obama recently announced that the U.S. Export-Import Bank approved a loan to help Petrobras, Brazil's national oil company, explore for oil off its coast. While this decision will help the Brazilian economy develop its domestic energy industry and bring new oil supplies to the world market, we are left to wonder why the president refuses to allow development of our own domestic oil supplies. A recent report from the Congressional Research Service found that our country's resources are far greater than those of Saudi Arabia. China and Canada combined – in fact, our recoverable oil, natural gas and coal supplies are the largest on the planet.

Yet in 2009, the Obama Administration cancelled 77 oil and gas leases in Utah and last year, suspended 61 leases in Montana. The administration has also restricted access to oil and gas exploration in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and off the Atlantic coast – although these two areas hold commercial reserves of 28 billion barrels of oil and up to 142 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

I am concerned these moves only serve to discourage domestic production at a time when we need to be focused on long-term energy independence. Last week, I joined 28



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

Senate colleagues in asking President Obama to review and change regulations that are hampering our energy production.

I also recently joined U.S. Senator David Vitter in introducing a bill, the 3-D Act, to encourage domestic energy production and create jobs. The act would force the Obama Administration to re-issue cancelled oil and gas leases, open formerly restricted areas such as the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve for oil and gas development in a responsible manner and streamline the environmental review process to allow for meaningful reviews while also preventing energy development plans from being continuously tied up in court.

In addition to developing domestic resources, we should pursue renewable energy sources, including the production and use of biofuels. Like domestic oil production, these fuels enable our country to be less dependent on foreign countries for energy.

Current biofuel production represents nearly 10 percent of our country's transportation fuel supply, and the next generation of biofuels nearing commercialization holds great potential to expand that percentage. Development of oil and gas resources and the development of renewable energy are not mutually exclusive – both should be allowed to move forward.

Energy exploration must also be accompanied by energy conservation. When Americans drive more efficient vehicles and use energy-conserving buildings, we will consume less energy. In past years, I supported an increase in fuel efficiency standards for vehicles and initiatives to encourage the creation of more energy-efficient buildings and appliances. Congress must continue to look for opportunities to advance practical and cost-effective

methods to reduce overall energy usage. This is an important moment and an important opportunity. As gas prices continue to escalate and political events in the Middle East threaten to disrupt the flow of oil, we must come together to end energy complacency once and for all.

Higher energy prices are not only threatening our global competitiveness, they are hampering our economic recovery. From fossil fuels to renewable resources, I remain committed to developing a comprehensive energy policy that builds on the Kansas spirit of self-reliance, innovation and creativity.

Jerry Moran of Hays is the junior U.S. senator from Kansas. His committee appointments include Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Veterans' Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Committee on Aging.

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