



Other Viewpoints

Make redistricting transparent, fair

State lawmakers need to make the process of redrawing the congressional, legislative and State Board of Education districts as transparent, fair and nonpartisan as possible. Admittedly, that's asking a lot of politicians.

Lawmakers are constitutionally required to redraw district boundaries every 10 years to make sure that one person's vote in one district has about the same weight as the vote of any other person in the state. That may seem relatively simple – all you need is the 2010 census, a state map and a calculator. But it can be complicated, akin to piecing together a jigsaw puzzle.

Population changes – mostly from rural to urban areas – necessitate shifting territory from some districts to others. That's why, for example, the "Big First" congressional district keeps getting larger and now covers most of the state.

In some cases, current legislative districts have to be combined, resulting in incumbents competing against each other in newly formed districts. Lawmakers also need to avoid dividing "communities of interest" or diluting the voting power of minorities.

The shifts create an opportunity for the political party in control to redraw districts in ways that protect their incumbents or improve their odds of winning seats currently held by members of the other party. That's why districts can end up looking like they were drawn with an Etch-A-Sketch.

This editorial board has supported creating a nonpartisan, independent panel to redraw districts, similar to those used in Iowa and other states, as a way to reduce the politics and gerrymandering and prevent incumbents from being able to draw their own districts. Attorney General Derek Schmidt championed such a change when he was a state senator, but it didn't get anywhere.

The last time lawmakers redrew boundaries, after the 2000 census, then-Attorney General Carla Stovall challenged their map in federal court. The dispute nearly postponed an August primary.

Current lawmakers are starting preliminary work on redistricting but are waiting for the 2010 census to be adjusted for Kansas students and military members living outside the state, which may not be completed until July. They have indicated they will try to be fair and logical in drawing new districts.

They need to be. Redistricting is supposed to be about ensuring equal rights, not about political games.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press*

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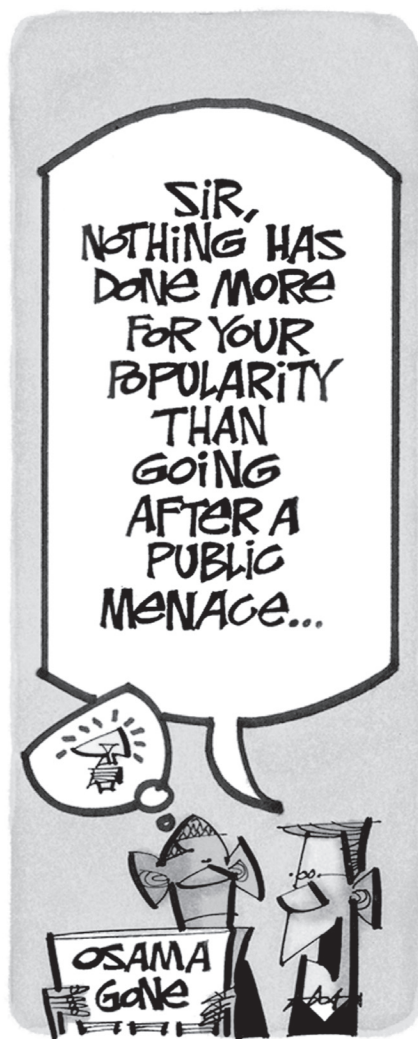
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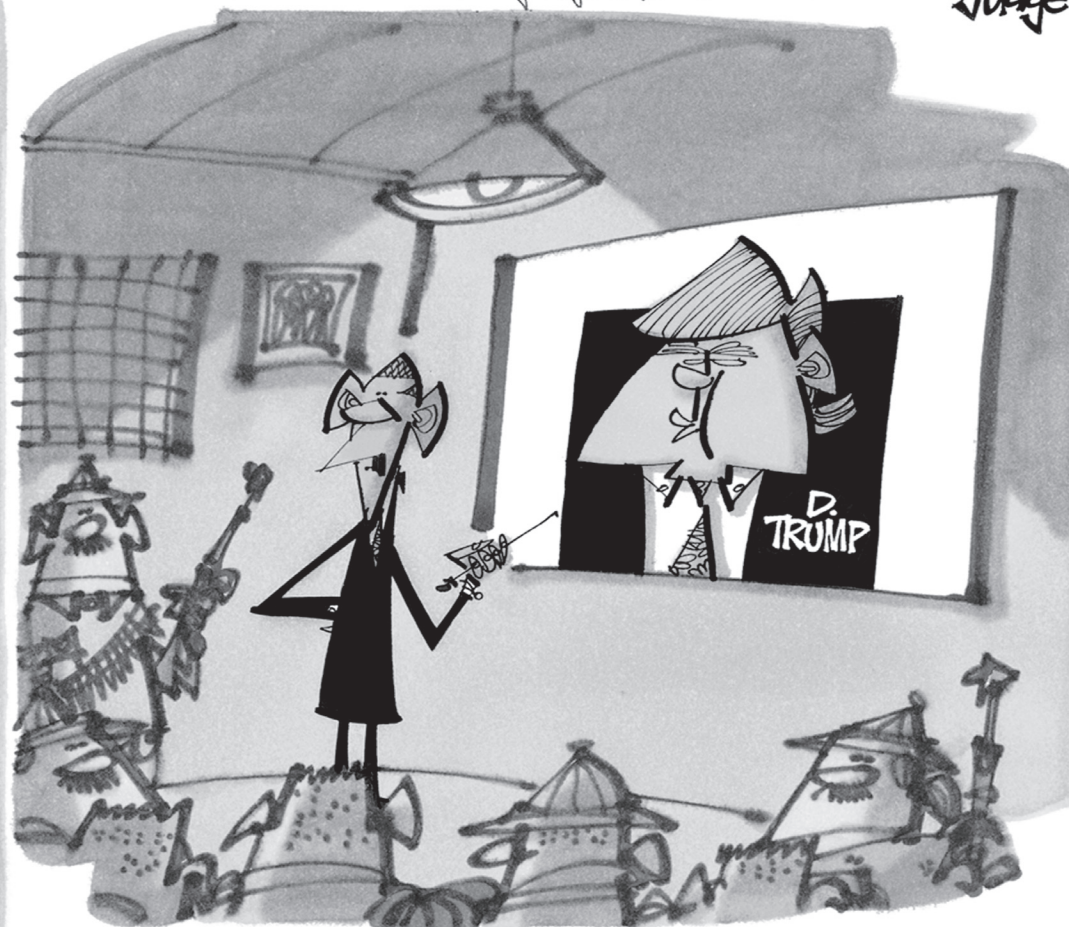
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Judge



"MEN, LISTEN UP..!"

Sitting at the gate makes wait longer

The big jet's problems should have been a sign for us, I guess. Not a good one.

The Airbus had spent the night in Augusta, Ga., normally the home of tiny, cramped "regional jets" that ply air commuter routes for lines called "Connection" or "Express."

By big, I mean a 320 model, about the size of a Boeing 737. Not a big airliner by today's standards, but it looked pretty big in Augusta.

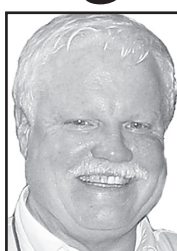
One of the ground-crew guys said starting about a week before, the Airbus was Delta's last flight out of Atlanta to Augusta at night and first flight back in the morning. Many days, it's full, he said, so who knows. Delta has tried bigger planes in Augusta before.

"But this one has problems," he added, nodding at the gate. "Should have been gone 10 minutes ago."

Indeed, ground crew members were commiserating with the pilots as we talked.

I wandered over to the other gate, where our U.S. Airways Express ("Operated by Air Wisconsin") flight was about to board. Only the gate crew didn't seem to be in much of a hurry. Finally, they let us out on the ramp and we gate-checked our "carry-on" bags. No way we were cramming those oversized "rollies" into the tiny overhead bins of that little jet.

Time came to leave – 7:10 a.m. – and time passed. Nothing happened. Finally, the pilot came on the intercom. Charlotte had heavy ground fog, he said, and so with the possibility of circling while it cleared, they took on more fuel. Only the crew overfilled the plane, and now it was too heavy.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

"Weight is an issue," he said dryly. "I'm not sure why they overfueled it, but we had to call another fuel truck to take some off. They say that might take half an hour. But then we might have to wait for Charlotte to clear up before they let us take off."

Anyway, we taxied out on to the ramp. Delta was ahead of us, so I presumed that Atlanta wasn't doing much better than Charlotte. We parked behind the Airbus.

The airlines, it seems have taken to heart the new federal regulations – and fines – for holding people on the ramp forever against their will.

Sara Jane, our cabin attendant, began serving coffee and juice to the passengers. One asked to be let off so he could either walk to Charlotte, only about 165 miles away, or take another airline, whichever was faster.

In fact, we calculated later, we could have driven faster. But we didn't have a car, and our daughter Felicia, who had gotten up at 5:45 a.m. and put on slippers to drive us to the airport, wasn't likely to take us to Charlotte.

A few minutes later, the pilot announced that he was going back to the terminal to let the guy

off who wanted to walk. The woman ahead of us said brightly that she'd like to get off, too. Sara Jane had to explain that she wouldn't be able to get back on if she did.

Anyway, the pilot said by the time we'd finished that, Charlotte ought to be able to take us. At the gate, an agent came on and noted that many of us were going to miss our connections. And we'd thought an hour and a half was plenty of time for breakfast and a stroll in Charlotte.

The agent said he'd start rebooking us on later flights. We left about 2 hours, 20 minutes down, and when we got to North Carolina, the computer in fact showed us with seats on an 11:50 a.m. flight to Denver, rather than 9:23. I'd say that agent did a great job, rebooking 50 or so of us that morning – at the same time people from 20-30 flights into Charlotte had to be reconnected.

(We've had worse days flying. The time we hit a blizzard in Denver comes to mind. We got the last plane out that day, but our luggage spent the weekend in the Bahamas while we went to Park City, Utah.)

By the time we hit Denver this time still two hours down, we went about our business, bought fried chicken, apples and bread for a picnic on the plains and hit the road for home.

I sure hope those Delta people got to Atlanta OK.

Steve Haynes is president of NorWest Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Gas prices critical for western Kansas

While traveling across Kansas for 13 more town hall meetings during the past three weeks, I heard a myriad of concerns and ideas from constituents. One issue that arose in places like Sharon Springs, Colby and elsewhere was the concern about rising gas prices.

The high cost of gasoline hits Kansans who just need to get from point A to point B, to take their kids to school, or to operate their farm or other business. The high costs are also placing a tremendous burden on entrepreneurs who have to charge consumers more. But Kansans aren't looking for another 1970s approach demanding we consume less energy by doing fewer things – they are looking for answers that do not disrupt their ways of life. What some environmentalist elite just don't get is that in Kansas there is no alternative to driving. There is no other way to get from point A to point B but with a car. There is no way to transport western Kansas products to market but by truck or train. Therefore, the solution is more energy, not less.

Increasing production not only lowers prices, but also creates jobs, helps families trying to make ends meet, and enhances national security by reducing our dependence on foreign sources. High gas prices are a matter of supply and demand. When Washington chokes the supply, costs go up. When Washington empowers drillers to add to the supply, costs go down.

This week, I joined some of my colleagues in the Republican Study Committee in co-sponsoring the Consumer Relief for Pain at the Pump Act. This bill adds to production by offering short-term solutions for dealing with high prices of gasoline now and long-term so-



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

• Capitol Notes

lutions for improving the energy marketplace in the years to come.

First, it repeals the President's "permatorium" on drilling on the outer continental shelf, which includes the Gulf of Mexico. Though the President has officially lifted the ban on drilling imposed after the Deepwater Horizon explosion last spring, the administration has effectively maintained that ban by delaying the permitting process for new leases. If the President truly cares about reducing unemployment, then stalling drilling permits and effectively killing tens of thousands of jobs is not the answer.

Second, this bill repeals the "Wild Lands Policy" that permits the Department of the Interior to stop energy development in America. Not only does it lift this authority from the Department, but it also streamlines the bureaucratic process and establishes a judicial review process for permitting procedures. Trial lawyers and special interests are allowed to exploit the current system, harming consumers.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, this bill releases the regulatory grip of the EPA on America's energy production. Through this legislation, the EPA would be barred from imposing regulations in the name of global warming and without Congressional consent.

Unelected bureaucrats have been handed too much power over our energy policy; decisions over energy policy should rest with those who can be held accountable by the voters.

This bill is a step toward reducing gas prices. Even more importantly, it is a part of a comprehensive, all-of-the-above energy strategy that is about meeting our needs and preparing for the future. It also recognizes that we are not going to transform the way we consume energy any time soon. Instead, with less regulation and more production, we have a real solution to high energy prices.

Rep. Tim Huelskamp of Fowler represents the 1st Congressional District of Kansas.

Write us

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

