

## Free Press Viewpoint

### Flint Hills defense helps our rural life

Two things that happened in the past week will have a big impact on the Flint Hills grasslands region of Kansas and Oklahoma, and those of us around the state should applaud.

First, Gov. Sam Brownback announced an agreement with energy companies that no more wind farms will be built or expanded in the Heart of the Flint Hills area.

The idea of wind farms in the scenic Flint Hills has been controversial from the start. The governor announced an agreement among the state, Flint Hills ranchers, preservationists, wind developers, power companies and government officials to expand an area of the tallgrass prairie to be free from new commercial wind farms.

While the pact exempts current wind farms with commercial contracts, it prohibits further development in the hills, the last large remnant of the tallgrass prairie that once covered much of the Midwest.

The move upset some local officials and wind promoters, who wanted to see more wind turbines added to existing farms, but it will not prevent new or beefed up transmission lines to move wind energy to urban areas.

Brownback noted that of 400,000 acres of tallgrass prairie, only about 4 percent remains, most of that in the Flint Hills. He said the area should be preserved for ranching and tourism, not energy development that would mar the vistas.

County officials and landowners in some counties have complained, especially in Cowley County, site of an existing wind farm. They cited property rights and landowners' rights to develop their land in opposition to the pact.

That said, we feel the governor did the right thing to protect this precious resource.

Then this week, Sen. Jerry Moran announced along with Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma that they have introduced a bill to exempt Flint Hills ranchers from regulation by the federal Environmental Protection Agency when they burn off dead grass and other waste each spring.

The burning is considered a key to the health of the region's pastures, which have changed little since the days when buffalo roamed. However, a concentrated schedule of burning pushed by state and federal regulators has been blamed for high pollution readings in Wichita and Kansas City.

Sen. Moran's bill would exempt the ranchers from federal regulation, essentially taking the federal agency and the state Department of Health and Environment out of the equation. The agencies have been pushing a complicated schedule for burning which has not eliminated urban complaints.

These ranchers have been burning their pastures to preserve the land for more than a century, long before Wichita and Kansas City were big enough to have a pollution problem. The season lasts only a few weeks in the spring, and the smoke dissipates. It should be a non-issue.

We say Sen. Moran is right; the ranchers should be free to continue traditional practices.

While neither of these moves will much affect northwest Kansas directly, they represent a strong push to preserve a rural way of life and a scenic area important to the whole state.

Both deserve our praise.

— Steve Haynes

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail [colby.editor@nwkansan.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansan.com). Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

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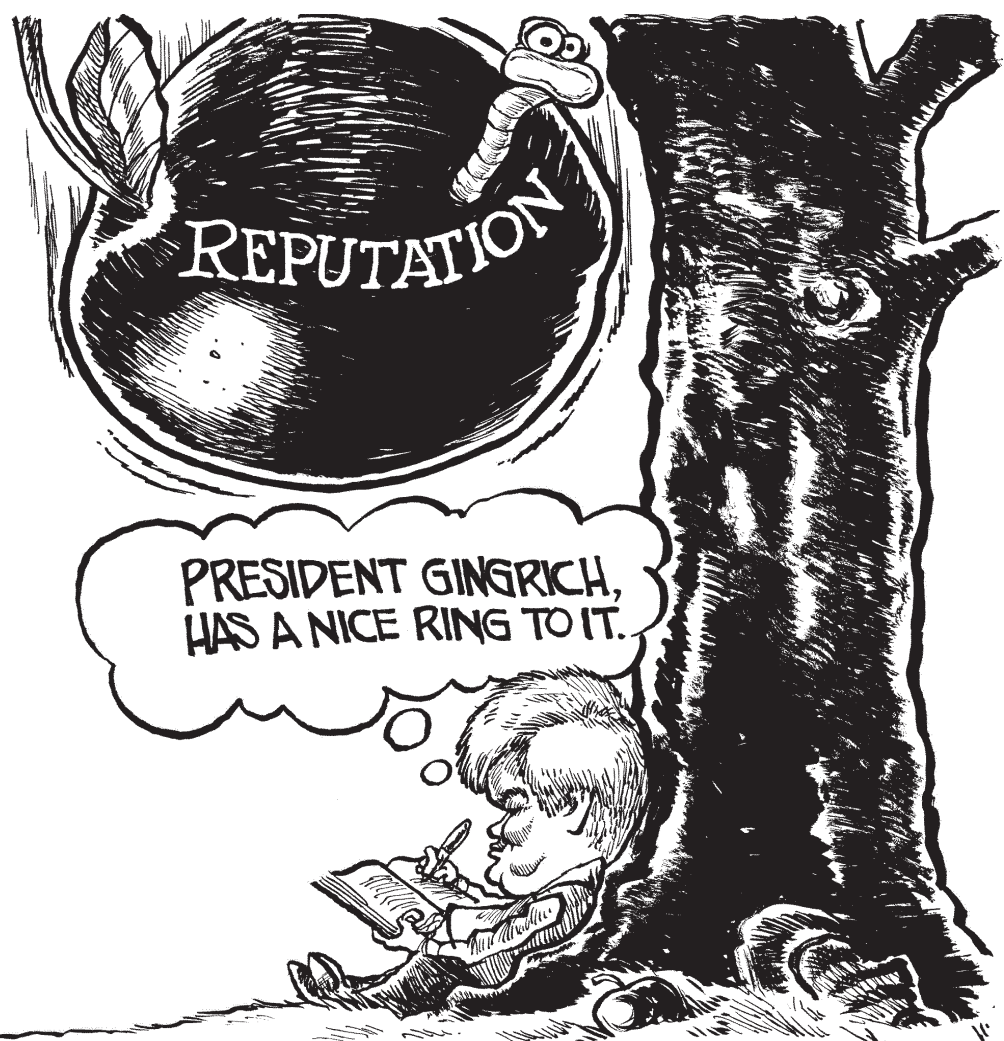
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## NEWTON'S APPLE



**JEFF DUFF** [duffyink.com](http://duffyink.com)

### Why Colby? Why not Colby

When I was given the opportunity to interview here for the publisher's position, the first thing that my husband and I noticed was how very friendly Colby is. I had been spoiled by the friendly nature of West Texas and was afraid that I wouldn't find another community as neighborly. Colby was a pleasant surprise.

As I have been making calls on local businesses for our graduation special, I was frequently asked, "Why Colby?" I think the better question is, "Why not Colby?" Colby has so many great things to offer for the long-time resident and for the newcomers.

I have really appreciated the many welcomes that have been offered to me and how helpful everyone has been on telling me where I can find various services. You'd be amazed at how many simple things can become complicated without this kind of advice.

Moving is the great adventure, no matter how well prepared you think you are. You first find out much "stuff" you own — and where has it all been hiding? As boxes were being



**Sharon Friedlander**

• Publisher's Musings

packed, I began to think that someone else must be adding to my "stuff," because surely I couldn't have enough to fill all those boxes!

Well, as it turns out, I do actually have that much. As I watched the movers load the truck, I started to wonder where I was going to put it all once I got to Colby.

That thought really came back to me as I watched that truck being unloaded. Our new home was flooded with a sea of boxes. I just stood at the door and played traffic director for the movers.

I am still hoping I find everything that needs to be unpacked very soon. Mover logic

in packing is never the same as mine. Some boxes must have been packed with the leftovers from every room in the house, or they had a wicked sense of humor. I just hope to find all the pieces that go together for my pots and pans.

I can't wait to be finished! I am reasonably sure there was a floor in the house before I moved in, and my mission is to find it.

I know my husband and I are going to enjoy Colby, and we do appreciate all the "welcome to Colbys" we have received. We have met a lot of folks since arriving here and hope to meet many more of you as we attend the many functions around town.

Be seeing you soon!

*Sharon Friedlander, publisher of the Colby Free Press, enjoys reading, hot rods and critters. Contact her at [sfriedlander@nwkansan.com](mailto:sfriedlander@nwkansan.com).*

### We're broke, need change of direction

"We've come to a turning point, a moment for hard decisions. We must act now to protect future generations from government's desire to spend its citizens' money and tax them into servitude when the bills come due." — President Ronald Reagan, 1985



**U.S. Senator Jerry Moran**

• Moran's Memo

When President Reagan delivered that call to action during his second inaugural address, our national debt stood at \$1.8 trillion. Today — 26 years later — that number has soared to \$14.3 trillion, and the federal government has reached its debt limit. Congress will soon vote on whether to raise the nation's debt ceiling for the eleventh time in the last decade. Our country is at a crossroads; the time to heed Reagan's warning and right our nation's fiscal course is now.

President Obama has confidently stated, "We will raise the debt limit. We always have. We will do it again."

If only it was that simple. The hard truth is our country is broke. In the last two years, government spending has grown nearly 25 percent and we currently borrow 40 cents of every dollar we spend. This year alone, the federal government will spend \$3.7 trillion and collect \$2.2 trillion. That is a shortfall of \$1.5 trillion. Common sense — Kansas common sense — tells us this pattern cannot continue.

The fact is our national debt is the responsibility of several Congresses and presidents — from both political parties — who have allowed us to live well beyond our means for far too long. And simply raising the debt limit, as President Obama has asked Congress to do, is a nod toward continued complacency.

But, complacency is no longer an option. This was made clear at the end of April when Standard and Poor's, one of the world's big three credit rating agencies, downgraded the United States' future financial outlook from "stable" to "negative." The announcement sent shock waves through the stock markets. The agency said the U.S. has "what we consider to be very large budget deficits and rising government indebtedness — and the path to addressing these is not clear."

The credit agency is exactly right; it would be reckless to allow our pattern of spending

and borrowing to continue without a serious plan in place to reduce the national debt. Americans are paying attention, and are looking for leadership in Washington to confront these problems.

On Thursday, I had my first meeting at the White House with President Obama since becoming a member of the U.S. Senate. The topic of discussion was deficit spending, the national debt and the pending vote on raising the debt limit. Prior to the meeting I had notified the President that I will not vote to raise the debt ceiling without a significant reduction in spending and a change in the way business is done in Washington.

This change will take the leadership of President Obama and willingness from both political parties as we work together to craft a serious plan to reduce our debt. The plan must include significant spending reductions, a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution restricting Washington's ability to spend money it does not have, and reforms to address our long-term unfunded liabilities.

Some say we need to raise taxes to get us out of this mess. But we don't have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem. Experience shows that more money raised by Washington, D.C., results in more spending in Washington, D.C. President Obama proved this to be true during a recent speech when he called for tax increases to pay down our debt while, in the same breath, spoke about the need for "additional investments." Call it what you will, "investment" simply means more spending.

In addition to restraining spending, we must put in place policies that grow the economy and put Americans back to work. By saying "no" to more spending and "yes" to pro-jobs measures, we will reduce the uncertainty in the marketplace, encourage business invest-

ment, become more competitive in the global economy, and most importantly create jobs.

The consequences of failing to control our debt will be greater than failing to raise the debt ceiling. The time to correct our failures is now. This is not an academic discussion. It is not a partisan discussion. This is about the future of our country, the standard of living Kansans enjoy, and whether or not there is an American dream to be lived by our children and grandchildren.

*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. To sign up for his weekly newsletter, Kansas Common Sense, visit [moran.senate.gov](http://moran.senate.gov)*

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