



## Other Viewpoints

### Arts financing cut does not compute

Do the math. Gov. Sam Brownback earlier this year shuttered the Kansas Arts Commission when he used his line item veto power to cut all the agency's funding – \$689,000 – from the state budget.

That minuscule \$700,000 didn't make a dent in budget reductions, yet the governor was determined to leave an agency, which operated with a small staff, without any state aid.

It hasn't taken long for Kansas to feel the ripple effects from Brownback's nonsensical decision.

The National Endowment for the Arts can't offer matching a matching grant as it did in the past because there is no money to match. An endowment official recently told a *Topeka Capital-Journal* reporter that the loss of state aid for the arts commission prevents federal grant support.

The announcement was followed recently by similar bad news from the Mid-America Arts Alliance. In recent years, Kansas has secured more than \$1.2 million in grants from the two agencies.

So let's do the math: The governor decided to save the state \$689,000 so it could lose more than \$1.2 million.

This is not rocket science. State officials always should look at potential losses in federal aid before reducing or eliminating state aid.

In addition to Kansas suffering the ignominy of being the only state that doesn't provide financing for the arts, programs in rural areas – which lack the benefactors and supporters found in urban areas – will face drastic reductions or, in some cases, simply disappear.

Public school students will miss opportunities to see live theater and participate in other cultural events.

Small counties with thriving arts programs will cut cultural activities and raise ticket prices for various events.

"It's just been the biggest fiasco ever," noted Peggy Cummings, executive director of the Bourbon County Arts Council in Fort Scott.

Fiasco, indeed.

Art is education; education is the arts.

Clearly, Brownback could benefit from some education about the arts, but his first classroom stop ought to be Math 101.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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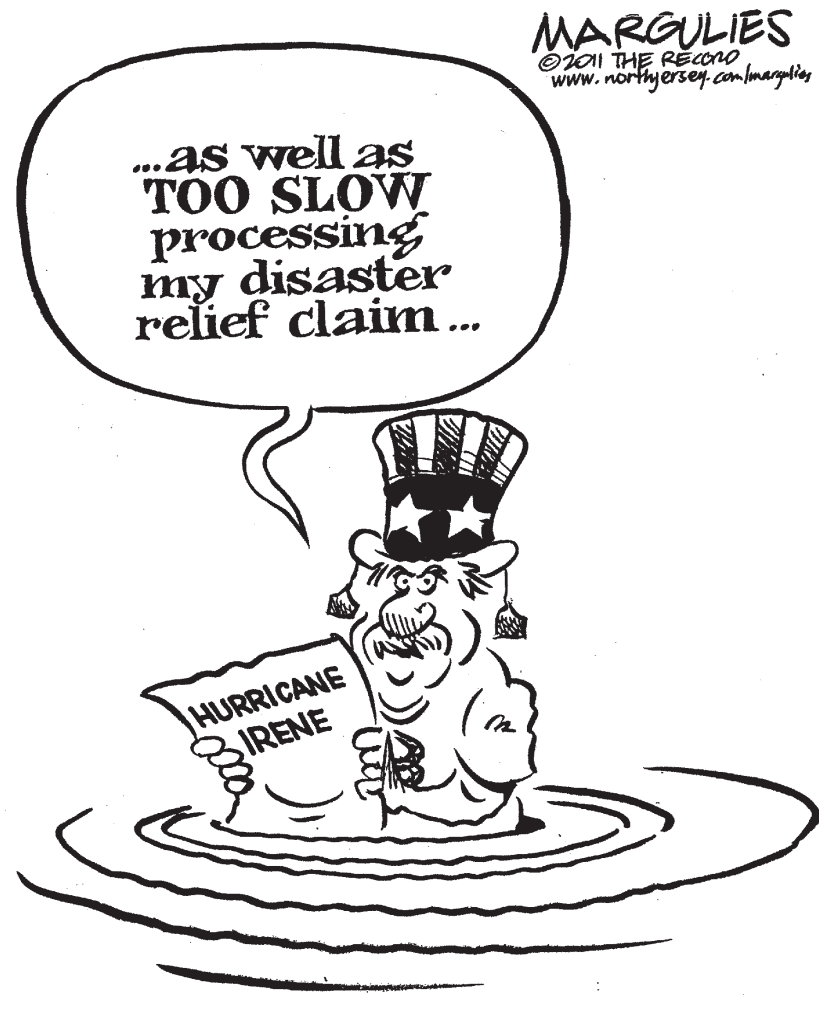
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## What future is there for Postal Service

Where is the U.S. Postal Service heading, and what will our mail service look like five years from now?

The new postmaster general, Patrick Donahoe, is pushing to remake the service as a lighter, leaner operation. Donahoe, who took over the top job in October, wants to cut \$1 billion from the operating budget just this year.

Faced with a potential loss of \$8 billion to \$9 billion this year alone, however, he needs a lot more than the cuts his people have come up with so far.

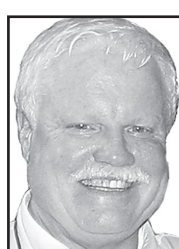
His biggest cut, by far, would be to end Saturday delivery of mail, cutting service from the traditional six days per week to just five. That alone is not going to save the postal service.

Even the postmaster general has speculated about a future with three-day delivery, and that is a real possibility in small towns and rural areas.

"Once they go to five-day delivery," one congressional aide involved in negotiations on a "reform" bill asked, "What's next?"

She said some planners have visions of the Postal Service "as an elite delivery service focused on (delivering advertising) in the cities."

The picture you get, talking to people in Washington, is that Congress is not going to do much to "save" the service, at least not right away. No one wants to get involved in another



**Steve Haynes**

• Along the Sappa

messy federal bailout.

Our U.S. senators, Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran, are aware of the problem. Sen. Roberts says the Postal Service is the next big "debt ceiling" issue Congress has to face, referring to the fact that the service will tap out its available credit this year and could be insolvent by next summer.

Sen. Moran has questioned the need and the procedures used for the planned closing of thousands of post offices, many in rural areas. (The service is studying upwards of 3,600 mostly smaller offices, dozens of them in Kansas, more than 10 percent of all post offices.) He's also supported six-day delivery, and he has some say on that as a member of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, which covers postal bills.

While the committee is trying to come up with a "Senate" bill to restructure the postal system, the attitude in the House is "hands off." House Republicans characterize any at-

tempt to help the service as "a bailout."

But the service descends from an operation founded before the Constitution. It was the first and biggest domestic program of the federal government, and its efforts knit the nation together. The history of the mails, of newspapers and of democracy twines together throughout our history.

Is the service now obsolete, or is it a vital national interest worth saving?

Pat Donahoe hopes he knows the way. He's slashing jobs and expenses, closing plants, re-drawing the transportation system. He knows he needs help from Congress, especially relief from \$5 billion a year in unneeded pension payments which now flows into the federal treasury – or did until the service stopped making some payments.

The smart money says nothing will happen until the "problem" becomes a crisis. Then Congress will do something, maybe not the right thing, but something. Meantime, Mr. Donahoe will keep slashing, trying to keep the beast afloat.

And it'll be harder to find a post office, buy a stamp or mail a letter on Saturday, especially out here in the country.

*Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.*

## Environmental train wreck coming

For years, Kansans have enjoyed lower electric rates than our friends and neighbors living in other parts of the country. That's because the electrical generation system we rely upon was built primarily in the 1960s and 1970s. As this system ages and our energy needs change, routine upgrades have been necessary to meet new environmental standards and to increase our generation capacity. To pay for these upgrades, we have all seen increased electric rates in recent months.

But, if the Environmental Protection Agency has its way, further increases will be much more dramatic – not to mention unnecessary.

Recently, the agency ruled that Kansas is among the states that must address Cross-State Air Pollution. Their ruling caps some of the pollutants associated with electric generation at levels well below what was allowable in prior years. While I applaud the effort to clean up our older electrical generation units, I am shocked at the short timeframe in which we must comply. The agency added Kansas to its list at the last minute, leaving us with a deadline to be compliant by 2012.

To make matters worse, the environmental agency is also considering a rule that would not allow existing electrical generation units to use water direct from their reservoir for cooling. Under this rule, units like LaCygne and Wolf Creek will be required to install a closed loop system, such as cooling towers – an upgrade that is estimated to cost U.S. consumers

### Other Opinions

• Senator Pat Apple Committee on Utilities

\$64 billion!

But, that's not all. The agency is now considering a rule that would hit smaller communities the hardest. This ruling would eliminate the use of rotating internal combustion engines for electrical generation. Electric utilities owned by small towns typically utilize such units, such as diesel generators, for peak generation. These small towns usually buy their base load from larger utilities because it is cheaper than operating a smaller generator. If this new rule is adopted, these units will no longer be allowed, leaving them to be sold for scrap metal or for use in foreign countries and, thereby, reducing our own country's generation capacity.

All of these changes will affect Kansas consumers – like you and me – more so than they will affect consumers in many other states. Why? Because, on the national level, we generate 49 percent of our electricity from coal. But, in Kansas, we generate along the lines of 80 percent of our electricity from this re-

source.

Some of the major electric utility companies have documented the anticipated effect of these rules, referring to the impact as the "train wreck." According to their projections, the "train wreck," which will occur if the agency adopts these new rules, will significantly drive up electric rates for consumers and reduce our electric generation capacity by 8 percent.

The bottom line is this: We need to take a rational approach in this country to upgrading our electrical generation system. We can – and must – keep our Kansas skies safe and clean. But, we can do this without inflicting dramatic rate increases on Kansas families and business owners. People have struggled enough already in this economy. The Environmental Protection Agency's proposal would cast a wet blanket over the entire Kansas economy with rules that are too broad, too overreaching, and that carry an unrealistic implementation deadline. The agency should target U.S. power plants that are using older technology for pollution control, starting with the dirtiest plants first.

I urge you to call your Kansas Congressional delegates and tell them "thank you" for their work to stop this train wreck from happening. Let's hope the rest of Congress will follow their lead.

*Senator Pat Apple of Louisburg is Chair of the Kansas Senate Committee on Utilities.*

### Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area

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Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

