



Other Viewpoints

State should be open about rules

The legal right to abortion doesn't get much respect in Kansas anymore. But as the state and its attorneys defend new overreaching anti-abortion legislation against the inevitable lawsuits, they at least should be less disdainful of federal judges and open government.

U.S. District Judge Thomas Marten had to order the state in federal court in Wichita to resume the flow of federal family planning funds to Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri – and quarterly, as in the past, rather than monthly, as the state preferred.

Whatever the eventual fate of the new law aimed at stripping Planned Parenthood of \$330,000 in Title X funds, the judge temporarily has blocked its enforcement while the legal challenge proceeds. The state should not have spent nearly a month avoiding Marten's ruling and, in the process, risking closure and curtailed services at Planned Parenthood offices in Hays and Wichita where 5,700 patients are served – and no abortions are performed.

"The court finds no injury to the defendants in maintaining the prior payment schedule, as they will be providing funding in a manner consistent with prior practice between the parties, and to an organization which has consistently provided satisfactory family planning services," Marten wrote in his order. So the state was right to agree to pay up.

Meanwhile, the state should stop fighting disclosure of how it crafted temporary new rules and regulations specific to abortion providers. Lawyers for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the attorney general want to keep two affected abortion clinics from learning how the rules were drafted as their legal challenge to the new clinic law moves through federal court in Kansas City, Kan.

Maybe it can be argued in court, as the state's lawyers have, that "legislative immunity" applies to the executive branch's implementation of new abortion regulations. But why not just be open about where the rules came from?

Denying open-records requests about the drafting of the rules, as the state also has done, also invites distrust, suggesting that the state now has something to hide about regulations sold by pro-life legislators last spring as crucial for "the safety and health of women."

Given how quickly the Department of Health acted once Gov. Sam Brownback signed the bill May 16 – having the 36 pages of new rules ready June 17 and using them to deny licenses to the clinics even before July 1 – it's more than fair for Kansans to wonder where the regulations came from.

The Brownback administration shouldn't tout the rule of law, transparency and limited government in some matters and then, when it comes to abortion, flout a federal judge and operate as a heavy-handed and secretive regulatory authority.

– The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press

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155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

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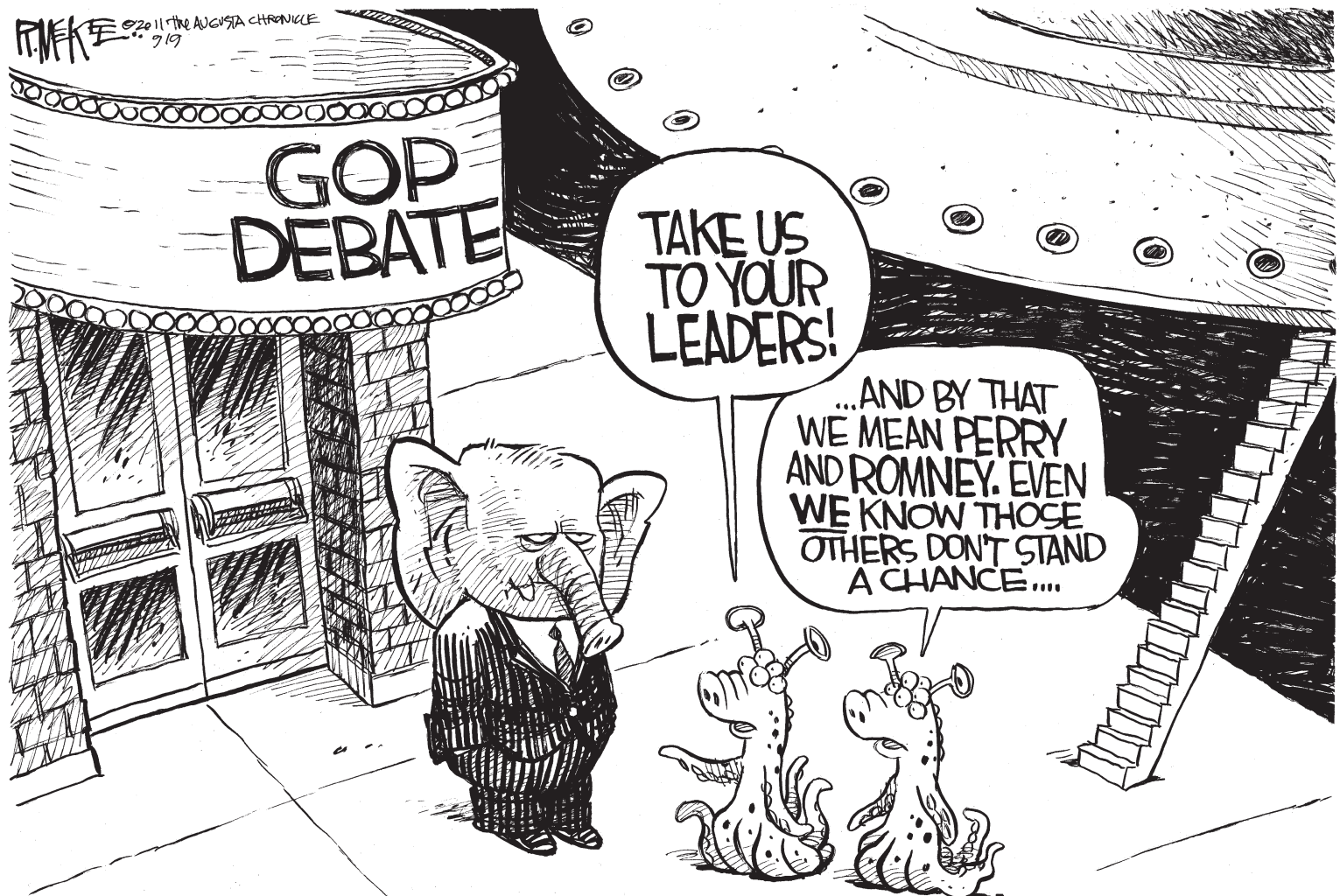
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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



Wind energy offers clean growth

The moment is approaching when our nation must decide how it's going to power the future. The importance of renewable energy to the nation becomes clear as Congress turns its attention to energy policy this fall, as we examine the importance of true energy independence and security more closely, and as we continue our work on rebuilding the economy and job creation.

Experience has taught us that investments in the renewable energy economy is creating jobs across all employment sectors, including construction, engineering, operations, technology and professional services, in both rural and urban communities.

Greater use of renewable energy also will allow the country to prolong its current power generation resources while developing new generation technologies to ensure a secure and homegrown supply of energy.

I've stated that our citizens won't fully embrace emerging energy technologies until it's in their best economic interest to do so. As I meet with business leaders from around the world, they're increasingly drawn to powering their facilities with wind in an effort to align their business practices with company philosophy.

Others have been hesitant to embrace renewable energy sources such as wind power, citing a potential increase in cost compared to traditional sources. Many have forged ahead, confident the long-term benefits of renewable energy will outweigh the short-term costs.

Re-Evaluating the Economics

Now, as power prices for new wind generation continue to deflate, many businesses are re-evaluating the economics. We, as a nation, have been waiting for the moment when a true balance between environmental concerns, economic benefits and energy needs is in view. I believe that moment has arrived.



Sam Brownback

- Kansas Governor

At the national level, we've moved towards this balance by deploying powerful tools, such as tax incentives to support investment in renewable energy projects and grants to encourage innovation in clean-coal technologies. The wind industry has utilized a production tax credit, which has helped the industry see steady growth this decade. I support the continued use of those tools as a way to spur investment in our communities and create sorely needed jobs.

In Kansas and the lower Midwest, our local utilities have designed and are constructing an electric transmission system that ensures greater reliability for our residents, offers access to competitively priced power, and dramatically increases our ability to move renewable energy across the country.

Energy Highways

Other private companies are working to develop renewable energy highways -- dedicated transmission lines -- that can transport thousands of megawatts of renewable energy from the Midwest to population centers in the East, thereby providing access to clean, reliable and affordable energy for millions of customers.

The Grain Belt Express Clean Line, which will deliver 3,500 megawatts of low cost, renewable energy from western Kansas to southeastern Missouri and points farther east, is a great example of such a project.

A combination of events has occurred in Kansas that has driven the cost of wind energy

to historic lows. We have 1,100 megawatts of operational wind and are on track to more than double that number by the end of 2012.

Wind energy makes a compelling economic case with new installed wind prices dropping from around \$0.06 per kilowatt hour to \$0.03 per kW or lower, while turbine technology increases capacity factors to around 50 percent or more. We've increased transmission capacity, constructing more than 1,000 new miles of high-voltage electric transmission. And the wind developers are motivated to sell because of the possible expiration of the tax credits at the end of 2012.

Pricing Kansas Wind

The price of Kansas wind is now competitive with the traditional sources of energy and you can get guaranteed rates for the next 20 years.

Kansans have a proud history of meeting the needs of the world. We export wheat to feed the hungry and machines that can fly to make the world a smaller place. The time has come for us to export clean, reliable, and affordable wind energy to the nation.

For states, utility companies, businesses and citizens, there will be no better time in the foreseeable future than the next few months to purchase wind power.

Many business and political leaders have set renewable energy goals for their organizations. The time has arrived to take action to meet those goals. If you choose to do so, you can be confident you're also serving the best economic interests of your shareholders, customers and citizens. You can know you're doing your part to protect the environment. You will be able to meet your future energy needs.

And we, as a nation, can seize this moment and take a significant step into the future of power.

Give the people what they want

There's an age-old adage in business and industry that says and I'm paraphrasing, "the customer is the most important part of business." While this is a simple, straight-forward charge to live by, putting this into practice successfully is the difficult part.

For decades, U.S. businesses, including agriculture have strived to take care of the customer, to listen to their wishes and desires. It goes without saying that in order to remain viable, Kansas farmers and ranchers and every other segment of our economic society must adhere to this philosophy.

With the advent of each coming year, Kansas farmers and ranchers must once again look to the future with an open mind and the flexibility to develop new ways of marketing their products.

Customers and consumers are driven by changes in personal preferences and increasing income levels, although the last three years have marked a decline in income for many.

Still, give the consumer what he/she wants always rings true – even in economic downturns. It's then consumers are even more diligent with their disposable income and will spend money on items they consider worthwhile and completely necessary.

A fairly recent phenomenon is the return of the home-town markets. Here producers bring their locally grown produce and livestock products from the farm to the consumers in the



John Schlageck

- Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

city. In such markets across Kansas, people line up to buy their pot roasts, beef bratwursts and T-bone steaks.

What drives today's consumers to forego the bargains and convenience of their favorite supermarkets is their desire to buy locally, from people who live in their community and today's savvy shopper wants to buy a top quality product and know exactly who's producing it. Consumers want to know all about the food they're purchasing for their families.

They want to ask questions of the beef producer. They can find out about the specific breed, how the cattle are being treated, what they're being fed and how their being cared for – just about anything they want to know.

Consumers want to know more about the food they eat, where it comes from and who produces it today. The ability to touch and feel the products they're buying and connect with the farmer/rancher who has produced this food makes for a more wholesome buying experience.

It brings that all important piece of the production chain, the consumer, face-to-face with the hard working farmer/stockman who produced the food for their family's dinner.

Consumers believe strongly about buying locally and from people they know, trust and can visit with about the products they're purchasing. And after all, the customer remains the most important part of any business.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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