

MARGULIES  
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## Free Press Viewpoint

# Will ethanol split farmers, stockmen?

A growing divide between corn growers and cattlemen could strain relationships just as Congress takes up the new Farm Bill – and face the farmer-stockman with some interesting decisions.

Livestock interests, backed by food manufacturers and retailers, worry increasing government emphasis on ethanol fuel may drive corn prices so high, ranchers will be forced to liquidate their herds.

With many cattlemen already under pressure from drought in the Southwest, the possibility portends even higher retail food prices – and lower profits from a shrinking cow herd.

What has stockmen worried is a compromise that traded relief on a requirement to produce 7.5 billion gallons of alcohol-based motor fuel by 2007 for a gradual buildup to 36 billion gallons by 2022. That was coupled with a \$5 billion-a-year federal subsidy for ethanol production that expires this year, but the production target remains.

Others who use corn, from food processors to the beef, poultry and hog industries, fear what might happen as higher and higher fuel targets kick in, especially if bad weather cuts corn production one year.

Corn prices are already nearly double what they were a couple of years ago, and most people in farm country are not complaining. Stockmen who need to feed cattle might not be so happy, however, if the price doubles again.

Our beef production system today is based on feeding grain. It produces efficiencies that grazing cannot match. But if the cost of feed gets too high, it could well force growers to cull and reduce their cow herds, even with relatively strong meat prices.

It's one of those situations where the market ought to be allowed to operate. If people want alcohol-based fuels, they can buy them. But when government steps in and commands people to do the "right" thing, the consequences are hard to predict.

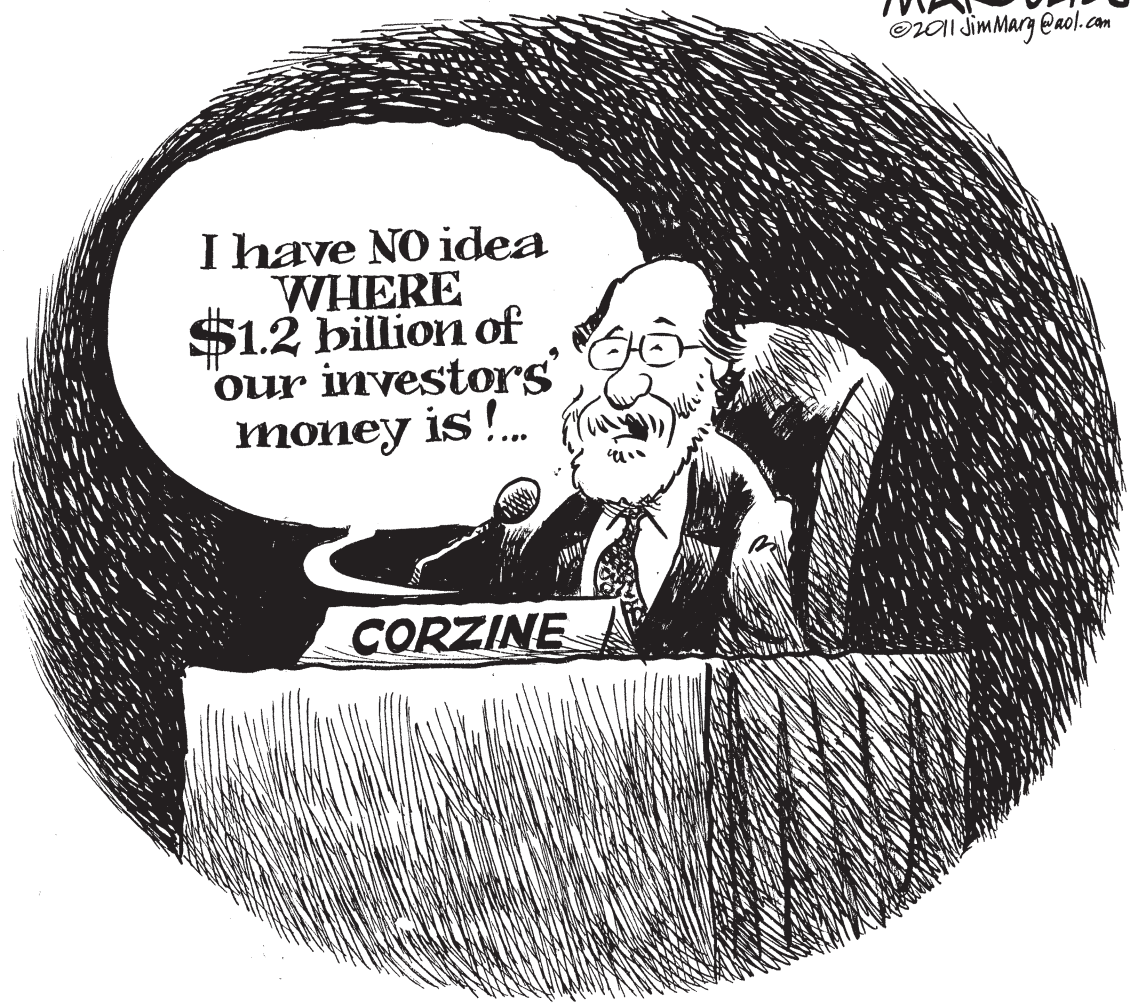
Ethanol production has been good to corn farmers, no doubt. It's created jobs out in farm country that did not exist. But it's harder and harder to justify on environmental or economic grounds, and with the votes shifting to the cities, it may be harder to keep in the Farm Bill, too.

The question for the farmer-stockman may be, "Feed the corn or sell it on the market?"

For the rest of us, it might be to ask whether we're better off with a strong corn market held up only by the good will of an unpredictable Congress, or with a solvent beef industry? Which means more to us in the long run?

Talk of possible corn rationing is just plain scary. Having the government decide who gets corn and who doesn't, and how much, who wants to depend on that?

Some days we'd be a lot better off if the government just stepped aside and let the market work. — Steve Haynes



# Bill of Rights reaches 220th anniversary

Last week, our nation marked the 70th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor and our entry into the Second World War.

That is a truly significant date, of course. The next day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress, calling Dec. 7, 1941, a "date which will live in infamy." It certainly has.

Another December date is even more important in the history of our nation, yet it often receives little fanfare. In fact, it has become such an accepted part of the nation's cultural fabric that we often take it for granted.

Thursday marks the 220th anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Bill of Rights.

Eleven score ago, on Dec. 15, 1791, our fledgling nation added the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution. As a nation, we stated emphatically that the individual rights of Americans had to be spelled out in our most important document.

So, who led the charge and to whom do we owe a debt of gratitude?

It's not necessarily who you might think, although many of our Founding Fathers, including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and James Madison helped make it happen.

So, who was that masked man? Who do we credit for making it happen?

It was Virginia's George Mason. Who? Mason was a Virginia delegate to the Con-



## Other Opinions

• Doug Anstaett  
Kansas Press

stitutional Convention who had decided not to support the new document because it didn't include a list of the individual rights of citizens. (In our era, though he might be better known for the outstanding basketball team fielded by a university named after him.)

Today, we exercise our freedom of speech, freedom of religion and right to assemble with gusto. Whether it's the Tea Party, the Occupy Wall Street protestors, a Shawnee Mission student tweeter or, yes, even the Westboro Baptist Church placard carriers, we know our rights – and we exercise them.

Those rights, along with many others, shout to the world that we Americans aren't afraid of freedom. We believe in it so much that we're willing to tolerate just about any message short of shouting fire in a crowded theater.

So, what inspired George Mason? At the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Mason helped draft a "Declaration of Rights" for his home state of Virginia. Mason wanted the same for the new

republic, saying it would be illegitimate unless it listed those inalienable rights.

He played a critical role in the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, but his proposal for a bill of rights fashioned after Virginia's was defeated. At the first session of the first Congress, future president James Madison, an elected representative from Virginia, introduced a bill of rights that reflected Mason's ideas.

Besides the rights already mentioned above, the document also guaranteed a right to a trial by jury and the right to bear arms, outlawed excessive bail, fines and cruel and unusual punishment and protected citizens against unreasonable search and seizure, among others.

If you "Google" the term Founding Fathers, Mason's name likely won't be listed in the top 10 or 20. But when you hear his story, you come to realize his dogged determination had as much to do with our freedoms today as the individual accomplishments of any other.

Two hundred twenty years later, those freedoms still ring.

So, say a word of thanks today to the Father of the Bill of Rights, George Mason.

Doug Anstaett, executive director of the Kansas Press Association in Topeka, is a former Kansas publisher and an award-winning editorialist.

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# Bankruptcy affects many in Kansas

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry has issued a subpoena to the former chief executive officer of MF Global, a major international commodities brokerage firm that collapsed after taking bad risks on European debt.

You might be wondering what this has to do with Kansas.

Well, the answer is a lot. Customers of MF Global included many Kansans: farmers, ranchers, grain elevators, co-ops, small businesses, investors and others.

When the firm went into bankruptcy, the trustee froze billions in accounts until the mess could be sorted out. Almost \$1.2 billion is thought to be missing. At this point, regulators do not know what happened to the money.

For the Kansas farmers who are out hundreds of thousands of dollars while the books are sorted out, this means their operations may be suspended. Seed purchases, planning decisions, land acquisitions, equipment purchases – everything is put on hold for the innocent victims of MF Global and, in this economy, that is not good for the rest of us.

The chief executive is not your run-of-the-mill corporate suit, but none other than former U.S. senator and New Jersey governor Jon



## U.S. Senator Pat Roberts

• From the Senate

Corzine. And, according to the Senate Historian, this may well be the first time a former senator has been subpoenaed before a U.S. Senate committee.

MF Global, with its extraordinary and rapid bankruptcy, is not just another Wall Street firm that went belly up. It represents the eighth largest bankruptcy in U.S. history, and the damage extends from Wall Street directly to Main Street and Rural Route 1.

I have the privilege of serving as the ranking member, or most senior Republican, on the committee, and I have been demanding answers from the start.

My first priority was to work with the bankruptcy trustee to get customers money back to its rightful owners. We are leaning hard on the trustee to do what he can to free up those funds so Kansans and others across the country can get on with their operations.

I was also the first to call for Corzine's testimony.

Several days after news broke, Gary Gensler, chairman of the U.S. Commodities Futures Trading Commission, called me to let me know he was recusing himself from commission oversight of the matter because he has a relationship with Corzine. Seems the two worked together at Goldman-Sachs, a major Wall Street investment firm. Yes, there seems to be a pattern here....

Unfortunately, the scope and timing of Gensler's actions in the early days of the bankruptcy have created exactly the kind of distraction he said he was hoping to avoid. I am taking a hard look at his actions on behalf of Jon Corzine and MF Global.

We need answers from Chairman Gensler. We need to know that his past relationship with Mr. Corzine did not cause the commission to be asleep at the ship while MF Global was losing billions.

But we need answers from the guy at the top of MF Global as well. Mr. Corzine has a lot of explaining to do.

Pat Roberts has been the junior U.S. Senator from Kansas since 1997. He currently serves on four senate committees including finance, ethics and agriculture.

## Where to write, call

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## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

