



Other Viewpoints

Political games make poor policy

President Obama killed the Keystone XL pipeline, at least for now. But politics killed it, too.

Under review for three years when Obama nixed its permit Wednesday, the proposed \$7 billion, 1,700-mile pipeline from Alberta, Canada, to Port Arthur, Texas, would connect to the existing Keystone pipeline, which runs down the middle of Kansas. The Keystone XL looked like a done deal last summer, after the State Department said it found no major environmental problems with the project.

It should have been possible to address the concerns later expressed by Nebraska officials over the route’s risk to the Ogallala Aquifer in a timely manner.

As Obama said on Nov. 1, when he promised that his decision would come soon, “We need to encourage domestic oil and natural gas production. But there’s a way of doing that and still making sure that the health and safety of the American people and folks in Nebraska are protected.”

Yet Obama decided just days later to postpone action on the route and permit until after the November 2012 elections, looking hopelessly political in the process.

In turn, Republicans in Congress, including the Kansas delegation, made their own political play by inappropriately tying the pipeline to the payroll tax-cut extension in December and imposing a Feb. 21 deadline on the president’s decision.

That allowed Obama to blame them and their “rushed and arbitrary deadline” Wednesday in rejecting the permit, while he neatly served the agenda of environmental groups that vehemently oppose the pipeline.

It also gave Republicans another opportunity to blast away at their No. 1 target for November.

“The president proved that he will kowtow to the radical environmentalist sector of his political base at the high opportunity cost of 20,000 American jobs,” said Rep. Mike Pompeo, R-Wichita.

“If we allow this opportunity to pass us by, America will take a step backwards in energy security, as we are forced to continue to rely on unstable nations for our energy needs,” said Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., vowing to work with Congress to “clear the unnecessary hurdles” to a project promising “tens of thousands of jobs.”

Can’t this country make big decisions anymore? Or even agree on the facts?

As experts have noted throughout this debate, pipeline proponents have inflated the project’s potential to create jobs, lower oil prices and reduce U.S. reliance on Mideast oil, as opponents have exaggerated the likelihood of pipeline spills and environmental significance of oil sands production (which Canada will continue, Keystone XL or not).

This is no way to make energy policy or help the economy. It’s sure to further erode trust in government, however.

— *The Wichita Eagle*, via the Associated Press

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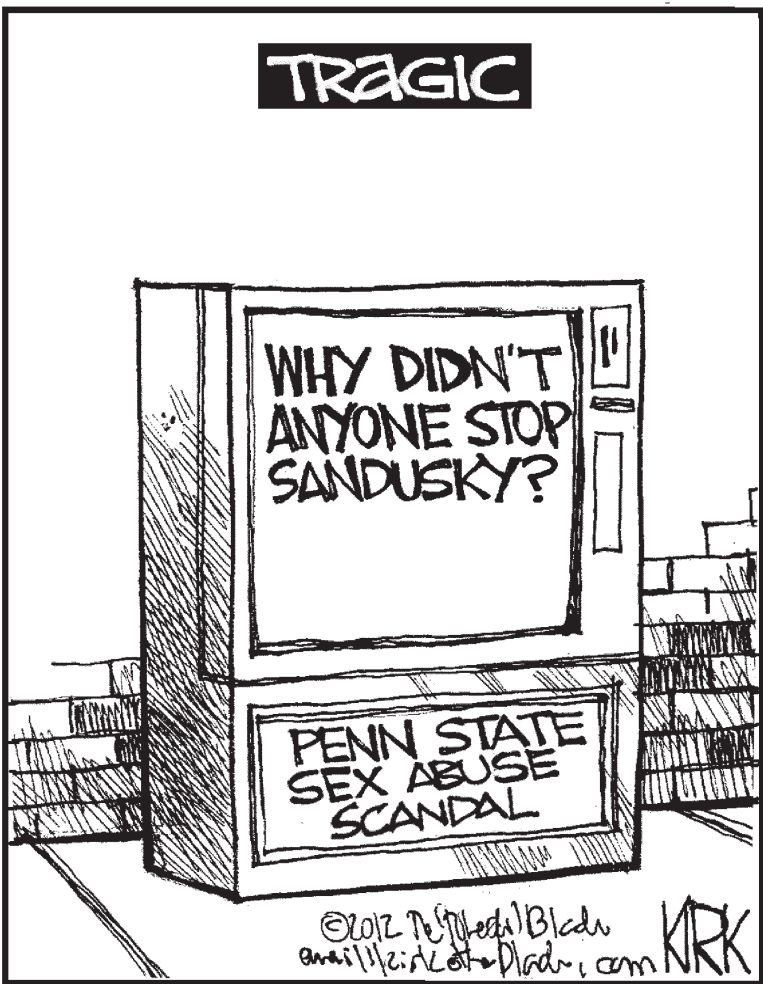
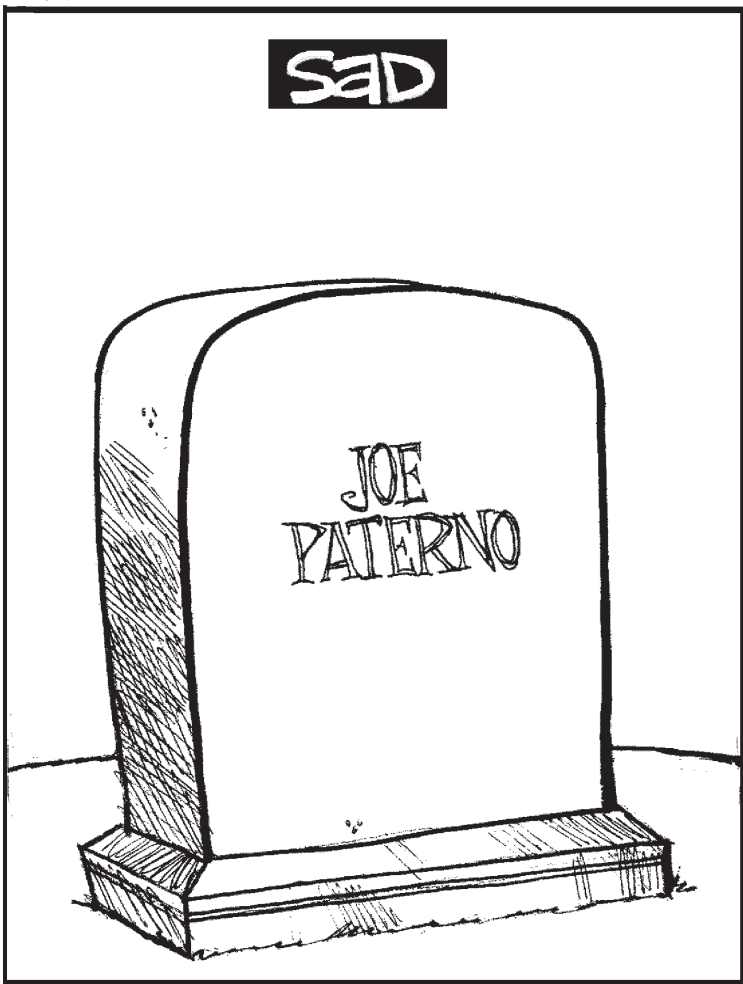
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WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAD AND TRAGIC?



Jumping dead battery just gets old

Cynthia and I have been getting pretty good at jump-starting my truck, which seems to have some mysterious electrical fault.

In three years, we’ve put two new batteries into this beast, and it’s still running them down. There’s never any sign of what caused the battery to ebb, just a slow – or no – crank in the morning.

And cold as it’s been, failures have become more frequent.

I’ve learned to quickly unzip the bag where I keep the tow rope, battery cables, flashlight and other emergency gear in the back of the truck. I can pop the hood and hook up the cables in nothing flat.

Cynthia has learned just how to back her car out of the garage – we normally park both at an angle out from the center to leave more space – and how to avoid some of the stuff normally stored between the vehicles.

The other day I even figured out how to clip the live ends of the cables to a wooden cabinet between the cars to keep them clear until she gets her hood open.

We can get that truck going in under three minutes – if it’ll crank – and under 10 if it needs time to charge. The latest wrinkle is a battery



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

charger we found amongst all the junk in the garage. That’s the last resort, but it works.

Some days, when the truck has been on the highway, I’ve no trouble starting it in the morning. Others, when it’s been sitting more, or just when it feels like it, it’s no go.

The only clue – if it is a clue – is that the air-bag light seems to come on when the electrical problem has been expressing itself.

Cynthia says it reminds her of the summer we traveled around Colorado in my car, a two-door Chevrolet Nova, that had a problem on warm days in high altitude with vapor lock.

I haven’t even heard of vapor lock in years, but in those days, it was a problem in the summer sometimes. Gasoline in the fuel line would vaporize and you couldn’t pump fuel.

A mechanic explained the problem to us and

showed us where in the line it likely occurred, at the top of a bend just under the carburetor. He said you might be able to cure the lock by cooling that line off with a wet rag.

Cars today don’t even have carburetors, and maybe that’s a good thing, but in the ’70s, that’s all we had.

Anyway, we learned to work as a team when the Nova vapor locked. I’d pop the hood, she’d go to the cooler for an icy rag and we’d have that puppy started in a couple of minutes. We toured our way through Alamosa, Dolores, Mesa Verde and Telluride with that cold rag and never got stuck.

It just goes to show the value of training and teamwork – especially when you’re motivated by being 30 miles from town on a 90-degree day.

Anyway, I’m taking my truck to the shop this week, and I hope they can figure out what the problem is. Teamwork or no, I’m tired of jump-starting it. Real tired.

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.

Teachers lack presidential candidate

If you are a teaching professional who is looking to regain the academic responsibilities and shed the disastrous teach-to-the-test reforms of the last decade, or are a parent of a child whose education has been crippled, this is not a good year to look for change in the next president.

Many hoped that President Obama would ditch the disastrous No Child Left Behind program when he came to office three years ago. Instead, he put “NCLB on steroids” and moved educational policy-making to Washington, D.C., by using “Race to the Top” grants to extort compliance. The National Governors Association pulled a “Benedict Arnold” and handed the federal agency a national curriculum in math and reading which essentially became a requirement of Race to the Top (soon to be followed by a national science core).

In spite of widespread recognition of the damage No Child Left Behind, and the impossibility of achieving 100 percent-student-proficiency-by-2014, President Barack Obama and U.S. Department of Education Secretary Duncan are pressing ahead with more Race to the Top extortion. Any waivers given to states for relief from the Adequate Yearly Progress requirement require enforcement of federal educational policy.

The current administration is putting No Child on super-steroids. Will any Republican alternative move another direction in education?

Republican frontrunner Mitt Romney has an open record on education, having been Governor of Massachusetts and detailed his position in his book: “No Apology: The Case for American Greatness.”

When running for senate in 1994, Romney was for eliminating the Department of Education. But now he is a strong advocate of standardized testing and No Child-style “accountability.” He also advocates keeping some school policy at state level. As governor, he enforced compliance with state exit exams, advocated for performance-based pay and al-



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

ternate route teachers.

U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Texas advocates for removing the federal government from all education policy and closing down the Department of Education. He voted against No Child in 2001. He would also end the federal student loan program for college students.

Former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania voted for the No Child law as senator. He has moved his children into homeschooling and questions top-down education. During approval of No Child, he pushed a teach-the-controversy amendment on evolution that failed. So far, there is no indication he would end the overtesting.

While Utah’s governor, Jon Huntsman signed a bill to give Utah’s accountability system priority over the No Child law. Under threat of losing federal Title I money, Utah backed down. On the campaign trail, Huntsman has said that No Child “hasn’t worked for this country” but it is uncertain whether he would dismantle it.

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich allied with Secretary Duncan in wanting even more rigorous school accountability. He favors expanding school choice through vouchers and charter schools, and making the Department of Education smaller, a change from 1995 when as Speaker he supported efforts to eliminate it.

Despite Texas being the home of No Child under former Pres. Bush, Gov. Rick Perry has very publicly opposed Race to the Top and would close down the Department of Education. Yet, under his leadership, independent Texas remains a basket-case in public educa-

tion, where lessons are scripted and teaching-to-the-test has replaced teacher professionalism.

Classroom teachers who hope to return to a full day of rich, diverse, exciting teaching that is not limited to getting high scores on a narrow test are really left with no viable presidential candidate in this round of elections. Our schools continue their transformation into test-prep prisons.

Our only hope is to not wait for the November 2012 elections. Act now. Send a message. Opt our children out of the No Child assessment testing this spring.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher’s college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

Where to write, call

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

