



## Other Viewpoints

### Wind energy credit good for Kansas

The bill Congress passed Jan. 1 to back the country away from the edge of a "fiscal cliff" included a provision that could be good for Kansas.

A one-year extension of the wind energy production tax credit was included in the bill Congress sent to President Obama for his signature.

Although the extension, much sought after by the wind energy industry and its supporters, including Gov. Sam Brownback, is only for a year, it covers wind farms that are under construction by Dec. 31.

According to Tom Darin, western regional representative of the American Wind Energy Association, "under construction" can mean breaking ground on a project or letting a certain number of contracts or projects by the end of the year. Those terms would give companies up to two years, from the beginning of this year, to complete projects.

That should restore to the wind industry some degree of stability, at least over the short term, and reverse payroll cuts at equipment production companies made last year when it appeared the production tax credit wasn't going to be extended.

A Siemens plant in Hutchinson, for instance, reduced its plant force from more than 400 employees to 150 through layoffs when the demand for parts it makes fell off due to uncertainty about the tax credit.

Siemens kept the plant open partially on the strength of orders for parts from southern California and Chile, where wind farms were being built, but further development in Kansas and the vicinity now could increase demand for parts and the company's need for workers.

Kansas has been one of the leaders in wind energy development in recent years and the money generated for landowners, construction and plant employees has been significant. The wind energy industry invested nearly \$3 billion in Kansas last year. Extension of the production tax credit could spark a rejuvenation of the industry in the state and provide additional economic benefits.

Whether the tax credit will receive further reprieves is unknown. It has plenty of opponents in Congress, including some members of the Kansas delegation, and it's likely they will continue to push for elimination.

The American Wind Energy Association, the industry's lobbying group, in December proposed extending the production tax credit for one year then phasing it out over five years.

Now that the tax credit has been extended, legislation phasing it out over a period of years sounds like an agreeable compromise position between the industry and other interests, including the fossil fuel industry, that want to see the credit eliminated.

A scheduled phase-out would bring added stability to the wind industry while giving it time to become more economically viable in its own right.

- The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press



"FIRST I HAD A FEAR OF FALLING OFF THE FISCAL CLIFF... NOW I HAVE DEBT-CEILING CLAUSTROPHOBIA..."

### Christmas is over – almost

It's time to take down the Christmas decorations. Past time, even.

I know, a lot of people do that on New Year's Day. Christmas is over, right?

Well, not really.

In the church, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are the big celebration, but that's just the start of Christmas. The season runs 12 days, until the Feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 6. That was Sunday.

The church observes another season, Advent, leading up to Christmas. It's a time of sober reflection and preparation for the joyous event. Many churches don't decorate for Christmas until near the end of Advent.

So, a few years ago, we agreed, or Cynthia said, I can't remember for sure, that we'd leave our lights and stuff up until Christmas was over. She likes decorations and she really likes lights.

So, Sunday we were supposed to turn our outdoor lights out. Then she decided to leave them on until Wednesday "so the paper guy would have light in the morning." Might even take them off the bushes and roll them up – if they're not stuck in ice and snow. Some years that's been a problem, though in Kansas, it's not often we see a white Christmas.

The problem with having a white Christmas



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

is that it usually turns into a white January, and then a white February, before it thaws. It just doesn't warm up much this time of year, especially when you have snow cover, which reflects the sun's light and heat back into space.

Indoors is another thing, however. Our son is coming home this weekend – he was busy painting his new house at Christmas – and Cynthia decided to save the presents, his and ours, until he gets here.

So, the tree stays up, and all those lights and decorations on every flat surface and house plant inside. Except for the ones on the cedar chest in the dining room. They died. The lights on the house plants, the ones in the new bay window, the ones in the TV room stay on. So do the ones around the nativity set in the fireplace.

And the tree.

So there.

After that, I guess, we'll put the decorations away. But it'll only be temporary, because, you see, she likes lights. I've told you that before, right? Or you've driven down Cass Avenue at night. You can spot our block.

Thing is, I think she has another set of lights ready to go out. Red and white ones to honor another saint's day come February.

It's not exactly a religious holiday anymore, but when it comes to excuses to put out lights on long, dark nights, any port in a storm.

At least, I think that's happening. I spotted several bags full of red and white lights from the hardware store the other day. These are LED lights, so they shouldn't run up the power bill too much.

And there's no evidence of red-and-white decorations for the flat spaces inside yet. Not that I've seen, at least. No hearts or cards or red, heart-shaped wreaths.

Of course, there are no vacant flat spaces in our house until after the kid has been here and we open the presents.

Merry Christmas. Happy New Year. And, uh, Happy Valentine's Day, I guess.

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.

### Heroic teachers stand in for parents

"When I heard about it, I just wanted to hug my child so hard when they got home from school!" That was the response of many parents when they first heard of the shooting tragedy at Newtown, Conn.

As the news unfolded, we saw the photo of school children, fear and confusion on their faces but scurrying in a line to safety under the supervision of their teacher. We learned of teachers who heard the shots, pulled students from the hallway, locked their classroom door and kept students safe in closets. And we learned of teachers who threw themselves in front of their students as a shield – and lost their lives.

Caring and heroic teachers are not unique to the Connecticut school. Teachers have protected their students as their own and given their lives at Columbine, Virginia Tech and elsewhere.

During the 9/11 attack, nearby schools began to be showered with debris falling from the Twin Towers. Teachers heroically evacuated their students from the impending disaster, making sure not one was left behind. Not one teacher abandoned their students even when their own child was in a classroom nearby.

At Virginia Tech in 2007, college instructors



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

showed the same commitment to their students. Twenty-seven students were killed as well as five faculty members who were barring doors, sheltering students or engineering a safe exit.

The most horrendous in modern times was an assault by militants on a school in Beslan in South Ossetia on Sept. 1, 2004, where over 770 children were taken hostage. At the end of three days, 186 students had been killed along with many, many teachers.

The Connecticut parents who rushed to the fire station staging area to pick up their children found them clinging to teachers who would not abandon them.

This is "in loco parentis" in action. It is a legal principle where school staff stand "in the place of the parent." From the time we drop off our children at school or they get on the school

bus, to the time they leave school, schools to some extent assume parental responsibility.

But we did not see a force of legal contracts or required duty in these teachers' actions. Teachers' acts of courage and sacrifice in our rare cases of school violence do not come from law. There was no such in loco parentis law in South Ossetia, yet those teachers gave their lives for their school children. In loco parentis no longer applies to American public universities; yet five Virginia Tech teachers made the ultimate sacrifice for their students.

Such actions by teachers are not about law. Teaching is a profession of "caring."

Schools are not like factories or businesses or locked-down prisons.

Schools are like home.

To our children, both home and school are where grown-ups care for you.

At home, your parents will sacrifice everything to save you.

And at school, your teachers will serve – "in the place of the parent."

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.

### Write us

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

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