

## Other Viewpoints

# Keystone pipeline should move ahead

Now that the State Department and the state of Nebraska have signed off on an expansion of the Keystone pipeline, there seems to be little reason for President Barack Obama not to approve the project as soon as possible.

That means the pipeline expansion should get this country's OK in mid-May. The State Department issued a report March 1 that raised no objections to proceeding with construction of the pipeline expansion. That report started the clock on a 45-day period for public comments, after which Obama will decide whether to approve the project.

Nebraska has some issues with the pipeline's route through that state — it was proposed to cut through some environmentally sensitive areas — but Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman earlier this year signed off on an alternate route that avoids the state's Sandhills region.

With the State Department and Nebraska on board, there is no reason for further delay.

Opponents of the expansion project contend the Canadian crude the pipeline would transport significantly increase greenhouse gases because it is the "dirtiest" crude to be found and requires additional refining.

That said, the original pipeline has been in operation for years and is carrying the Canadian tar sands crude to refineries in Oklahoma and Illinois.

Canada, having found an abundant source of oil, isn't going to stop its production. The tar sands crude will find its way to refineries and that work can create jobs at U.S. refineries and spin-off jobs.

The pipeline expansion also will create a more cost-efficient method for moving oil from fields in Montana and western North Dakota to U.S. refineries. Much of the oil from those states now is being transported by rail to refineries in the west.

The original Keystone pipeline enters the U.S. in North Dakota and runs south through that state, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas to Cushing, Okla. An intersecting line carries some crude to Patoka, Ill. The pipeline expansion, known as Keystone XL, would enter the U.S. in Montana and cut diagonally across Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, where it would connect with the existing pipeline.

The project also calls for extending the current pipeline from Cushing, Okla., to refineries on the Gulf Coast. Obama already has said he doesn't object to that segment of the expansion.

Given that tar sands crude already is being refined in the U.S., and that more would be with the addition of the Oklahoma-Gulf Coast link to the existing pipeline, Obama should have an easy decision to make. He should keep in mind that the pipeline also will be carrying a lot of U.S. crude in a more economic manner, which would impact the final cost of the refined product.

It's time to approve the project and increase the flow of crude to U.S. refineries.

— *The Topeka Capital Journal, via the Associated Press*

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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.

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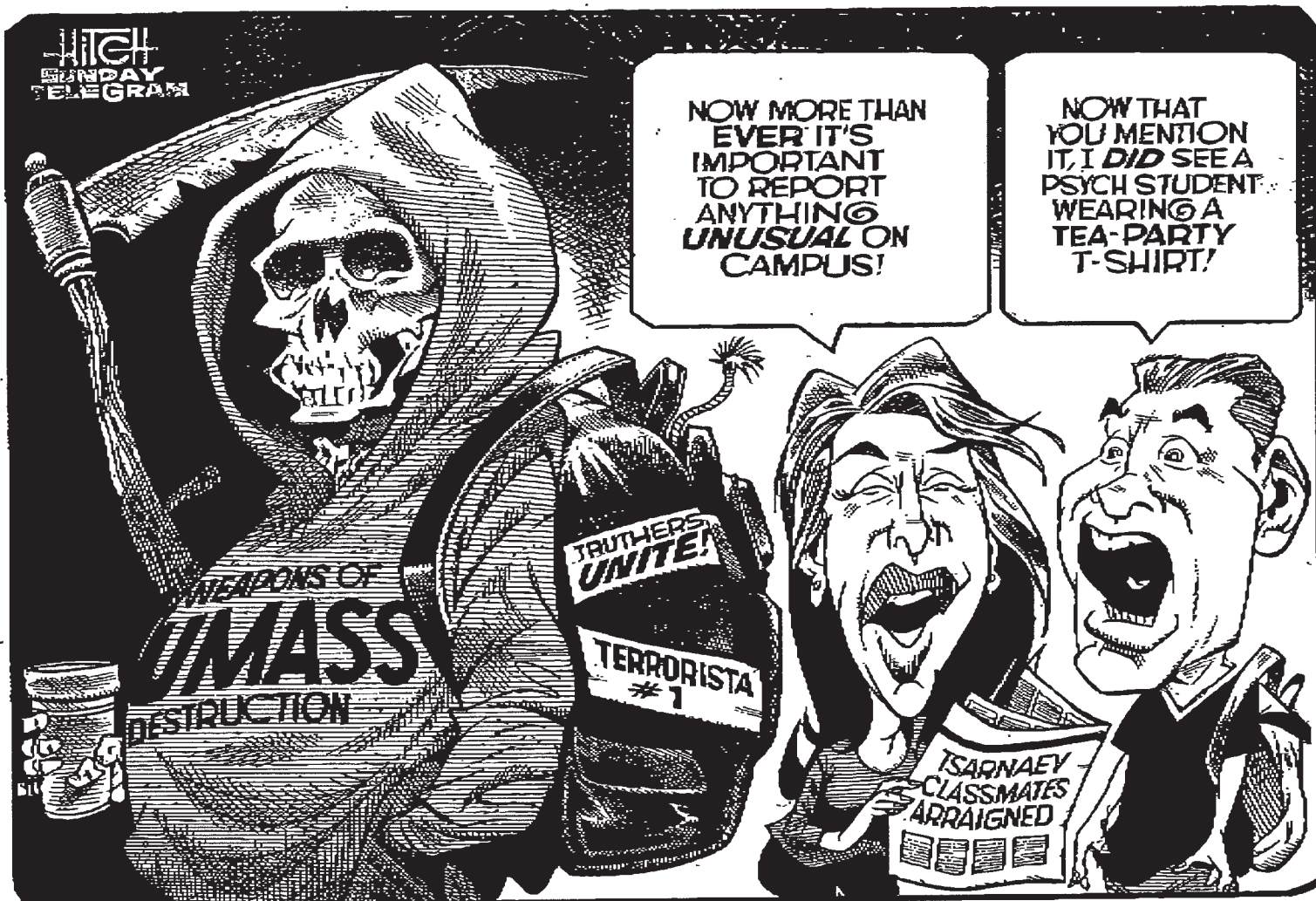
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# Old or not, he gets involved

I'm a semiretired old man. I can go to the coffee shop and talk about last night's sporting events, the weather, politics, etc., whenever I want to.

I can take a nap on the sofa whenever I want, or I can go out and get in my tractor and do a little farming when I want. I can also sit here and spend 20 or 30 minutes (or hours) reading the banal chatter (sharing opinions) on the Internet.

I got more newspapers and magazines than I can stay awake to read. I can write a letter to the editor and let the world in on my vast knowledge and expertise. (Some folks don't think I have much knowledge or expertise. That's OK; I'll share it anyway.)

At my age, I declare I have a right to do what I want to — if I can afford it. Sometimes my health restricts or prohibits me from doing something I think I should or want to do. I'm also guilty of sitting and doing nothing when I should be doing something.



**Ken Poland**

• Ken's World

But, at my age, I also have a responsibility to analyze society and society's needs. I have a responsibility to use my lifetime of experience and knowledge to attempt to formulate public policies that make life safer and more rewarding for the coming generations.

I have a responsibility to be involved in political forums, service clubs, religious education and worship experiences, involvement with grandkids and great-grandkids, support other youth activities, visit friends or neighbors in the hospital, retirement centers or rest homes, etc., etc. There is plenty to do for ev-

eryone, regardless of age, education, physical ability or economic status.

To make a long story short, I ain't got time to get bored. My wife says I need to take time to learn "proper English," but I excuse myself and tell her, "Ya cain't teach an old dog new tricks."

PS: With the last week's news, someone needs to figure out what ails our society and a fix for the ailment. Theocratic government, extreme partisan government and citizen's "militia" (rebellion) isn't working. Anybody got any ideas?

If you do, why don't you share them with a letter to the editor?

*Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at [rwinc@cheerful.com](mailto:rwinc@cheerful.com).*

# Politics now and politics then

When two senators recently got into a spat over whether the Boston Marathon bombings were being politicized, the news was everywhere within minutes. Reams of commentary quickly followed.

In the maneuvering over gun-control legislation, every twist and turn was instantly reported and then endlessly debated. As the effects of the federal sequester start to make themselves felt, outlets in every medium — print, television, online — are carrying both the news and the inevitable partisan sniping over its meaning.

This is political reality today. When people ask me how politics has changed since I first ran for Congress in 1964, it's the first thing that comes to mind. Back then, when you spoke to the Rotary Club in a small town, you were speaking to a few members of the Rotary. Today, you might well be speaking to the world.

A debate on Capitol Hill back then might or might not have made the news, but even if it did, days could go by before the rest of the country reacted. Today, the response is instantaneous, often hot-blooded and almost inconceivably far-reaching.

It's not just the sheer proliferation and aggressiveness of the media that have ratcheted up the intensity of political life. Almost every facet of politics is more complicated and hard-edged.

Voters want instant results. Consultants are everywhere. Lobbyists have multiplied and become immeasurably sophisticated at

## Other Opinions

• **Lee H. Hamilton**  
Center on Congress

finding ways to get what they want. Well-funded, well organized interest groups enrich the D.C. region's economy, while in the rest of the country grassroots organizations try to influence policy on every cause under the sun. All of this, in turn, has created an unending flood of money. Politics is now big business.

Perhaps because of the scrutiny that political decisions now get — and the speed with which organizations turn those decisions into fundraising opportunities — it is much harder to do the basic work of politics: finding common ground.

A generation ago, when politicians of differing views met to hammer out their differences, they actually hammered out their differences. It was not easy, but they believed that as elected officials they had a responsibility to find their way out of difficult problems together.

In a Washington that is more ideological, more partisan and less pragmatic than it used to be, the bedrock notion that politicians would come together to make the country work seems quaint. It hasn't disappeared entirely, but it's

certainly endangered.

Which may be one reason there's been another change I've seen in politics over the years. I first went to Congress at a time when Americans had faith in the institutions of government. The year I ran for office, Lyndon Johnson was campaigning for President on a platform that the country could successfully wage a war against poverty.

Today, it seems inconceivable that a politician would be so bold or so naive. Congress can't even get a normal budget done on time. A "war" on anything seems beyond its grasp.

I don't mean to be entirely negative. Politics' greater intensity also has its bright spots. There are more and often better sources of information. Ordinary Americans are highly engaged, with more avenues of entry into the system.

Perhaps that's something to build on. With greater public sophistication about a complex system, Americans might also show more patience with politicians trying in good faith to resolve our challenges. And if that happens, who knows? Maybe we'll even discover that government can, in fact, successfully tackle the big problems.

*Lee Hamilton is director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.*

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## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

