

## Other Viewpoints

### Future prosperity depends on water

When it comes to future economic prosperity in southwest Kansas, water always bubbles to the top as a concern. In an arid region – one fueled by agriculture – farmers are left to sap water from the ground to maintain crop production. It's put a serious dent in the supply of water from the Ogallala Aquifer, leaving policymakers wrestling with various strategies needed to slow the rate of depletion of the aquifer. Water conservation always matters, naturally. Consumers – whether they're producers, businesses and industries, or individual households – should be mindful of ways to get by with less water. At the same time, it's worth knowing if there could be some way to bring more water into the region when Mother Nature won't cooperate with adequate rain and snow. Such is the thinking behind a concept that's been tossed about before, but never gained much steam for a number of reasons.

Now, however, a 31-year-old federal study that proposed pumping Missouri River water some 400 miles to the southwest part of Kansas has been resurrected. The 1982 High Plains Ogallala Aquifer Regional Resources Study by the federal Department of Commerce was done to satisfy a 1976 congressional mandate to examine declining water supplies in the High Plains. The resulting plan called for creating a river of sorts that would push excess water from the Missouri River in northeast Kansas to parched southwest Kansas. Other communities on the way also could benefit from the new water supply. Of course, such a project would be costly in setup and maintenance, to the tune of billions of dollars. Without such a dramatic fix, though, the future of an agricultural economy that helps fuel many jobs and related ventures throughout Kansas could be extinguished. Extraordinary problems often demand extraordinary solutions. What may seem like a pipe dream could end up being an economic boon in a state that depends on farm success. For that reason, the idea still warrants serious study and conversation.

– The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press

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roberts.senate.gov/public/
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- U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 136-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov

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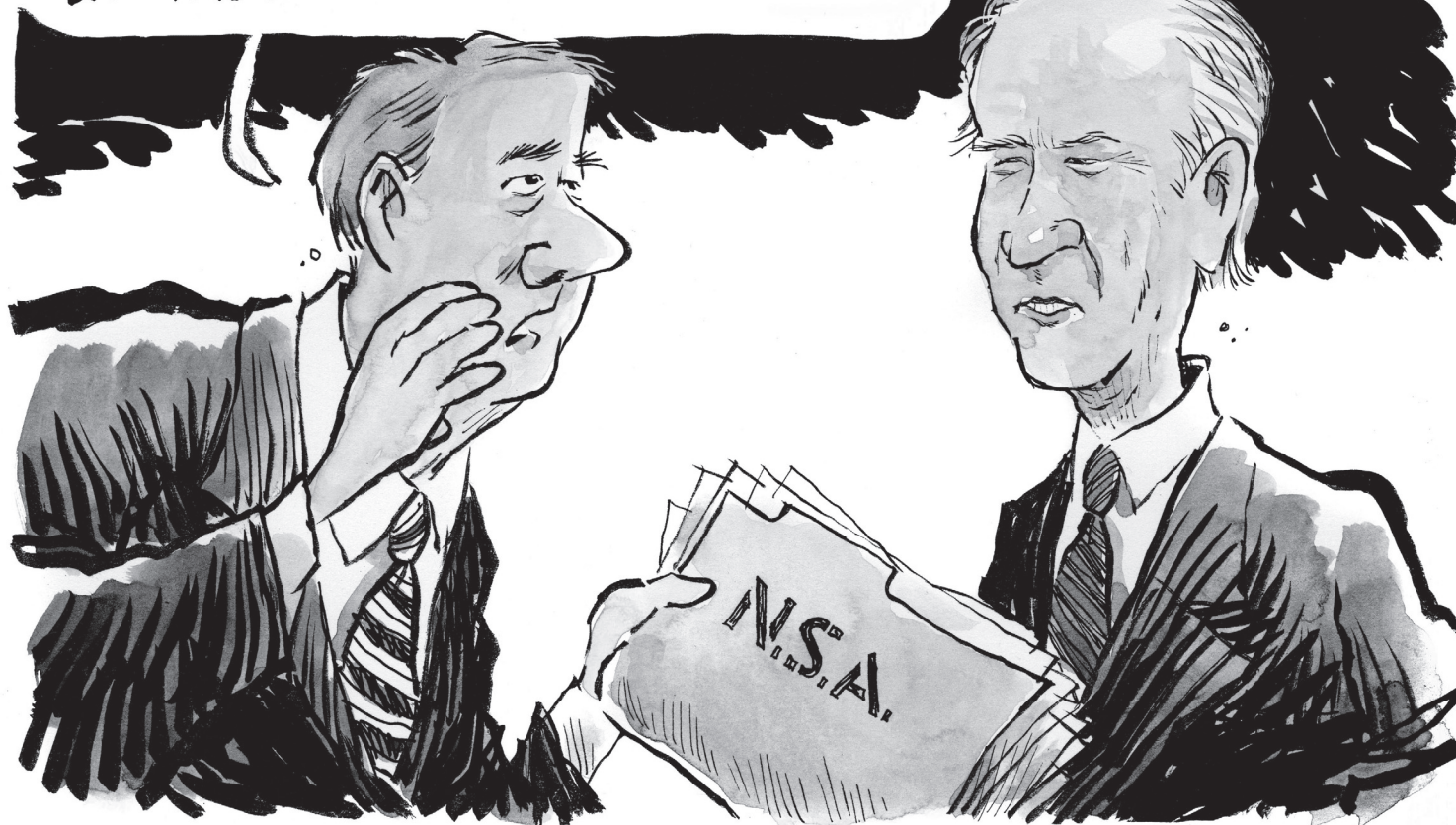
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UM, VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN? THIS IS AWKWARD, BUT WE ACCIDENTALLY STUMBLED UPON PHONE RECORDS SHOWING YOU CALLING THE WRONG PEOPLE...

OMAHA WORLD HERALD KOERBA



## Veterans earned American Dream

Americans come together each year on Nov. 11 to celebrate and honor our nation's veterans. These brave men and women sacrificed to provide their children and grandchildren with the opportunity to achieve the American Dream, so it's imperative we make certain they themselves have the opportunity to live the American Dream.

In Kansas and across the country, veterans face myriad challenges when they return home from service – from braving mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, to the basics needed to enter the workforce like creating or updating a resume. With 34,000 servicemen and women expected to return home by February 2014, practical programs and services must be in place to help them transition from one chapter of their lives to the next.

Whether it's continuing their education, finding a job to support their families, or starting their own business, Kansas continue a strong tradition of working to help our servicemen and women attain their goals.

For soldiers and their families looking to obtain a college degree, universities across the state offer flexible and affordable options such as online coursework and accelerated programs. Fort Riley and Kansas State University also have an unconventional collaboration connecting eight Division I sports teams and four club-level teams with combat units at Fort Riley. From scrimmaging to attending deployment and return ceremonies, the fellowship creates a mutual appreciation and has even inspired some soldiers to become the first in their families to attend college upon separation from service.

A real concern for veterans when returning to civilian life is finding a job and business



**U.S. Senator Jerry Moran**  
• Moran's Memo

owners in Kansas should strongly consider hiring our heroes. According to extensive interviews conducted last summer by the Center for a New American Security, business owners hire veterans because of their leadership and teamwork skills, character, discipline, effectiveness and loyalty. Numerous large companies like Garmin and Sprint have veteran employment initiatives, so it's encouraging to see small businesses also taking steps toward proactively recruiting our heroes.

National initiatives are important, but support at the local level such as the job fairs at all of our Kansas military installations also make a difference.

Veterans are offered this kind of community networking and support through organizations like GallantFew, which was founded by Army Ranger veteran Karl Monger of Wichita in 2009. GallantFew exists to reduce veteran unemployment, homelessness, and eliminate veteran suicide. The nonprofit organization changes lives by pairing "seasoned" veterans who have successfully established their civilian careers with "new" veterans to mentor and facilitate a seamless transition from active military service to civilian life. You can get help or get involved by visiting www.gallantfew.org.

For many veterans, entrepreneurship is becoming an increasingly valuable way of pro-

viding for their families. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 2.4 million businesses, nine percent of companies nationwide, are owned by veterans. And according to the Kansas City-based Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation – the largest foundation in the world devoted to entrepreneurship – today, 45 percent of veterans start their own businesses upon completion of their military service.

In April, I convened a Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee roundtable with business owners and veteran organization representatives to discuss the state of veteran entrepreneurship, ideas on how current programs may be improved, and gaps not being addressed. I'm also a sponsor of the Servicemembers' Choice in Transition Act, which includes a provision to empower military members who seek to own a small business the ability to pursue that dream as part of the Transition Assistance Program.

On Veterans' Day, we express our gratitude for the service of those who have protected our way of life and allowed us to remain the strongest and freest nation in the world. Let's make certain whether veterans wish to start their own business, commence a job search, or go back to school, they are able to achieve the same American Dream they sacrificed so much to protect.

God bless our veterans: we respect you, we thank you and we love you.

*Jerry Moran of Manhattan, the junior U.S. senator from Kansas, is a member of the Senate Banking Committee and serves as the ranking member of the Subcommittee for Housing, Transportation and Community Development. He is the sponsor of the Financial Institutions Examination Fairness and Reform Act.*

## Downsized education shortens year

Not only are students paying more for college tuition today, many Kansas students are now getting less education.

Since the minimum course requirement for a bachelors degree is now 120 credit hours instead of 124, some programs at regent's schools are beginning to reduce their program course requirements to keep a "market advantage." University colleagues across Kansas are reporting to me (and I have personally seen) curriculum review changes that lower course requirements.

Sometimes no rationale is given. Other times it is clearly listed: they have to "remain competitive" with other (cheap) programs being offered to Kansas students. This is a "race to the bottom."

Many university professors who are planning their syllabus for spring 2014 have discovered that they are teaching a shorter year – there will be several class meetings less. Kansas Board of Regents policy changed so that the minimum number of instructional days for an academic year is now 146 plus 5 final exam days. That is why Kansas universities can now



**John Richard Schrock**  
• Education Frontlines

have 73 instructional days per semester instead of 75.

We have all seen the cost of our chocolate bars go up to a point where we might actually decide not to buy them. When we reach that point, the business strategy is simple: just hold the price and downsize the candy bar.

But education should not be treated as a business where we downsize our "product."

Issues of quality in education – and that includes the time it takes to master course content – belong in the hands of faculty, just as medical practice belongs in the hands of physicians and surgeons. But in this time of drastic budget cuts and the threat of closing programs, there has been no faculty pushback

to this trimming of education.

Maintaining rigorous coursework and a solid curriculum is a faculty responsibility. I do know of one heroic professor who recognizes that the cut in instructional days will leave students shortchanged. This professor extended the time a class meets. But for the most part, university faculty are abdicating their academic responsibility and leaving these decisions in the hands of administrators.

There is a marvelous character in a Peanuts cartoon who misses a day of school and worries about going through life "one day dumber."

Many Kansas university students will now be missing 16 days from their four year bachelors degree.

And 16 days is a lot of "dumb."

*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, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

