

Other Viewpoints

Renewable energy divides Republicans

Kansas' ruling GOP majority is as unified as it is conservative on many issues. But a decision looms about renewable energy standards in which geography and business interests could matter as much as free-market ideology. The stakes include Kansas' status as a wind-energy leader.

As part of a deal to allow a still-unbuilt coal-fired power plant near Holcomb, the 2009 Legislature passed the renewable energy standards, which mandate that major electric utility companies in Kansas generate or buy an increasing amount of energy from renewable sources. The law called for their renewable generation capacity to be 10 percent by 2010, 15 percent by 2016 and 20 percent by 2020.

Opponents unsuccessfully tried to weaken the standards last spring. Last month House Speaker Ray Merrick, R-Stilwell, told the Wichita Pachyderm Club that the renewable energy law "is costing the utility ratepayers" and he expects the 2014 Legislature to repeal it.

Not coincidentally — as Merrick and Senate President Susan Wagle, R-Wichita, are both on the board of the American Legislative Exchange Council — the Koch-backed exchange council's agenda for 2014 reportedly includes trying to roll back such green-energy mandates in the 30 states that have them. Similarly, U.S. Rep. Mike Pompeo, R-Wichita, has advocated for letting the federal wind-energy production tax credit expire at the end of the year.

But the renewable energy standards and federal tax credit have been credited with helping Kansas draw \$3 billion in wind-power investment in 2011 and 2012, as Kansas landowners received an estimated \$273 million from leasing their land for turbines.

And repeal of the renewable energy standards may not be a done deal in Topeka, given the support for such pro-wind policies among Republicans in the state. Not only did Kansas Sens. Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran support extending the wind tax credit for the current year, but Gov. Sam Brownback is part of the bipartisan Governors' Wind Energy Coalition. Brownback signed its Nov. 6 letter urging congressional leaders to pass a multiyear extension of the federal credit. The coalition's "Renewable Electricity Standards: State Success Stories" earlier this year also touted Kansas utilities' "reported rate increases of less than 1.7 percent to cover required renewable energy investments in 2012 and 2013" and concluded: "Renewable energy standards deliver jobs and economic benefits to rural areas and cities alike, all while insulating consumers from fuel price risks and building America's global competitiveness in a growing market for new technology."

Kansans with a stake in this renewable energy standards debate, and that's everybody who uses energy, will need to watch closely and be heard.

— The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press

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ANTI-CLIMATE CHANGE DENIER

Writers and truth sometimes flexible

We were starting out for a walk along the river, back a few days when the weather was warm, Cynthia, daughter Lindsay and me. Someone asked what time we were starting, so we'd know when half an hour was up and we could turn for the car.

"I just started the time," I said.
 "Well, you know your father," Cynthia said. "He never starts his watch until we've been walking five minutes."

I rolled my eyes.
 "You know how your mother exaggerates," I said.

Lindsay smiled. "I'd say she just lies," she said, but not without affection.

The children, all victims of many of their mother's columns over the years, always told their friends that their mother might put them in her column if they, say, came over for dinner. And their mother always exaggerated. Sometimes made things up. Changed the facts to fit the story.

Whatever you want to call it. I think it was handy to have their friends believe this, especially if their mother wrote a column about them that, while excruciatingly embarrassing (and, when you're in junior high, what isn't?), they could say she just made up.

Well, she did exaggerate a lot. She'd just smile and say, "I like to call it artistic license."



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

Take the case in point. It's true, sometimes I don't start the timer right away. It might take me 30 seconds or a minute to remember. Rarely longer. Now, that's morphed into five minutes. "Never" less.

You see what I mean? I'm sure the children did suffer, having a mom who wrote about them. I told them it could have been worse.

They could have been born to, say, a cartoonist like Lynn Johnston, who chronicled her family through good times and bad until it just got too complicated. When she quit tracking the family story, Lynn said it'd gotten so involved she had to hire a continuity editor to tell her if the grown kids' homes looked the same from week to week. Otherwise, sharp-eyed readers would complain.

Our kids' foibles were exposed to a few thousand readers, but Lynn's "Mike" and "Elizabeth" (names had been changed to pro-

tect the guilty) had an audience of millions when "For Better or for Worse" was the most popular comic strip in the world.

Or they could have been related to Dave Barry, the syndicated humor columnist, who once wrote about picking his son up in front of the junior high school in (gasp) the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile.

Compared to them, you wouldn't think our kids had much to worry about, but then their friends were the ones who wound up in the columns and/or read about their episodes. Not millions. But I suppose it was only the ones the kids knew who counted.

It's true, their mother did write about them a lot. She couldn't write about the cats every week; the old men would complain.

And their mother does exaggerate. I never let it bother me, and I'm sure I've been the target of more of her barbs than any of them. But then, I have a column, too, and I can get even. They didn't.

But I never exaggerate. There's too much good stuff out there as is.

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.

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Listening still matters to Kansans

The pioneering spirit of the earliest Kansas settlers lives on today. We know our neighbors and look after them. We teach our children to be moral and responsible citizens. And we work hard to build a better future so our kids and grandkids can pursue their dreams and reach their goals.

This is the reason I became interested in public service and it is the reason I remain involved today. As your U.S. senator, I am committed to listening to Kansans and making certain your voices are heard when decisions are made in our nation's Capital.

Since coming to Congress in 1997, I have made it my top priority to return home each weekend to visit with the folks who sent me to Washington on their behalf. Whether the conversations occur in line at the grocery store, at church or when I'm filling up my truck at the gas station, the input I get from Kansans matters to me and affects the decisions I make in Washington.

When I was first elected to the House of Representatives, I launched the "Big First Listening Tour" and held annual town-hall meetings in each of the 1st District's 69 counties. I have continued this tradition as a senator and have traveled throughout all 105 counties in our state to hear directly from Kansans.

Last week, I returned to Marion to hold my 1,000th town hall meeting since being elected to Congress — the same community I held my first town hall in as a U.S. representative on July 18, 1997.

More than 125 Kansans from Marion and the surrounding communities turned out for a conversation, including a high school government class from Marion-Florence High School. It was inspiring to see the next generation interested in learning about our democracy.

Topics discussed ranged from Obamacare and the "nuclear option" on filibusters to the government shutdown and water conservation. One question was raised by Peggy Black-



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

man, the watershed restoration and protection strategy coordinator for Marion Reservoir. She wanted to talk with me about the importance of solving the reservoir's blue-green algae problem.

It was great to see Peggy, who was at my very first town hall meeting back in 1997 at the county courthouse. In addition to water-conservation issues, Peggy visited with us about why making her voice heard is important.

"We choose to live rural because we like the slower pace," she said. "I'm thankful for the wonderful family life and caring, concerned and compassionate community rural Kansas provides."

"I'm concerned that ... Washington doesn't understand our way of life. We're sitting out here, the breadbasket for the country and the world. It takes a greater effort by us to get our point across because we are so few in numbers."

Peggy is right. I've often told people on Capitol Hill that where I come from in rural Kansas, economic development can come down to whether or not there's a grocery store in town. Few people in Washington understand how these things can be major issues. It's something they don't have to think about, but in so many of our communities across Kansas, keeping a local economy alive and well is about having a Main Street with a hardware store, a grocer and a pharmacy.

The reality is that without a change of direction in Washington, the future of rural America is in jeopardy. We must address the numerous

challenges our country faces, from the increasing costs of Obamacare and government regulation, to out-of-control federal spending and providing certainty to the agricultural community.

Though some things have changed since my first town hall meeting, my efforts in Washington remain much the same today as they were when I was first elected — to see that we have prosperity in the communities we call home.

I will continue to fight on behalf of Kansans on Capitol Hill, and truly appreciate the input I get from you during my Listening Tour stops. Please continue to give me your questions, complaints and marching orders. I will work to make certain policymakers in our nation's capital understand them as well.

Thanks again to the folks who joined me in Marion. I appreciated discussing national policy, but also enjoyed hearing Kansans share their stories of success and achievement. It was an enjoyable event that reinforced my long-held belief in the strength and spirit of our communities and the values that make Kansas a great place to live, work and raise a family. Our state will continue to thrive, thanks to the work ethic, concern and kindness of its people.

You can learn more about my upcoming Kansas Listening Tour stops by subscribing to my weekly newsletter at www.moran.senate.gov.

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.



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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