

Other Viewpoints

Bistate tensions need to cool down

Two governors, two political parties, one border. It's natural to expect conflict, right?

Perhaps, but it doesn't mean we have to like it.

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback appeared insensitive when he didn't consult with Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon before reviving this 30-year-old big idea: tapping the Missouri River at White Cloud and building a 360-mile aqueduct to carry life-supporting water to dry western Kansas.

Gov. Nixon, in turn, responded too harshly to this suggestion by dismissing it out of hand as "ill-advised" — not just the idea, but even the notion of Kansas studying the project at a cost of \$300,000 to be shared by the state and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

This followed, by two weeks, Gov. Nixon's big speech in Kansas City on the need for a moratorium on offering tax incentives to entice companies to move across the Missouri-Kansas state line. Kansas officials who had been working on this issue behind the scenes were caught off guard, and said so.

If this is a high-stakes version of tit-for-tat, we're not well served. The two governors reside on different ends of the political spectrum and in states with significantly different challenges. But if relations were functioning as they should, neither of these recent dustups would have occurred.

Citizens should expect both governors to do more to keep the lines of communication open. We think they also need to appreciate their two states are forever closely linked and they should proceed as though they are close allies, not feuding neighbors.

Concerning the river, Kansas is entitled to consider all of its options when it comes to providing water to its drought-prone regions. Gov. Brownback, in fact, campaigned on water policy and already has won support for conservation measures and steps to extend the life of the important Ogallala Aquifer.

The Kansas Aqueduct Project would employ lift stations and canals to carry water past Perry Lake, through the Flint Hills and into western Kansas. The multibillion-dollar project would take years, if not decades, to accomplish.

All seven states through which the Missouri River passes or forms a border should be concerned about how this project might affect management of the river. But while there is cause to be apprehensive, a scientific study that examines the important issues should be welcomed, not discouraged.

— St. Joseph (Mo.) News-Press, via the Associated Press

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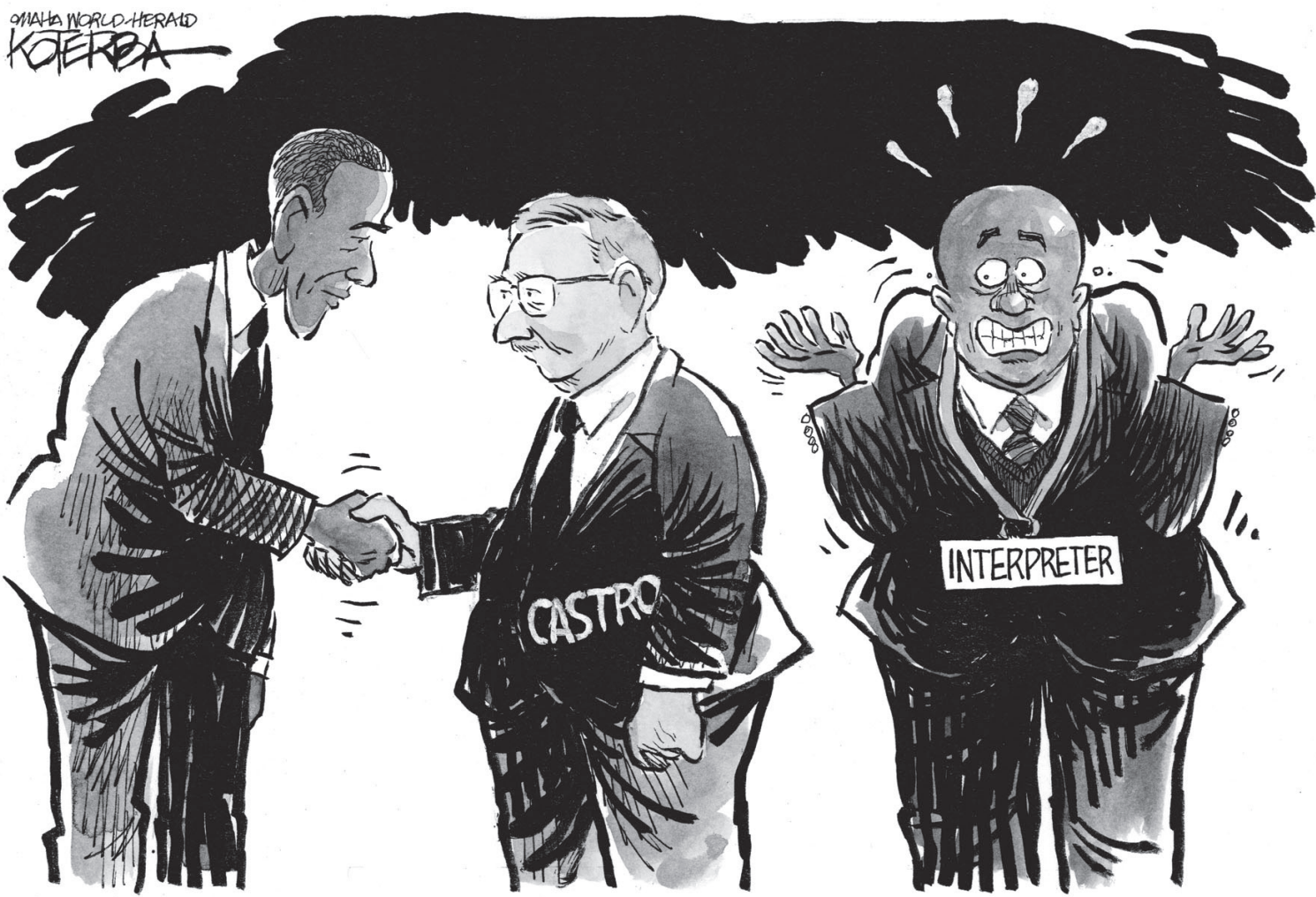
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Unlikely hero gave us Bill of Rights

There's a commercial right now that shows a huge cloud of dust and says, "We're willing to bet no kid ever grew up with a poster of a Passat on his bedroom wall." It's an advertisement for a Dodge Charger, a muscle car.

Likewise, few of us grew up with a poster of Virginian George Mason gracing our wall, either.

For sure, Mason was no Miley Cyrus, Mick Jagger, Madonna, Prince, John Lennon or Elvis Presley, some of the top celebrities of the past 50 years.

But what he did for his fellow Americans more than two centuries ago blows away what any "Hollywood idol" has ever accomplished.

Do you like to speak out about your government?

Do you appreciate a free press that can ferret out fraud, abuse, malfeasance and corruption?

Do you freely exercise your right to worship God, or not to worship at all?

Do you relish the fact that you cannot be jailed without cause, that cruel and unusual punishment is banned and that unreasonable searches and seizures are condemned?

Are you happy that your right to bear arms protects you and your neighbors from criminal elements and from a tyrannical government?

If so, then you owe a debt of gratitude to George Mason. For it was this stubborn defender of the individual rights of his fellow citizens who almost singlehandedly guaranteed that our newly minted but flawed Consti-



Doug Anstaett

• Kansas Press Association

tion would be amended to include a list of those rights.

We call those first 10 amendments the Bill of Rights, and that is just what they are. These statements indicate our government must be subordinate to our individual rights to freedom, liberty and justice.

Dec. 15, Bill of Rights Day, was the 222th anniversary of the day the Bill of Rights was ratified.

Mason never liked politics, but after penning the Declaration of Rights that was adopted along with the Virginia Constitution, he participated in the Constitutional Convention. Disgusted, however, he refused to sign the new national constitution because it lacked a specific listing of individual freedoms. He went home from the convention disillusioned, an outspoken opponent of ratification.

Fortunately for us, his stubbornness paid off. Within two years, the Bill of Rights was adopted and we continue today to enjoy the individual freedoms spelled out for every citizen in those first 10 amendments to the Constitu-

tion.

Today, we might wonder about the state of our rights. With the revelations about spying by the National Security Agency, drones taking pictures of our every move and little of our private lives seemingly "private" any more, we may wonder if the Bill of Rights really matters today.

It most certainly does. For it is the Bill of Rights that allows us to call into question every move our government makes. It allows us to stand on the street corner or march on Topeka or Washington demanding more accountability from government. It allows us to say "enough is enough" when our rights are in jeopardy.

When government goes too far, we can petition for a "redress of grievances," something few nations across the world allow.

Rest assured, George Mason's stubborn determination helped guarantee those rights to every American, then and today.

No, his poster isn't on our walls and likely never will be, but every time we exercise our individual rights, we create of "living poster" of George Mason.

Doug Anstaett, executive director of the Kansas Press Association in Topeka, is a former Kansas publisher and an award-winning editorialist.

It's really everyone's back yard

"Not in my back yard!" is the protest heard when waste dumping is being negotiated. This concept, abbreviated NIMBY, is easily illustrated by the Central Interstate Low Level Radioactive Waste Compact established in 1985.

The states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska agreed to decide on the best site to store the low level radioactive wastes generated in medical and other activities. But when the "best" site ended up being in Nebraska, that site went to court and ended up being removed from the pact in 2004.

A similar NIMBY occurred nationwide when the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository in Nevada was found to be the best deep geological repository storage facility for highly radioactive wastes. This agreement was designated by the NWPA Amendments in 1987 and approved by Congress in 2002. But again, NIMBY protests by Nevada, the site of Yucca Mountain, brought that effort to an end.

That does not mean that our national need went away. Just last year, a U.S. Department of Energy commission stressed the urgent need to find an equivalent geological repository. But the requirement that it must have the input and approval from the citizens around it ensures that our "not in my back yard" attitude will prevent any U.S. radioactive waste repositories.



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

The other side of the coin is the IMBY principle, where everyone wants resources and "goods" in our back yard.

In Kansas, we had the (Gov. Sam) Brownback plan, approved by our Legislature, that waived state income taxes for five years for anyone moving from outside Kansas to any of 50 rural counties.

Far more egregious has been Texas Gov. Rick Perry's highly publicized aggressive efforts to steal jobs from other states. This "in my back yard" strategy may appear to be good politics in Texas, but Gov. Perry can kiss goodbye to running for president again. Both Democratic and Republican governors are protesting his efforts that make his state richer by making their states poorer.

A real statesman looks at the whole picture — for the benefit of all.

Finally, Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon has called for a moratorium to the Kansas-versus-Mis-

souri tug-of-war. Each state has been trying to attract businesses to cross to their side of our common border, to the detriment of the other state.

At the international level, we want to import rare earths we do not have in order to manufacture our new media electronics, from cell phones to laptops. A few years or even months later, they wear out and we ship these devices with hazardous components to some impoverished African country. We want the goods of the world brought to our back yards, but we then dump them as wastes in other's back yards.

There is something missing in our educational system when such selfishness is considered legitimate. Virtually every culture has some version of the golden rule: if you don't want it done to you, don't do it to others.

Whether it is Kansas-versus-Missouri, Texas-versus-the-rest-of-the-U.S., or the U.S.-versus-the-world, it is time we learn that for both resources and wastes, everyone's back yard is our back yard.

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