commentary

from other pens...

Moran water plan deserves consideration

The Hays Daily News on water usage:

Congressman Jerry Moran of Hays has introduced a water-conservation component to the House-passed farm bill, an approach that deserves careful consideration.

In concept, it sounds good. It would be a voluntary program that would pay farmers to reduce the use of water they draw from the Ogallala Aquifer underlying much of western Kansas....

In addition to a 10-year water conservation incentive payment program, the legislation also includes cost-sharing for irrigators who improve or upgrade to equipment that is more water efficient.

The measure also calls for better mapping and monitoring of water usage from the aquifer and would establish a High Plains Aquifer Council to coordinate conservation programs and oversee efforts to conserve Ogallala water.

The Ogallala covers 174,000 square miles in an eight-state region. .. The aquifer, relied on heavily for irrigation, is being spent, and Gov. Bill Graves among others has endorsed a goal of getting to zero depletion in 20 years — meaning a point when no more water is being taken from the aquifer than is naturally replenishing it.

The House earlier this month approved a \$170 million farm bill that remains heavily based on subsidies. The Bush administration has said the bill is light on conservation programs and specifically, rewarding farmers for better environmental practices such as control of runoff of chemicals and animal waste. ...

Water conservation is an excellent component to include, at least for regions where critical groundwater resources are being depleted.

As western Kansas is one of those places, Moran's leadership on this legislation is good to see.

The Wichita Eagle on Roberts' warning:

Pat Roberts is sounding the alarm about another terrorism target: U.S agriculture....

The Kansas senator gained unwanted notoriety following the Sept. 11 attacks because he was one of the few lawmakers who predicted such dangers. On March 11, 1999, Mr. Roberts opened the first hearing of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Military Capabilities. ... By warning that terrorists will pick U.S. targets "selected for their symbolic value, like the World Trade Center.

Tragically, those and other warnings went largely unheeded. Now .. Mr. Roberts is warning that agriculture may be the next big target, and that we're not prepared.

To that end, Mr. Roberts ... introduced a 10-year plan to help safeguard our nation's food supply. The \$3.5 billion total cost would be paid out of the next farm bill. ...

... Mr. Roberts hopes that scientists can develop more resistant plant strains and that the tightened security on crop-dusting will help. That's why he also wants a better first-response system - which might include local veterinarians and a "swat" team of experts from Kansas State University — that can immediately determine what has happened and what the response needs to be.

Doing so could help contain the damage and keep it from wiping out an entire crop or industry, as the foot-and-mouth outbreak did recently in Britain, Mr. Roberts said.

Congress needs to debate the specifics of Mr. Roberts' plan ... But it must not ignore a threat that could ... result in chaos.

Don't give Mr. Roberts another reason to say, "I told you so."



After several dozen U.S. Senate staffers tested positive for anthrax — but didn't fall ill — the House of Representatives suddenly shut down. Some say you have to go back to the War of 1812 to find the last time a chamber of Congress closed in an emergency.

So what if anthrax wasn't found in the building housing the representatives? So what if a regimen of antibiotics would almost certainly clear up any infection if they were, in fact, exposed? It wasn't as though they were bombarded by poisonous fumes or the bacteria of some incurable virus.

Didn't matter. Couldn't risk it.

This may be insensitive, but here was my first reaction: They can send our sons and daughters off to die in the unforgiving hills of Afghanistan; they can tell us civilians to hang tough, to return to normal, to "not let the terrorists win." But when faced with the first hint of danger, our leaders ran for cover.

Already these terrorists saw our president take refuge the day of the attacks in a bunker in Nebraska. (Perhaps such extraordinary caution was prudent, but reports now suggest that Air Force One was never threatened after all.) The terrorists have seen our vice president retreat to a secret hiding place; Dick Cheney's absence was so complete for several weeks that rumors spread that he had died or suffered a debilitating heart attack. The terrorists even saw, if they were paying close attention, California Governor Gray Davis decide, briefly, to lease a private jet so he could avoid commercial flights. He soon understood his gaffe,



common folk.

Home of the brave, indeed.

It is easy to live up to ideals when little is asked of us. Our leaders talk beautifully about strength and resolve when addressing welfare, education, campaign finance reform. ("We will stand strong and resolute against those who would dare trample the rights of gun lobbyists to treat us to long weekends at the Bermuda Marriott!")

But now, with our homeland directly attacked, "strength" and "resolve" must be more than words on a Tele-Promp-Ter. In times of danger and anxiety, a country must confront the elemental question, "Who are we?" And like it or not, our leaders are the ones who carry the answer to the rest of the world.

During World War II, King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth (now the Queen Mother), stayed in London in Buckingham Palace during the Battle of Britain. Prime Minister Winston Churchill practically had to be dragged into bomb shelters during the Blitz.

When they refused to give in to fear, they sent Chronicle. Send comments to her e-mail and the message — to the world and to their own citi- joanryan@sfgate.com.



zens — that Britain was undaunted.

Symbolism is even more important, I would argue, in a war against terrorism.

The terrorists already have succeeded in disrupting our travel, our economy and our sleep. Now they have managed — with a few spores of anthrax to disrupt our government.

What could be a greater morale booster for bin changed his mind and has continued to fly with the Laden and his cutthroat fanatics? What better way to reassure the terrorists that their plan is working?

And what better way to fuel the extravagant fears of American citizens who already are stockpiling gas masks, Cipro and bottled water?

Some might say our leaders should take whatever steps they deem necessary to feel safe, just as the rest of us do. But they aren't like the rest of us. Their role in a time of crisis is no less critical than the roles of the firefighters, police and emergency medical technicians in New York.

These workers did their jobs in the face of unthinkable devastation and danger. We should expect no less from our highest elected officials.

The latest Gallup Poll shows that our trust in government is the highest it has been since 1968. Six out of 10 people say they trust the government to do "what is right" just about always or most of the time

We need the government to be worthy of that trust. Our leadership is the face we show the world. Let it be a courageous one.

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For the last couple of years, we've been hearing that high definition television is just around the corner — that very soon, we're going to be seeing the clearest and most unbelievable pictures since the first Playboy magazine. So, while I'm waiting, I'm watching normal television. Last night on one channel I saw Peter Jennings; on another was Dan Rather; and on a third was Barbara Walters. Suddenly, I got the feeling that these three are stalling the whole hi-def revolution. They don't want high definition. They want the picture to be as fuzzy and unrealistic as possible. That's why they use oldperson camera lenses. They have no lines on their faces, their eyes aren't clear, and they almost have halos. High definition is obviously for people under 35. Low-def is much easier on the rest of us. So, if you're ever in Hollywood, I suggest you take a piece of wax paper with you. Then, when you're in a restaurant and you see an elderly woman at the next table, try looking at her through the wax paper. I bet you'll say, "Oh my gosh, it's Barbara Walters.'

THE PRESENT IS THE GIFT

From Nostradamus on, there have always been people who claim to be able to predict the future. Why are so many of us fascinated with this ability? There's a pretty good chance that it's all baloney, but more importantly, the last thing you want to know is the future. Take a look at your own life over the last 20 years. How much of it would you



have preferred to know was coming? You would have been depressed waiting for the bad, and you would have missed the delightful surprise of the good. It's way better not to know. As long as you have 100 bucks in the bank and an extra pair of clean underwear, you're pretty much ready for whatever the world throws at you. You don't go to movies where you know the ending, and it would be a shame for you to be standing in the lobby while your life plays out on the screen. Most of us have no idea whether or not there's life after death, and that's the way it should be. We all find out eventually, and I think it's very thoughtful that so far, nobody's blabbed.

MIDLIFE PHYSICS

The physics I learned in high school is no longer valid. Here are a few changes that need to be made to adapt the Laws of Nature to the middle-aged person:

- The shortest distance between two points is the one where you don't have to bend over.

-Bodies in motion tend to fall onto the couch.

- Bodies at rest tend to be disturbed.

- Whatever goes up, you probably sold last week.

 Energy can neither be created nor destroyed It can, however, be wasted.

- Infinite mass is achieved at the speed of ligh and also during Thanksgiving dinner.

NO PEAKING

One of the most important lessons in life is not to peak too early. And I don't mean just in the bedroom We only have to look at people like Gary Coleman or Jerry Mathers to realize that early accomplish ment can be extremely debilitating. (Opie is the exception.) For most of us, it's important to delay success as long as we possibly can. There's nothing worse than being a has-been. The ideal plan is to achieve the zenith of your personal and professional achievements just prior to passing away. Be sure to point that out to your wife as your excuse for never being successful. You've just got too much to live for.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Life is a trip, but you're not driving." - Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

berry's world

Pharmacists deserve recognition

To the Editor:

There's a group of individuals who play a significant role in the hospice care concept. These professionals, our pharmacists, also provide assistance to our community during times of illness. Often they do not receive the recognition they deserve.

With terminal illnesses, most patients have a multitude of physical and psychological symptoms. With the help of the pharmacists, we at Hospice Services are able to address the complex needs of the terminal illness.

Frequently, new medications are released that provide comfort from pain. Our pharmacists help us understand the benefits of these new medications. Sometimes this means they spend extra time researching the medication or finding ways to make the medication available. Besides making it available, they even go the extra mile in helping us find ways to deliver the medication to the patient's home.



from our readers

to the editor

At Hospice Services, we do not discriminate based on the cost of medications for a patient. If the patient needs it, they receive it. Thanks to our pharmacists we find the right medication for our patients

Quality end of life care can be characterized by two words - competence and compassion. These also characterized our local pharmacist. We see it with our work in hospice care and in their daily assistance to the community.

Hospice Services nurses

Reva Benien, Tracey Carpenter, Debbie Evangelidis, Sandy Kuhlman, Doris Wiens



"I'D LIKE YOU TO SIGN THIS. IT HAS TO DO WITH MY HITTING YOU ON THE KNEES WITH A LITTLE RUBBER HAMMER

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