

from our viewpoint...

New year begins with good prospects

The snow and ice may make driving a bit difficult at times, but the moisture is a great beginning of the year.

The National Weather Service "drought watch" message at the end of December called for an increase in moisture to help moderate the dry spell. The forecast predicts for more moisture in the first three months of this year.

For construction workers at the Goodland Energy Center plants, a long, cold, wet winter could add frustration and delay some projects. Development of these three plants is a real key to giving the county a path for expansion and growth. Besides adding a power plant to help stabilize the electric grid, the three plants are a way to expand the markets for corn and the byproducts of the three plants.

The wet weather could delay the hoped-for early start on road construction projects for Sherman County and the City of Goodland, but these will swing into high gear as soon as it dries out. Bids for repaving old U.S. 24 and North Caldwell Avenue will be opened this month with plans to begin in March if possible.

It was good timing that the contractor for the intersections at Eighth and Caldwell and Armory Road was able to have most of the work done before the weather closed in.

Work continued until the storms on the K-27 project south of town, and it will be back in full swing come spring. The grading is getting close to the south end, and there will be detours to get the north end ready for paving. This \$17 million project will improve the safety of the road south of town, and leaves the section in Wallace County as the last link to improving the highway all the way to Tribune.

With the wet weather, there should be some smiles on farmers' faces. The snow should give the wheat good cover and build up some subsoil moisture. However, if the weekly storm pattern continues, that could make the calving season a bit tough.

The community planning process is moving ahead, and the action teams will be meeting later this month to begin work on the priorities that Shine on Sherman County came up with over the past three months. It will take time, but the teams will be looking for way implement the plans that came out of the vision retreat. These are long-term goals for the county, and progress in each will add to the feeling of success.

Construction of the new Holiday Inn Express is moving ahead, and Doug and Jeanne Irvin told the Goodland Rotary Club on Friday they hope to have the hotel open by April. Adding a 73-room hotel should pull more people off the Interstate to spend money in town.

Plans for other projects, such as a new High Plains Museum, can help keep the momentum moving forward, and add to the sense of expansion and progress in town. Most of the projects that took advantage of the county's Neighborhood Revitalization Program are under way. This will be the last year to take advantage of these tax breaks unless the city, county and school district agree to extend the three-year program.

This year is shaping up to be a great one, and with the Weather Service saying the drought is moderating, there is every reason to believe progress will continue through the year and beyond.

We will survive the slippery driving. Just keep thinking about the wonderful moisture it brings with it. — Tom Betz

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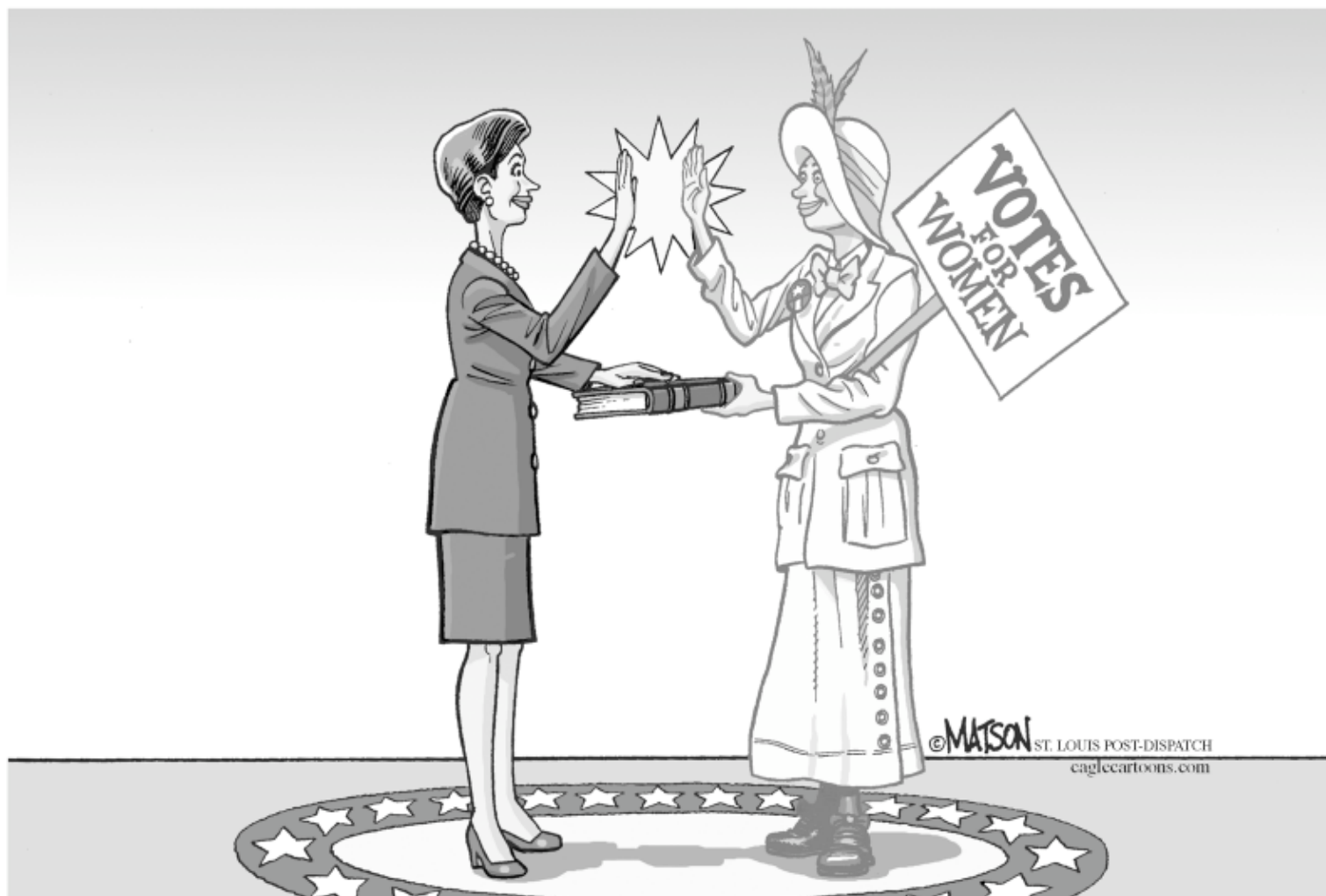
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Nor'West Newspapers

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THE 60TH SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Are we forfeiting our quality of life?

To the Editor:

Are residents of the High Plains willing to forfeit yet another large slice of the gifts of land, water, clean air and quality of life?

If we are content to believe a vocal minority, the proposed coal fired electric generation plant near Holcomb will be the next best thing to sliced bread. Don't believe it for one minute. These promoters are not required to "tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

As inhabitants of the High Plains, all we need to do is remain silent, forfeit our precious water in perpetuity, provide a small tract of land as a hiding place from society and a look in the other direction. This will allow corporate pirates to reap billions of dollars in profits. Remember, corporations don't die, they continue on forever. They don't answer to society, they assume limited accountability for their actions, and pay very little in taxes.



from our readers

• to the editor

As a western Kansas farmer, I am sick and tired of the colonization of rural America. We must take a stand. We cannot allow the continued exploitation of our natural resources, and the deterioration of our health and environment in the name of "economic development."

If you are looking for the truth, follow the money. You will have to look hard, because the money isn't even passing through our neighborhood. The imported coal will be transported by an out-of-state railroad. The vast majority of the energy produced will be

exported. Over a 50-year period, Sunflower's cost of obtaining water rights will only amount to a sprinkling of dollars for every million gallons of depletion of a precious resource. The major deposits in our state will be mercury and carbon dioxide, not cash.

I do not see a coal-fired power plant as a pillar upon which to build a future. Let's make sure this is not part of the legacy left to our children and grandchildren.

I recently saw a bumper sticker with a quote by Maggie Kuhn: "Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes." Contact your state representative, state senator and Gov. Sebelius. Demand a moratorium on construction of new coal fired electric plants in the state.

Tom Giessel
President, Pawnee County Farmers Union
Larned

Arguments about power plants are weak

Editor's Note: This column ran last week but the letter it refers to was left off the page by mistake. We are running both today in the hope that the column will make more sense.

Should Kansas allow three new coal-fired power plants to be built at Holcomb, west of Garden City?

It's the top environmental issue of the year in the state. Above in Tom Giessel's letter to the editor you can get a sample of the sort of logic being used to fight the plant, which is to say, not much.

Why bother with logic or facts when you know what's best?

Let's take a look at the arguments here.

• "This will allow corporate pirates to reap billion of dollars in profits..."

Just who are these corporate pirates, anyway?

The plant would be built by two "generation and transmission" power cooperatives, both owned by consumer-controlled rural electric cooperatives.

Sunflower Electric, based in Hays, is owned by six Kansas cooperatives formed to bring power and light to the High Plains.

Sunflower's partner is Tri-State Generation and Transmission, a larger Colorado co-op owned by 44 local-service cooperatives. All are owned by their customers, including your publisher, a member of the San Luis Valley Rural Electric Cooperative.

So the owners of these plants, the evil geniuses behind this plot, are the farmers and rural residents of Kansas and Colorado, parts of Nebraska and Wyoming, a few in New Mexico and Utah. Us, in other words.

• "As a western Kansas farmer, I am sick and tired of the colonization of rural America. ... We cannot allow the continued exploitation of our natural resources."

Except to grow corn, of course.

• "Corporations don't die...they don't answer to society...they pay little in taxes."



steve haynes

• along the sappa

There's one good point. Cooperatives don't pay corporate taxes, but their members do. Utility cooperatives have to pay taxes on their equipment, though.

• "If you are looking for the truth, follow the money (which) isn't even passing through our neighborhood. The imported coal will be transported by an out-of-state railroad. The vast majority of the energy produced will be exported."

BNSF Railway, which serves the plant, is one of two major railroads serving Kansas. The successor to the old Santa Fe, it has its largest freight yards in Wyandotte County, its main

shops and a business office in Topeka and a division office in the state. It's one of Kansas' largest private employers.

• The power will go out of state. That's true.

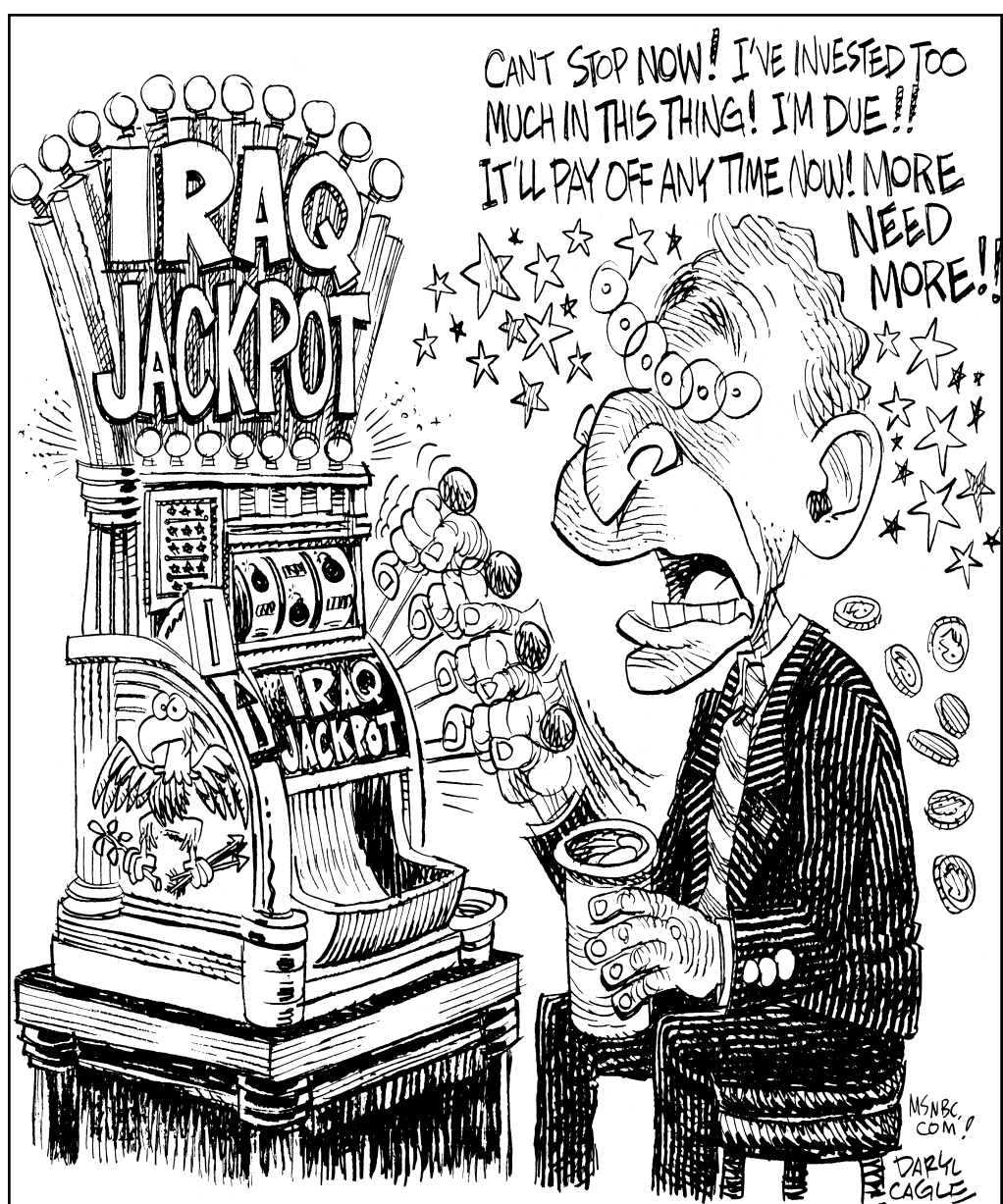
So do most of the cars produced at the General Motors plant in Kansas City. So does most of the wheat grown by Kansas farmers, most of the beef raised on Kansas pasture, finished in Kansas feed lots, killed at Kansas plants. That's how we make a living out here.

• "Speak your mind."

First, think about what you are saying.

This country faces a real question in whether it will keep adding to the "greenhouse gases" thought to fuel global warming. Hysterical debate grounded in emotion won't lead us to a better decision.

That is a question the country needs to face, but it's not one Kansas or the citizen-owners of the Holcomb plant can solve. Under present law, at least, they deserve a chance to build it.



Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: star-news@nwkans.com.