

from other pens...

# Mistake to waive federal fuel taxes

Don't do it, Sen. McCain. The problems it will cause will be greater than the benefits you think it will create.

Last week, Sen. John McCain, yes, the GOP presidential candidate, asked Congress to waive the federal tax on gasoline and diesel fuel from Memorial Day to Labor Day as a way to ease the price burden on travelers. The tax on gasoline is 18 cents per gallon, on diesel 24 cents.

In the past year, gasoline has increased in price by 18 cents in a matter of days. Diesel fuel's increase has been so great, truckers around the world recently staged protests. Here in Kansas, paying \$3.17 after the tax cut won't really make people feel better about it. It will just remind them when gasoline was \$3.17 a gallon — still too much.

But the bigger picture is the image it gives of taxes. Taxes are created, and paid, for a reason. The federal taxes on gasoline help to pay for road improvements federal-aid route such as I-70 and U.S. 83.

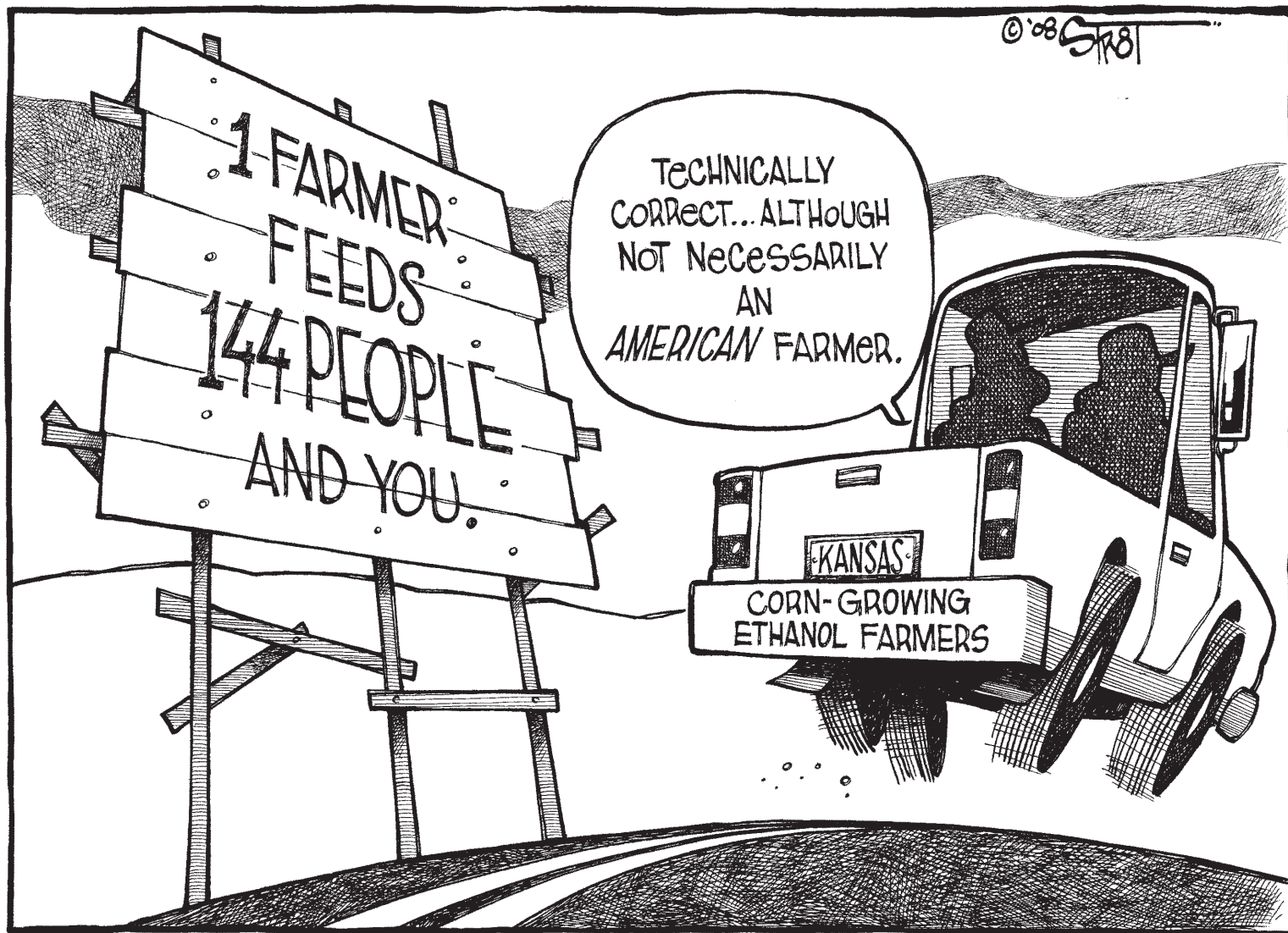
Cracks and potholes will eventually show up in those roads without money to maintain and rebuild them. If the money is not there, the problem gets worse. People won't, and don't, like driving on poor roads, no matter how much fuel costs.

Taxes can't be treated this way — to make people temporarily feel better about a situation. Taxes should only be lowered, permanently, when the programs they support do not need as much as in the past. Taxes should not be treated as a door prize.

This is not the first time a government has made such a suggestion. Several states have sales-tax free weekends, usually in August, to spur back-to-school shopping for families. Again, like the fuel tax suggestion, sales taxes are created to maintain a government's operation. The amount of taxes lost during those times could easily make some major, needed equipment purchases. Besides, most stores offer sales at that time that usually beat the amount of sales tax.

Sen. McCain, it is honorable of you to care about the economy and fuel prices, misdirected as your fuel-tax waiver suggestion is. If you want to help with taxes and the economy, ask Congress to get rid of the loopholes some companies jump through to avoid paying taxes to begin with.

— John Van Nostrand, *The Colby Free Press*



# The 'unthinkable' can happen

By **LESLIE NOLETTE**

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I'm sure there are some of you who don't know April was Child Abuse Prevention month.

Over the years, I've seen so many news broadcasts and newspaper articles on children, some as young as one month, being abused, or even murdered, by their mother, father or babysitter.

"How awful to have to experience something like that," I would say.

You never think that something like that could ever happen to you ... until it does.

We had dated for about six months, so I felt so comfortable with him. His family was so wonderful. He had been in the Army for 12 years and had no criminal record, not even a speeding ticket. I decided that he would be the one for me.

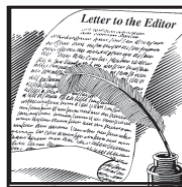
One evening, I needed to go to the store to get milk and diapers for Justeen, who was 16 months old. She was sleeping and I didn't want to disturb her. Justeen had been teething and having trouble sleeping through the night. He said it would be fine, that he would keep an eye on her. So I took my three older children with me to the store.

The next thing I remember was being walked down the hallway to a "quiet room." My boyfriend sat there, crying, with his face in his hands.

"I'm sorry," said the doctor. "We did everything we could."

"This can't be happening," I thought. "This has got to be a really bad dream."

I didn't want to believe the doctor. I thought



## from other pens

• commentary

to myself, "It will be OK. We'll take Justeen home. She'll be better after some medicine."

That never happened. I didn't get to take Justeen home. I never got to touch her or hold her before they took her away. She was evidence.

I later found out, during sentencing, that he had shaken Justeen — "like a madman," were his words in court — thrown her across the room, drowned her in the bathtub and then resuscitated her, just so that he could kill her again with a couch pillow, smothering her face.

It was nine days before I saw Justeen again, lying on a morgue table with just a blanket covering her. I began to dress her. A long white, satin gown; white shoes and stockings; a headband to cover the heavy stitches, like rope, from the autopsy; finally, a gold cross around her neck.

Justeen looked like a beautiful angel. I closed my eyes and imagined her running through a field of flowers, into the arms of Jesus.

Justeen has been gone for 10 years, and her death has had such an impact on my entire family's lives. It never gets easier; you just learn to cope with it.

I felt compelled to tell my story ... to let people know that we need to do something about this. ... that it is possible to deal with any

situation before it gets out of hand. This should never, ever happen to an innocent child.

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway website ([www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)), in the last six months, the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services has received 26,191 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect and over 100 investigations are initiated each work day.

Other mistreatment includes sexual abuse and exploitation, emotional and verbal abuse, even abandonment.

Awareness leads to change. The key to awareness is communication and education. Talk with others in your town. Effective communication can increase awareness of this problem, build community support, change attitudes, teach parenting skills and reinforce healthy behaviors.

Educate yourself on how to recognize abuse and neglect. Offer to babysit for your neighbor, friend or family member. Social and Rehabilitation Services in Colby offers resources to help parents cope with their children's behavior. Most people don't understand Children's Protective Services workers are there to help keep families together, not pull them apart.

To learn more about the signs of abuse and neglect and ways you can help prevent it, visit [www.srskans.org](http://www.srskans.org).

To report concerns of child abuse or neglect, call (800) 922-5330. The Kansas Protection Report Center is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Every call is taken seriously and every effort will be made to protect the caller's identity.

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# Post-Pennsylvania primary punditry

Order another bag of peanuts, pass the cotton candy and get used to the smell of sawdust, because the circus tour has been extended. Yes, my friends, welcome to the primary that will not die.

You'd think that after six thrill-filled weeks of hosting this sideshow competition of rival ringmasters outdoing each other in the Like A Normal Human Animal Act, the State of Pennsylvania would selflessly provide the rest of the country with a semblance of closure by permanently pulling up the stakes of this traveling Big Top. But no. They got addicted to the sound of calliope music and don't want the spectacle to end. Selfish bastards.

While we watched over their shoulders, the residents of the Keystone State had a front-row, bench-seat view of the wacky zany antics of two of America's finest moral contortionists variously indulging in comedic bowling, throwing back shots with beers (performed a little too expertly, if you ask me), imaginary sniper fire dodging and way more information about spiritual advisors than we needed.

All the while we oohed and aaahed and shoveled handfuls of funnel cake into our mouths, then stood up to put on our coats ready to head home and pore over the handbill for the Circus Maximus about to parade into town, but while we were digging for our keys, Pennsylvania wiped some peanut shells off the bench and sat back down.

All that was left was to light the ceremonial fuse to fire the shot that announced the ending of this historic freak-show media encampment. But something happened. The human cannonball got stuck. Or the sword swallower sneezed. Or the clowns got lost in the basement of the car. Or they needed to reduce their inventory of corn dogs. Or maybe the problem was Hill and Bare themselves. Perhaps their prop masters didn't trust them to execute the tightrope shootout which explains why instead of exploding, their guns just popped out sticks that said "Bang."



## will durst

• raging moderate

Hillary Clinton didn't win Pennsylvania, she survived. Long enough for another attempt to nail that elusive quadruple on the flying trapeze. But the net is gone and the clock is ticking. The Junior Senator from New York may have bested the Junior Senator from Illinois by nearly 10 percentage points, but at the rate she cut into his delegate lead, she's on pace to overtake him sometime during the middle of his second term.

To the elders of the Democratic Party, this is Worst-Case Scenario City: harmless carnival attraction twists into a grisly horror movie in the middle of the final reel. The political variation of Saw v. Two People. Locked inside

of a single country. Each with a war chest of souped-up power tools. And this time, the electricity is on.

The answer to the double billing conundrum is obvious; unfortunately, there are only two Democrats in America who aren't salivating like trained dogs at the idea of the Obama and Clinton Dream Ticket, and those two Democrats are Obama and Clinton. Meanwhile, John McCain is free to stumble around the country frightening children.

So, go ahead, re-inflate those mylar balloons, but keep them out of reach of the candidates because at this point, their first inclination will be to strangle each other with them. And someone warn Indiana and North Carolina that the circus is coming to town, and the acrobats are brandishing chain saws.

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