

from our viewpoint...

Three strikes! Are we out?

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius made good on her opposition to coal-fired power plants in western Kansas with the third veto of a bill that was overwhelmingly passed by both the House and Senate.

House Speaker Melvin Neufeld (R-Ingalls) said this week the legislature would not try to override the third veto when the legislators return to Topeka on Wednesday.

The billions of dollars of investment in western Kansas will seep away and probably end up in Oklahoma or Texas. Western Kansas takes another hit in the stomach from Topeka.

Millions of dollars have been spent by lobbying groups on both sides of the power plant controversy to sway the emotions of Kansans. One side tells us how bad coal plants are, and that the answer is the development of wind power. The other side says the plants would be cleaner than any existing in the state, and that wind power and more transmission lines would be part of the development.

In March 2007 the Sierra Club and Kansas City Light and Power came to an agreement to allow the power company to proceed with building an 850 megawatt coal-fired power plant near Weston, Mo., which is 25 miles northwest of Kansas City.

This was a plant that had been held up for more than two years by the Sierra Club and a series of lawsuits. Kansas City Light and Power serves customers in both northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas including the greater Kansas City metropolitan area.

Bruce Nilles, attorney and official with the Sierra Club, called the settlement significant and predicted it would influence other utilities to react to global warming.

He said the Sierra Club hoped the agreement would create enough wind power and reduce demand for power enough to make additional coal-fired plants unnecessary.

This agreement was made six months before the Kansas Secretary of Health and Environment Roderick Bremby denied air permits for the proposed two 700 megawatt Sunflower Electric coal-fired plants at Holcomb.

The decision by Bremby sparked a huge controversy because he said the carbon dioxide levels of the plants would contribute to global warming. Controversy with the decision was because neither state nor federal regulations have specific limits for carbon dioxide emissions.

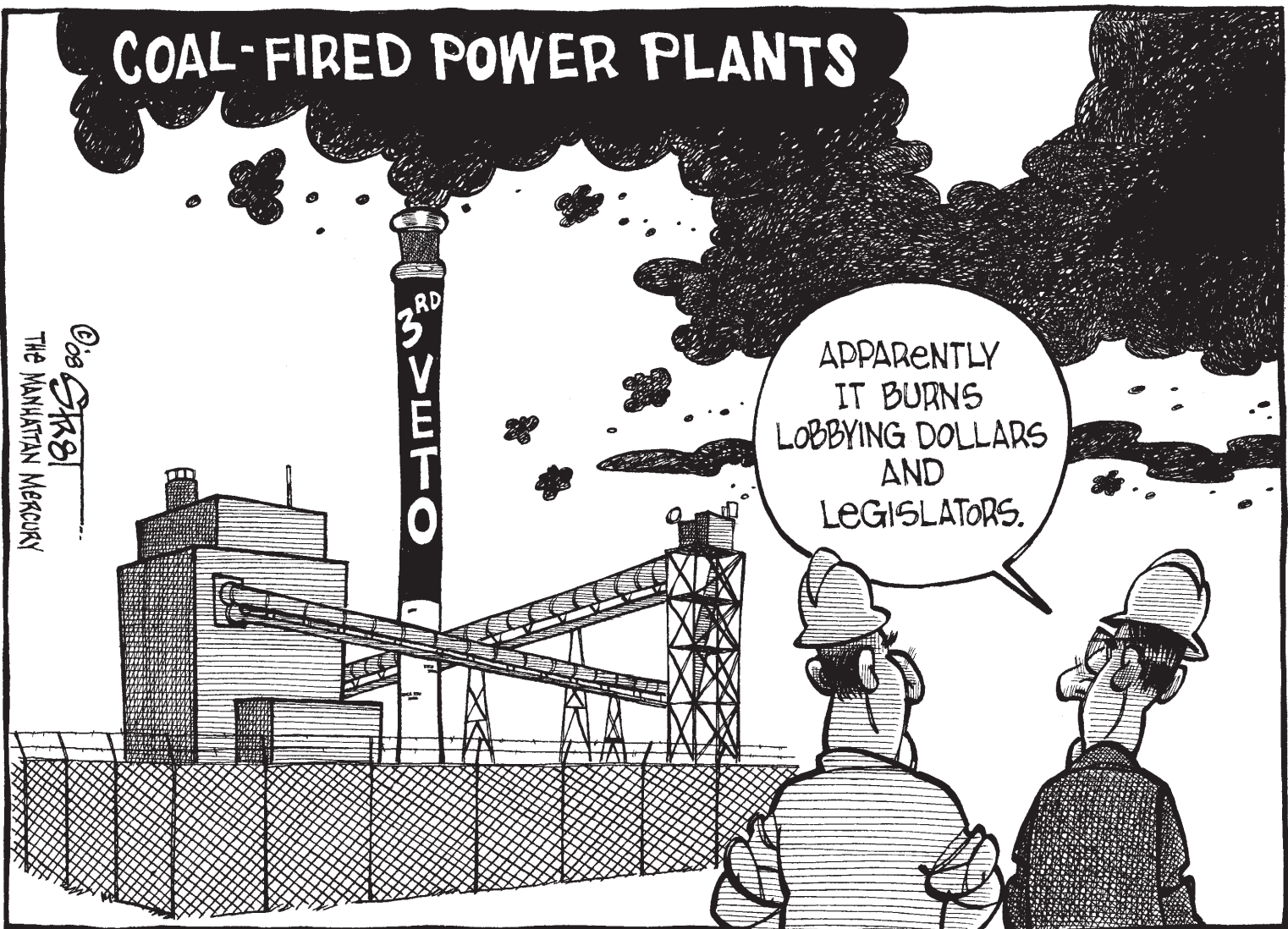
Seizing on this the Legislature spent five months trying to pass bills to allow the Holcomb plants to be built, and to narrow the regulative authority of the Secretary of Health and Environment to what was in the laws. Three bills were passed by large margins in both the Senate and House, but Gov. Sebelius vetoed each one and on two tries the House fell two votes short of overriding the veto.

Lt. Governor Mark Parkinson is fond of saying how wind power can be the next boom for Kansas, and that it is a better answer for the state than the coal-fired plants.

During a visit to Goodland and Colby Parkinson said he felt the state should develop enough wind power to be able to export power to other states. However, he did not feel it was the same to sell coal generated power out of state and keep the jobs in state.

Sunflower Electric will have to find another way to generate the needed power over the next few years, and despite plans to develop wind power there will be a power gap causing Sunflower to seek power in the market where the price will be higher.

The hot winds from Topeka should die down after next week, and maybe an agreement between Sunflower and the governor can be reached to at least allow development of part of the Holcomb energy plan. — Tom Betz



Honor Flight: Honoring our WWII vets

In 2004, just a few days before its dedication, I walked outside the U.S. Capitol Building and beyond the Washington Monument to the newly constructed World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. It was inspiring.

At long last, nearly 60 years after the war ended, these veterans — who did so much to protect our country and liberate the world — were to receive recognition through a national monument.

I happened to have my cell phone with me and called my 90-year-old father back in Plainville. He is one of the thousands of Americans who left their family and lives behind in World War II to fight on foreign soil. My father fought in Northern Africa, Sicily and Italy.

Fortunately, when I called, I got the answering machine. It is often difficult for sons and daughters to tell their fathers the things we should tell them. My message was, "Dad, I love you, Dad, I'm proud of you and Dad, thank you for your service to our country."

I told my dad what I should have said a long time ago and what we all should say to our veterans. It was too bad that many veterans of this "Greatest Generation," now in their 80s and 90s, are unable physically or financially to



jerry moran
in Congress

visit our nation's capital and see this beautiful tribute to their service and sacrifice.

A few months ago, Senator Bob Dole — himself a World War II veteran who led the charge to build the Memorial — told me about a grassroots, non-profit organization called Honor Flight.

Staffed by volunteers and funded by donations, Honor Flight enables World War II veterans to travel to our nation's capital to see the Memorial created in their honor. Honor Flight operates across the country using commercial and chartered flights to send veterans on a one-day, expenses-paid trip to Washington.

I have had the honor of joining Senator Dole to greet these veterans at the World War II Memorial. The time we spend with these proud men and women is very moving.

As volunteers — often local high school students — help veterans off of the bus, you

see the excitement in the veterans' eyes that has kept them up many nights beforehand in anticipation. As we walk past the fountains and to the granite pillar dedicated to Kansans, the student volunteers listen to veterans recount tales of their time in the service, of friends made and friends lost.

Tourists stop their sightseeing to shake the veterans' hands and express thanks. Many veterans are moved to tears. It is a special day for a very special generation of heroes.

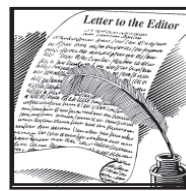
This Memorial Day, I want to call attention to this worthy program and the work of the volunteers who make it possible. Of the 16 million veterans who served in World War II, only three million are alive today.

We are losing them at a rate of 1,200 each day. Honor Flight is working against time to say "thank you" to these veterans.

For more information or to donate to this program, call Pat Hageman, a Kansas coordinator, at (785) 737-6024 or visit www.honorflight.org.

On Memorial Day, let us be grateful to the men and women who answered the call in service to our country, remembering their sacrifices and recognizing the debts we owe.

I see crosses



from our readers

to the editor

Just a few months ago, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius announced the Eight Wonders of Kansas. I'm a lucky person; I travel a lot of miles though this state and have had the great fortune to see or experience most of those Wonders. Those that I have not seen, I plan to see soon. This is truly a beautiful state and something Kansans should be proud of.

Unfortunately, I have seen something else that is lining our streets and highways: Crosses. They are dotted in the wildflowers and in our prairie grasses. As I drive by them, I wonder what happened. Did someone hurt or suffer, did they experience fear or think of their loved ones in their final moments? We will never know.

One thing I do know is someone who is alive today is hurting or thinking about that loved one. I'm sure the hurt or loving never stops. You only have to take a close look at these

crosses as you travel by them. They are often decorated with a person's favorite teddy bear, book, picture, or a baby bottle. That means there is someone alive who cares.

I also wonder if this tragedy was preventable; sadly, in almost all instances the answer is yes. The difference between life and death could have been made by a slower speed, a designated driver, not talking or text messaging on the cellphone, or even something as simple as making the decision to buckle a seat belt or restrain a child.

I ask you to do everything in your power to prevent the planting of any new crosses to dot our roadways. You can educate, you can change your habits and law enforcement can aggressively enforce the laws. Speak up; you may be the squeaky wheel that changes attitudes and behaviors.

I leave you with this: as you travel through Kansas, enjoy the wonders of this beautiful state, but also be aware of the crosses that line our highways, and think how you can prevent new plantings.

Be Safe and Buckle Up — every trip, every time.

Dave Corp
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Kansas Department of Transportation Bureau of Traffic Safety
Topeka

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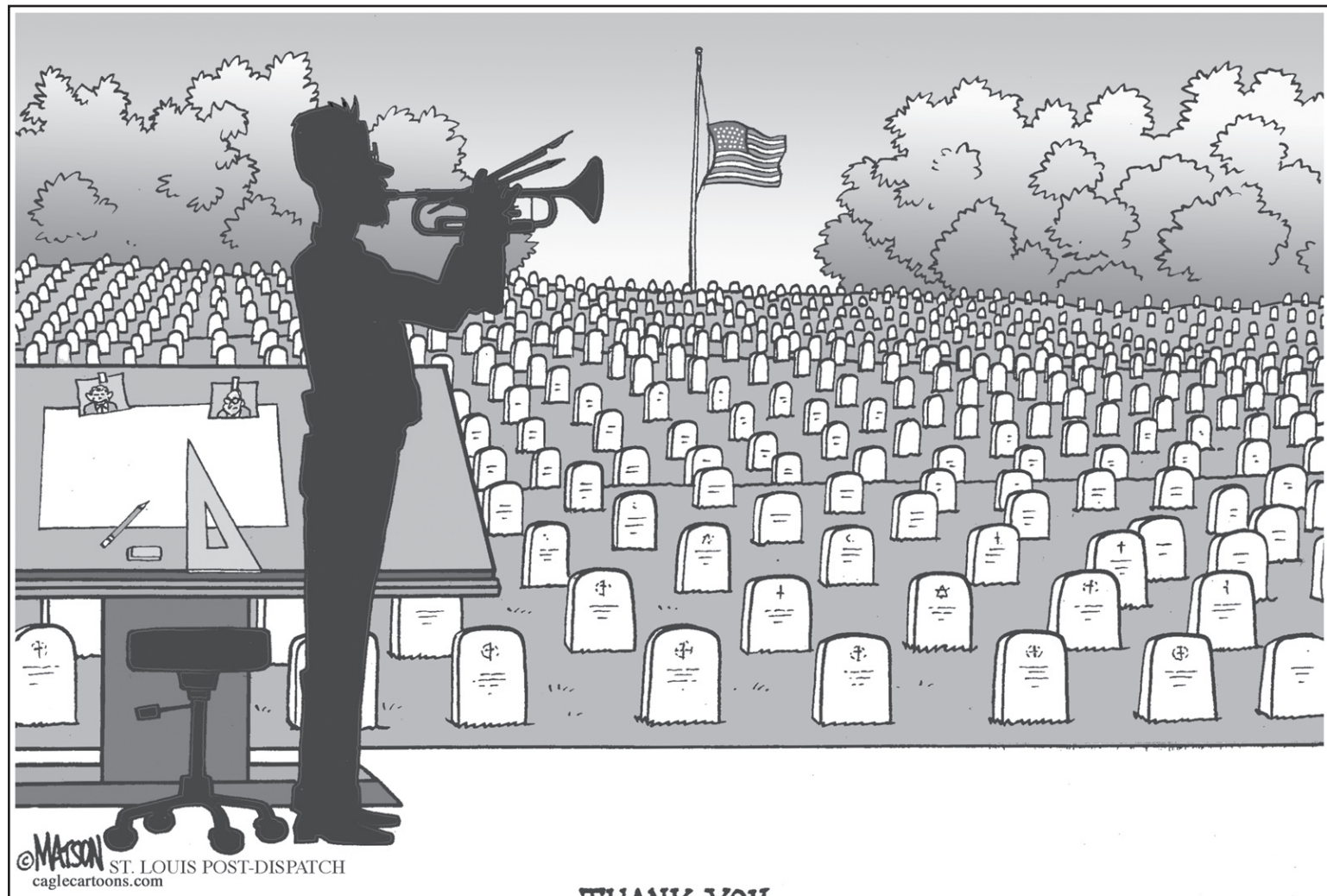
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