

from our viewpoint...

House district map has serious flaws

The redistricting committee in the Kansas House of Representatives this week approved a redrawn map of the U.S. Congressional districts. Unfortunately, it has a number of flaws.

The 2nd district would be monumentally different. The map would carve a huge chunk out of the eastern end of the 1st and give it to the 2nd. About 12 1/2 counties from Lincoln County to Lyon County would be put in the 2nd District. Everything in the 2nd District north of Manhattan would get put in the 1st District, including Leavenworth County.

We would take Wyandotte County, but the 3rd District would pick up the rest of Douglas County (right now it has about half).

The Fourth District, centered around Wichita, would only lose its half of Greenwood County.

So the first district would reach from the Colorado border to Kansas City as well as having almost everything west of Salina.

Why did this seem like a good idea?

Wyandotte County has 157,505 people in it and Leavenworth has 76,227. That's a lot of votes compared to the sparsely populated western Kansas counties.

To equal those two counties, it would take around 36 western counties, and that's including the population centers of Hays, Great Bend, Garden City and Dodge City. Take those away, and it would take a lot more. Still, that population difference is staggering.

Counties like Wyandotte that are all urban have far different concerns than the farm counties in western Kansas. A Kansas City representative won't likely know what we need out here and may not bother to find out.

Demographics are vastly different between Kansas City and northwestern Kansas. We have a lot fewer minorities, while in southwest Kansas they have a very different set of minorities.

It also really shakes up the electoral map. Western Kansas candidates would have to compete with Kansas City and Leavenworth Candidates, who likely could raise a lot more money. Central Kansas candidates, of which there were many two years ago, would be competing against southeastern candidates.

To give a small example going back to the election of 2010, there were eight candidates in the 1st District primary, one Democrat and seven Republicans, but under the new map, six of them would have been running in other districts.

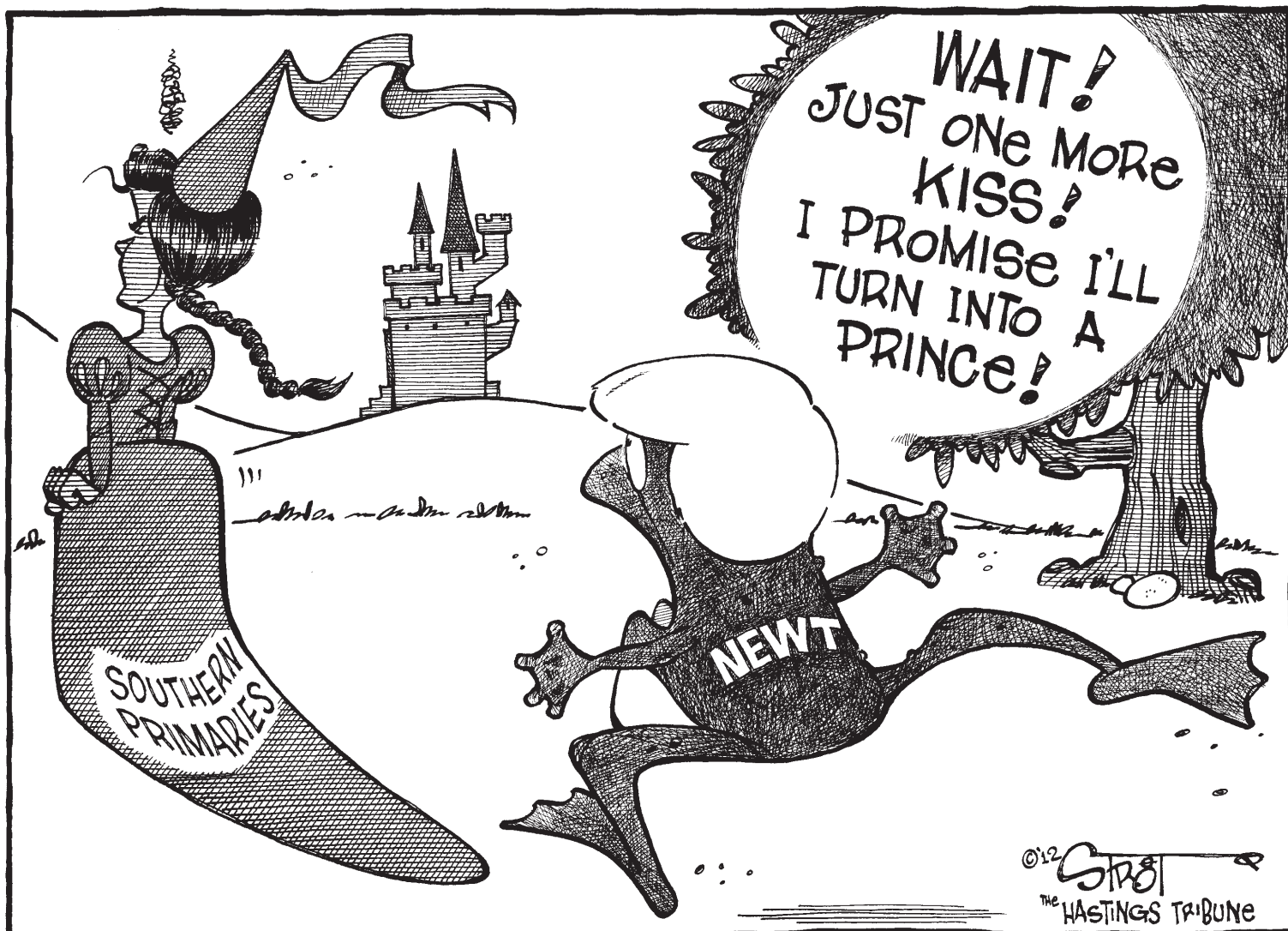
Salina Democrat Alan Jilka would have had to run in the 2nd District, would include Manhattan and Topeka. Republicans Tracey Mann, a real estate salesman, and Monte Shadwick, a city commissioner, were also from Salina. Attorney Marck Cobb lives in Galva, near McPherson, Jim Barnett lives in Emporia and Rob Wassinger lives in nearby Cottonwood Falls, all of which would also be in the 2nd District.

That just leaves Republicans Sue Boldra of Hays and the eventual winner Tim Huelskamp of Fowler.

Would western Kansas completely lose its voice? It's difficult to say. If we have strong candidates from the west like Jerry Moran they can get enough votes to win. But this map makes no sense.

A better plan exists, called Sunflower 9C, which was developed by the Legislature. It gives the 1st District more territory in the Manhattan area, including the city itself, and extends the 4th District more to the west. It preserves the general notion of where the districts are now and doesn't do anything particularly drastic. We think this is closer to the right plan.

It all has to change of course, to get more equal representation, but that representation is far from equal when one county can balance out 36. —Kevin Bottrell



Organization will no longer put on event

To the Editor:

The members of the Goodland Nu Phi Mu wish to express our appreciation for the past 34 years of support for our annual Food and Gift Extravaganza. As a group we have recognized that we can no longer produce the quality of show that the community has come to expect and so have decided to no longer continue with this event. While it was a difficult discussion it has been decided that we can more effectively service our community in a variety of ways throughout the year.



from our readers

to the editor

We would welcome inquiries if there is another group/organization that would be interested in pursuing an event similar to this. Thanks again for many years of memories and support.

The members of Nu Phi Mu:

- Deedi Hoss-Dorn
- Jessica Wolf
- Amity Ihrig
- Penny Nemecek
- Janda Linin
- Tricia Bhend
- Calli McDaniel
- Lindsey Emig
- Koren Dechant
- Erin Gleason
- Brittney Heiter

Water policies a step in the right direction

Speaking in the heart of irrigation country and the Ogallala Aquifer region, Gov. Sam Brownback signed two bills in southwestern Kansas last week that are intended to lengthen the life of this region's water resources.

Brownback signed the bills March 5 at Garden City High School while students, community leaders, farm-organization members and legislators watched.

The bills were historic because they mark a change in how water-rights holders will use their water in the future, particularly in the Ogallala Aquifer. This aquifer, which covers parts of western Kansas, is one of the world's largest aquifers. It underlies parts of eight states: Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, South Dakota and Wyoming.

The High Plains region relies on the Ogallala for water, but this finite resource has been depleted by years of extensive irrigation.

One bill for now apply to only areas of the state closed to water appropriation, that is, where use is so heavy no further wells or irrigation permits are allowed. It partly repeals a 1945 law that required farmers to use their water each year under the so-called use-it-or-lose-it doctrine. The other bill gives rights holders more flexibility in how they use their water each year.



Insight this week

john schlageck

Brownback said he believes it will allow for more water usage in dry years, with an eye toward conservation in wet years. Both measures were part of the agenda he outlined in January for the 2012 legislative session.

"I believe we should feel good about these measures that will help extend the life of our state's water resources," the Kansas governor said. "The people who use water in this region of Kansas are passionate about water, and they understand we don't have a future without it."

Stanton County farmer Jim Sipes, who attended the signing ceremony, says these two bills are the culmination of something farmers and irrigators have been trying to get in western Kansas for a long time.

"For those of us who do not use our water through irrigation anymore," he said, "it gives us the flexibility to continue to conserve the water without having to figure out ways to keep this water right viable now that use-it-or-lose-it for our closed appropriation areas

has been repealed. "The combination of these two bills will give producers who want to irrigate the ability to do so while getting the most use of that water and benefiting the state and our crop producers."

Joining the governor for the bill signing was Ogallala Aquifer Advisory Committee chair Gary Harshberger, who farms in southwest Kansas. Harshberger said he believes these measures will help move "the culture from one of consumption to one of water conservation."

Additional water-related measures continue to march through the process. Farm organizations, including Kansas Farm Bureau testified recently in support of separate House-passed measures allowing neighboring farmers to devise their own groundwater management, the dividing of water rights, water banking and an irrigation transition assistance plan.

Anticipation is high for the passage of a law allowing Local Enhancement Management Area plans, which would promote local control for irrigators. These plans would call for reductions of water use, and if supported by the Groundwater Management District, have corrective measures that address conservation needs and are approved by the state water engineer.

China approaching U.S. on energy use

China surpassed the United States in carbon dioxide emissions in 2009. Some U.S. observers paint China as an energy hog. But China has well over four times the U.S. population, so the average Chinese citizen uses barely one-fourth the energy one American uses.

We should worry if the Chinese continue to increase energy consumption to the U.S. per-capita levels. But that will not happen. The Chinese way of life is far more resource-conscious. Coming from their history and culture, they do not squander precious resources. The average Chinese adult saves 40 cents of every dollar they earn, and you can't save that much if you waste money on energy.

Stay in a China hotel and you will put your room key card into a slot inside the doorway that triggers the room's electricity. When you leave and take your room key card, the electricity to the room goes off. The same applies to the many school rooms, offices and other enclosures across the country — they are only heated, cooled or lighted while people are in them.

China's dramatic economic expansion since 1980 has pulled 500 million of its citizens out of poverty — a middle class approximately twice the size of the U.S. middle class. That means that for most products China produces, it buys nine out of 10 of its products itself.

It has been a decade since the new middle class Chinese family has aspired to the "four necessities": television, refrigerator, washing machine and air conditioning. Yet there is a



education frontlines

John Schrock

resistance to extending this affluence to high-energy appliances.

In our university apartment in west-central China, we have a washing machine that skimps on water, but no energy-wasting clothes drier. Clothes dry quite well hung in the air. We wash dishes in a sink; not as convenient as a dishwasher, but that would be another energy hog. You could get your clothes ironed; but for the most part, every day is casual Friday: a little wrinkled but comfortable.

As China moves from a developing to a highly-developed country, there is no way to avoid an increase in per capita use of energy. This is especially visible in their rapid adoption of automobiles. But there is still massive use of bicycles, electric bikes, public buses and trains. And while some cars are powerful, for the most part their trucks are underpowered. Their cars sip, not guzzle gas.

China cannot build power plants fast enough. Last summer, when the county's power plants were running flat out, demand was 18 percent greater than capacity. The country raised electricity fees for all users except personal households. China also worked on grid efficiency, the only way to avoid rolling brown-

outs. And China has over two dozen more nuclear power plants on the drawing board or in construction.

China's electricity dilemma would be even greater had it not mandated a switch from incandescent to fluorescent and LED light bulbs years ago. Overnight, the Chinese made the change and it helped preserve energy for other necessities. U.S. politicians cry out light-bulb "rights." China recognizes a responsibility for electrical equity.

When I return to the U.S., I know that I am going to be frustrated with the energy squandered around me. Americans have become so accustomed to spending a significant portion of our income using convenient but unnecessary appliances, and air conditioning our homes when we are away, etc. How can I teach about efficiency without sounding like a Depression-Era grandmother who goes around turning off lights when we leave a room?

China is working to pull another 500 million rural citizens out of poverty. Lu Xuedu, the deputy director of the Chinese Office of Global Environmental Affairs, has stated: "You cannot tell people who are struggling to earn enough to eat that they need to reduce their emissions."

Meanwhile, our U.S. usage of gasoline and electricity is down, because our middle class is shrinking and poor people cannot afford to use as much energy. Nevertheless, when it comes to being energy hogs on a person-by-person basis, U.S.A. is still Number One!

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