

Playing political game holds up major growth

Isn't it about time to stop playing politics with our future?

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is holding up construction of two relatively clean coal-fired power plants in western Kansas to support her political ambitions while 18 old, dirty plants spew pollution into the air in eastern Kansas.

A couple of power plants may not seem like much to eastern Kansas, where jobs are plentiful and growth is the norm. Out here, 200 jobs is major economic development.

No one says these plants should be allowed to degrade the air. Proponents say the plants are as clean as you can get, but if they need to be cleaned up some more, by all means, let's do it.

Since the state has no standards for carbon dioxide emissions, though, it's hard to meet them. That's what the governor and her minion, Secretary of Health and Environment Rob Bremby, seem to expect.

Sunflower Electric Power Corp. of Hays, a "generation and transmission" cooperative owned by rural electric co-ops out west, hopes to build the plants to supply its farmer and municipal customers, and similar cooperatives in Colorado and the Texas panhandle.

The plants would be state of the art, much cleaner than any operating in Kansas. The administration has laid down a challenge here, saying the state essentially won't allow them to be built because they would produce a lot of carbon dioxide.

Even an experimental plan to grow algae to soak up the carbon hasn't bought the plants any credibility. Opponents claim the scheme won't work, though they all believe in the magic of wind power.

What we know is that the rural electrics do need the power, and rural customers across five states the plants would serve likely will

pay a lot more for out-of-area power if they are not built.

A reasonable position on the plants would not fit well with the governor's higher political ambitions, though. She's running hard right now for vice president, no matter how modest she makes out to be.

People are starting to see her as a rising star, and that star is firmly hitched to Barack Obama's coattails. It's pretty obvious the reward for supporting Sen. Hillary Clinton could be no higher than a cabinet post, but with the Illinois senator, No. 2 does not seem unreasonable.

Out on the Plains, though, people will be paying higher electric rates to finance this ambition. It's a shame.

What Kansas needs is the jobs and power the plants would produce. What the governor needs is environmental credibility.

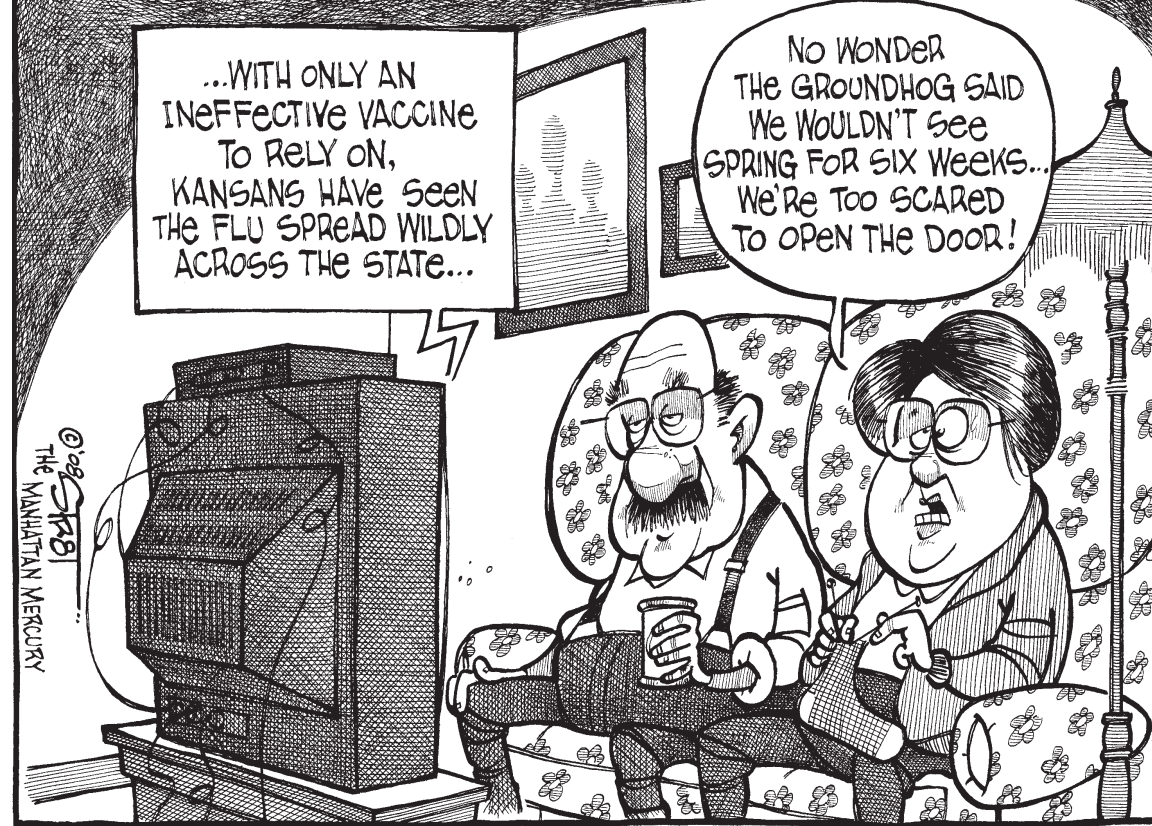
The issue is complex. The threat of global warming may be real, but there's really no alternative today to coal plants. Wind power is undependable at best, and solar needs years of research.

Developed eastern Kansas may not understand this, any better than the Front Range understands the needs of rural Colorado. It's unlikely the plants will produce any more pollution than the General Motors plant in Kansas City, or the cars it produces.

Some argue that the power will go mostly to other states, but so do the cars. The jobs belong here in either case, and we doubt Wyandotte County wants to give them up to save the earth.

A reasonable compromise would see the plants built with strict regulation, but it'll surprise us if that happens. Not until after the elections, anyway.

— Steve Haynes



Kansas Senate debates issues

Among some of the issues the Senate is debating this week, Senate Bill 595 has to do with the proper labeling of agricultural products, specifically milk.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the use of a hormone supplement called rBST in 1993 and it has been widely used by milk producers since then. It is safe and legal.

Because this same hormone is naturally produced by cows, there is no scientific evidence that the usage of the rBST supplement has any effect on the value of the milk produced. Processors and retailers, however, are asking for rBST-free milk.

Remember that rBST is a hormone naturally produced by the cow, so even if the cow has been given rBST, that does not change the amount of rBST in the milk. No scientific test has been developed to differentiate between milk from cows that have been given rBST and those that have not.

The government approved this product in 1993 and nothing has changed since. This shot is safe and legal and does not affect the composition of a glass of milk. rBST is species specific, so its biological actions will not affect humans. Most consumers know very little about this hormone. It has made our dairies more efficient by increasing milk production a gallon per day per cow.



Letter from Topeka By Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Please do not misunderstand. I support proper food labeling when it is substantiated by scientific testing that has proven some health hazard. I oppose this request for special labeling on milk because there is no evidence that the reasoning behind the label indicates a health hazard. All milk contains rBST, regardless whether the dairy producer uses this hormone supplement, because it is a natural hormone produced by milk cows.

Sadly, I think we are bombarded by activist groups, environmental groups, concerned citizen groups, and others, all of whom have their own agendas.

I would like to see a labeling regulation developed to prevent these confusing claims that cannot be supported by sound scientific testing. If we are forced to label milk as rBST free, then I question the validity of the label when there is no scientific test to show that milk really is rBST free.

I have had the pleasure of visiting many of my constituents at "town

hall" meetings the last couple of weeks. On Monday, I planned to be traveling through Logan, Wallace, Greeley, Wichita, and Scott counties. I will finish my tour on Saturday in Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur and Norton counties with Rep. John Faber.

We'll be at the Decatur County courthouse from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Other times from 8 to 9 a.m. at the Heritage Corner Cafe in Bird City, from 9:30 to 10:30 at the Williams Brothers Grocery in Atwood and from 1:15 to 2:15 p.m. at the Town and Country Kitchen in Norton.

I appreciate the support and interest shown by those attending these gatherings. Please feel free to contact me with any concerns you may have.

I can be reached by writing to Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Street, Room 128-S, Topeka, Kansas, 66612 or call (785) 296-7399. My e-mail address is ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us. Let me know if you would like to be on my mailing list.

Husband's frustration shows

I think I raised Jim's frustration level a few notches.

He had traded some work with a neighbor for an old wrecked car. Last night, he decided to load the wreck on a flatbed trailer.

The plan was for him to lift the mangled vehicle onto the trailer with the front loader of the tractor. My job would be to back the trailer under the vehicle.

Not that I haven't frustrated him before, but most of you men can relate when you remember trying to coach your wife as she backed a four-wheel trailer.

Something that comes so easily for men seems to be a genetic malfunction for women. My brain says, "Turn the wheel the opposite direction you want to go," but when I look in the rear-view mirrors, I get confused.

All I can see is my husband frantically twisting his arms, making what looks like a circular motion, as he is trying to guide the trailer. Then, he waves me off.

"Pull forward, turn the wheel again."

His hands make the "come back" motion.

Now what's he doing? That turning "thing" again.

I turn the wheel, he reverses his



Out Back By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts cplotts@nwkansas.com

motions, I turn the wheel the other way, I see the trailer start to veer off. Again, he waves me off.

To his credit, he never yelled at me once.

He finally figured it wasn't worth the effort and just picked the wreck up with the tractor and positioned it on the trailer. Using the loader, he pushed and pulled until it fit.

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My sister-in-law, Linda Kelley, lost her mother, Evelyn Santee, last week. In failing health for some time, Mrs. Santee had been living at an assisted care center. Linda and her husband Jim (that would be my brother) visited her every day, without fail.

Linda is an only child and the burden of decisions fell squarely on her shoulders. When her mom died, Linda had to make all the arrangements. She has been part of the Kelley fam-

ily for more than 40 years now. "Big families are great," she said, "always someone to help share the load."

That's true, and we share her sorrow, too.

From the Bible

And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. — Mark 14, 10-11

Legislators coming Saturday

Don't forget that Saturday I will be at the Decatur County courthouse with Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer. Please come out and welcome Sen. Ostmeyer and me for an informative meeting.

The Kansas Legislature has reached what we call "turn around." The House has finished its bills and the Senate is finished on its side, so now the House concentrates on Senate bills and visa versa. The only exceptions are what we call exempt bills.

Following is an update on the progress made so far by House Republicans. Agenda Items now passed include:

- Expansion of satellite voting statewide. SB 65, unanimously passed by the House, allows all county election officers to designate advance satellite voting locations.
- State budget transparency. HB 2730, passed 119-3, creates a searchable database for Kansans to keyword-search their government's receipts and expenditures. The budget continues to be at the forefront this year. By keeping track of the fiscal notes, we will meet our agenda goal of limiting the budget increase to 5 percent.

Items recommended favorably for passage by the Committee of the Whole include:

- Limiting downward departure from sentencing guidelines. HB



Letter from Topeka By State Rep. John Faber jfaber@ink.org

2732 responds to concerns regarding departures from the sentencing guidelines that result in probation or very short sentences for persons convicted of crimes like rape, aggravated indecent liberties and electronic solicitation of a child.

Increases penalties for theft and aiding escape. HB 2845 increases the penalties for theft of property from the Department of Corrections and raises the penalty for any department employee or volunteer or employee or volunteer of a contractor who aids in an escape. The bill corrects a weakness in the law discovered after a recent escape.

Intensive Groundwater Use Control Areas. This bill sets up a framework for the state Division of Water Resources and Ground Water Management Districts to reverse the loss of ground water and to set up a review process in designated areas.

Distribution of litigation money from the Kansas-Nebraska water lawsuit (SB 89). This bill, now

in conference, designates how money received from Nebraska will be spent on water conservation projects.

These bills in exempt committees would advance the agenda:

- Immigration: Several bills being heard in committee include HB 2370, HB 2680, HB 2774, HB 2836 and HR 6009. The goal of all is to relieve the state of the burden providing services for illegal aliens, ensuring that state and federal immigration laws are enforced, and helping legal immigrants to assimilate into the Kansas culture and economy.
- Energy: The House-passed energy plan is now in conference committee. Members began their work Friday, Feb. 29, when both chambers finish considering bills.

It is an honor to serve you in the House. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at jfaber@ink.org or (785) 296-7500.

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Law freezes city government

To the Editor:

The Law of Unintended Results. The intent of the Open Meeting Law was to give transparency to government. In communities of certain size, such as Oberlin, it results not in Open Government, but in Frozen Government.

The Oberlin city council consists of five members. With five members, three constitute a quorum. Therefore, legally, the majority of a quorum of three is two. This being the case two members, without the press present or having been notified the press a certain time before, cannot even casually discuss city business.

They cannot stand out on Main Street and discuss the condition of

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the sidewalks or the water pressure in certain parts of town, etc.

Nothing that could even remotely be considered city business can be discussed outside of the official meetings.

One member could request the mayor to communicate something to another member, who can then request it be passed back to the other member, however this gets rather cumbersome.

Strict adherence to the law results in city council members discussing city business less with fellow council members than they can with a

tourist passing through town.

Rural communities, such as Oberlin, are now at a crucial phase in their fight for survival.

With our small base of active community-involved citizens, even the press must be involved in a positive and constructive way.

The motto of "Controversy Builds Circulation" haphazardly applied is destructive. The press being part of the problem, this writer hopes that they can be part of a thoughtful solution.

Jay Anderson
Oberlin City Council member