

## Energy independence sure doesn't save us cash

It hasn't been long since our leaders on both sides of the aisle were exhorting us to strive for "energy independence," cutting back on oil imports from foreign nations who wanted nothing good from us and sucked up all our hard-earned cash.

Sen. Ken Salazar of Colorado told the Denver World Affairs Council how the world was feeding at our table, and it wasn't a pretty picture.

The Colorado Democrat would soon become secretary of the interior, and as such, responsible for much of the government's regulation of oil and gas exploration and development in the Obama administration.

"Saudi Arabia is using its oil riches to build four new cities in the desert," he said. "Venezuela is using its new riches to dispense patronage around South America and compete for influence in the hemisphere. Russia is using the oil windfall to increase its federal budget tenfold, buy up currency reserves and challenge Europe and the U.S. on everything from NATO expansion to missile defense. And in the Sudan? The Sudanese are building new skyscrapers."

But Mr. Salazar was not alone. Presidents from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush have lectured us on energy independence. But now that we have it, it may not be all it was cracked up to be.

How the world is changed. Today, we're beholden to North Dakota and Pennsylvania, which are sucking up much of the cash

that used to go the Saudis. In North Dakota, they're ramping up the state budget to build highways and facilities, schools and jails to serve the oil boom.

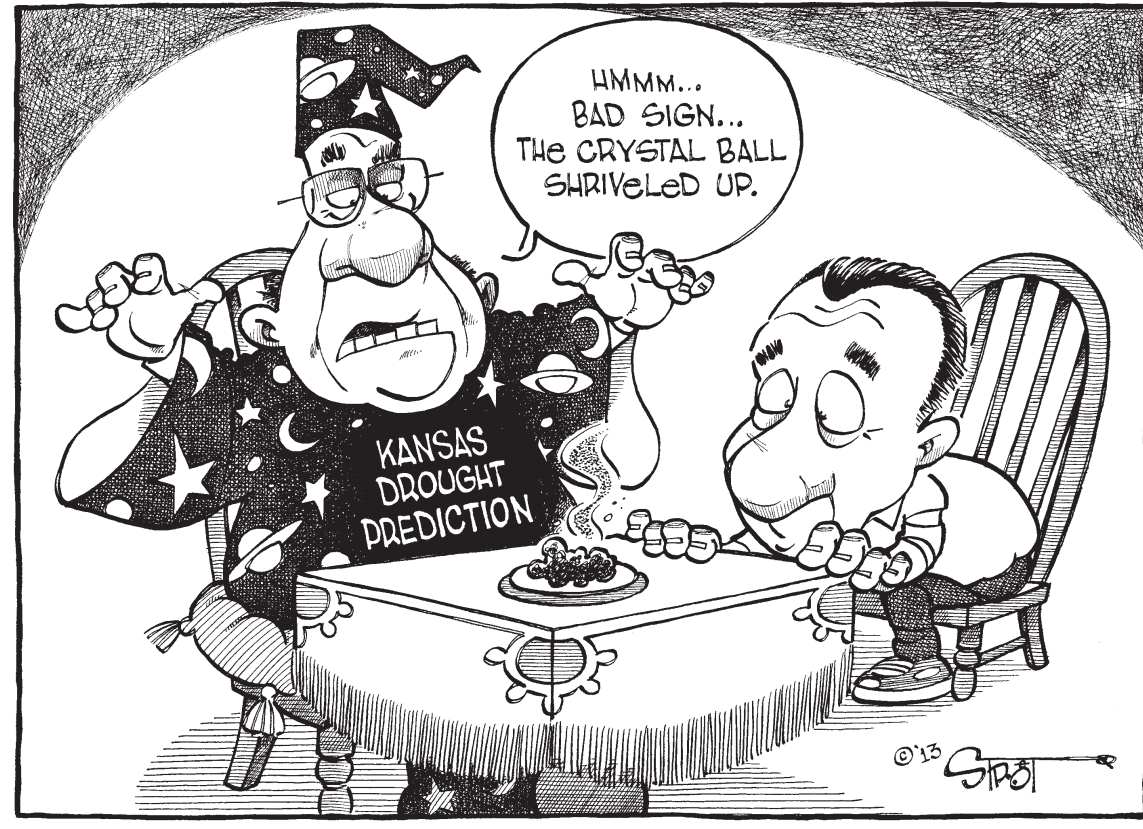
The U.S. became a net exporter of fuel this year, and it will be bringing in even more foreign cash if energy companies are allowed to build port facilities to export natural gas, which we have a whole lot of. Even with the excess, however, prices are not going down for most consumer products.

Natural gas is fairly cheap, but only because they haven't figured out how to export much of it yet. World demand is as high as ever. Oil is another story: expanding markets in Asia and Africa, including China and India, have taken up most of the new production. And the U.S. still imports a lot of oil, even as it exports refined fuel and even crude oil.

Pump prices for motorists remain high and could be headed for record levels this summer. And the truth is, we're lucky.

We may have more oil and gas than any nation — according to the latest estimates of our mineral wealth, far more than the Saudis — but world demand is exploding. The future offers only more of the same. And energy prices, high as they seem, are low here compared to most of the world.

So while we may have to bow now to Bismarck rather than Riyadh, fuel isn't going to get any cheaper any time soon. The best advice is to get used to it. — *Steve Haynes*



## It's time to till, plant new crop

Spring is here, and it's gardening time.

A week ago, Steve mowed the lawn for the first time this spring and I cleaned out the long lily bed out front.

On Sunday, it was tiller time. Steve had already talked to Joe down at the hardware store, and he had the tiller ready to go.

We have two gardens — the main one where we grow cabbage, carrots, corn, squash, beans, peas, lettuce, spinach and anything else that strikes my fancy, and the side garden, which is just a three to four-foot wide area on the south side of the house. That's where we put our tomatoes and green peppers. Last year, I also put in chilies, but then I couldn't figure out what to do with them when I picked the crop.

So while Steve tilled the side garden, I picked the last of my 2012 produce.

Yep, that's what I said. I picked vegetables in April.

Last fall, I dug only about half of my carrots. The rest I just left in the ground and put a little fence around.

I had done this last year without putting up any barrier, and when it came time to dig the second half of the carrots in the spring, I didn't know where they were. Steve even-



## Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*  
c.haynes@nwkans.com

tually found them with the tiller, which was not the best way to preserve them, but they were all nicely sliced up for salads.

Last fall, I decided that I wasn't going to do that again. So after digging up a pile of carrots, I put a fence around the ones I left.

On Sunday, with storm clouds on the horizon, Steve tilled like crazy and I dug, dug, dug.

As soon as I had my carrots out of the ground, the tiller was going over the ground where they had been.

I also dug up some small lettuce plants that were growing in the big garden. Last fall, I put in some variety lettuce and spinach. Only a couple of spinach plants made an appearance but the lettuce did quite well, especially one huge Swiss chard plant, which was so pretty I never cut it. This spring, the spinach still is absent without leave, but the lettuce was trying to make a reap-

pearance. It was pretty spotty, however, and I figure I need to reseed if I'm going to get a good crop.

So as the raindrops started hitting the ground, I brought my produce into the house and Steve ran the tiller home. Now all we need is seeds and sun.

## From the Bible

And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?"

— Luke 24: 15-17

## Trip's done, but mess remains

I hate to admit that I haven't finished unpacking from our recent trip. The house still looks like the van threw up all over it. Some people (women in particular) are really good about tackling those kinds of jobs and, no matter how tired they are, getting them done. Unfortunately, I'm not wired like that.

When I'm tired, I sits. And when I sits, I thinks. And when I thinks, I thinks about how tired I am. And when I thinks about how tired, I am, I sits. And when I sits, I thinks, and so on.

I know that I would much rather build a house in Mexico or Guatemala than unpack luggage or do housework. Big sigh. But I also prefer to live in a reasonably clean house, so there you have the dilemma. Get out of the recliner and get to work or sit there and watch it all fall down around me.

-ob-

Over the weekend, I did a walk-about in our yard. Winter and all the high winds we've had were hard on the place. I found boards in the fence that need fixed and lots of odds and ends that should have a home, but don't. I also found lots of green things pushing up towards the light.

Naked lady plants are up all over town. I apologize to whoever it was that sent me their official name, but I can't remember it. My daffodils are in full bloom and I think I will cut a bouquet. Irises are greening up everywhere, and that reminds me I really should thin out the beds. Day lilies are coming up, as well as peonies and cone flowers. I think it's



## Out Back

By *Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts*  
cplotts65@gmail.com

safe to say, "Spring is here."

-ob-

By the time this column is in print, we will be great-grandparents for the second time. Had a little scare over the weekend when we were notified that our granddaughter, Angelia, had gone into labor and was on her way to the hospital.

She was scheduled for a Cesarean section Monday morning, so we assumed the delivery would just be pushed up a day or two. No so. Little Lucian did not make his appearance, so we are still awaiting word of his arrival.

Lucian has a brother, Kayden, whose world is about to be turned upside down. They've tried to prepare Kayden for the arrival, but for almost three years he's been the center of the universe for his parents and grandparents. He is a sweet little boy and I'm sure he'll gladly share the limelight with his little brother. Well ... maybe not gladly.

-ob-

It's back to work this week. I've been going over in my mind what needs to be done. After almost a month, I might need to be re-trained.

## Honor Roll

Welcome and thanks to these recent subscribers to *The Oberlin Herald*:

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Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800  
E-mail: oberlin.herald@nwkans.com

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## Key issues still need work

I don't know what to say about this past week. Going into the week, we were hoping to have a tax and budget plan by Friday, but the House and Senate were unable to compromise on many key issues.

It was interesting to chair a conference committee for the first time. There are many procedural steps, and to learn the procedures plus working with the other house on bill content was challenging.

This past week, the House did

approve a bill allowing a veteran designation on Kansas driver's licenses and identification cards. Anyone who served in the military and left with an honorable discharge can choose to have "veteran" printed on their driver's license by providing documents. Also, the Department of Revenue will share the names and locations of veterans with the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, which will notify the veterans of facilities, benefits and services available.

There has been no move to change

current laws to the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System. The House passed a measure that would take a big step forward in getting

use out of the \$9 billion shortfall in



## Letter from Topeka

By *State Rep. Ward Cassidy*  
ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

the system.

HB 2403 proposes to sell \$1.5 billion in state bonds to invest in the system. We already have the liability side for the system, so this is not new debt. What it does do is take advantage of the state's ability to borrow money at low interest and use it to get a higher rate of return in other investments. The thought is that interest cannot go much lower, so this is a low-risk way to earn returns that take advantage of current circumstances.

I return to the Capitol for the Omnibus session on April 28 and 29 for Appropriations Committee meetings. We will adjust the budget recommendations in the House on bills passed so far this year that have fiscal notes adding cost to the State General Fund.

I am writing this in the House chamber. We have been debating since 10 a.m. this morning and it would appear we have many more hours to go. Next week, I will discuss important bills that passed both Houses by the end of the evening.

## In the U.S.A.

"When the people fear the government, there is tyranny. When the government fears the people, there is liberty."

Thomas Jefferson  
April 13, 1743-July 4, 1826  
Third president of the U.S.

## Child abuse still a problem here

### Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

We all say that children are our priority, that they deserve to be happy and healthy, and live in stable, loving homes. We also say that they are our future. Even more, when asked we say that we know child abuse and neglect is a serious problem; in fact, research shows that 90 percent of the public asserts this.

Still, child abuse and neglect persists.

It's true that child abuse has been shown to be on the decline nationally, but this trend is confused by ever-changing reporting laws and inconsistent data collection from state to state and town to town.

There is no national vision or plan for children, all children, and their families. Nor are there any benchmarks which would allow us to know whether we are even successful enhancing child and family well-being.

Yet we say that children are our future.

In truth, we know more than ever what to do to prevent child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse and abusive head trauma.

But we need to act. All adults, and all communities, must and can play a role in prevention. Neighbors can offer to baby sit one another's children to help reduce the stress, frustration and isolation so many parents experience. People can contact the local newspaper and ask why they don't talk about the prevention programming, such as home visits, that already exists in Kansas. Or, they can ask policy makers and corporate leaders what their plan is for Kansas children and families.

We believe that we all need to take action, year-round, but we also know that we need to somewhere to start, so why not April as we mark Child Abuse Prevention Month, as we have since 1983?

During April, you'll see pinwheels spinning across Kansas, standing for the action someone took on behalf of children and families. Pinwheels are the new symbol for child abuse and neglect preven-

tion in the U.S., with more than 650,000 distributed across the nation in 2012 as part of the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign, and more than 3 million since 2008.

The pinwheels also serve to build a community of people who support prevention of child abuse and neglect, and we want people from all walks of life — business and faith leaders, coaches and teachers, parents and neighbors — to be part of that community.

We all need to be on the same page when it comes to children and families. And we need a plan. Because if we believe that children truly are our future, then we need to act now, not next month, or next year, but now.

Please join us. For more information about efforts in northwest Kansas, call (785) 460-8177 or e-mail paigec@st-tel.net.

Paige Campbell, program director  
Northwest Kansas Prevention  
of Child Abuse and Neglect  
Colby