

## Energy independence 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 to 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



## Legislative News

"Turn Around"

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. This did not happen, as the House and Senate were not able to compromise on many key issues.

It was very 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 very challenging.

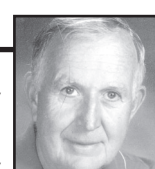
This past week, the House did approve a bill allowing a veteran designation of Kansas driver's licenses and non-driver identifications. Anyone who served in the military and left with an honorable discharge can choose to have "veteran" printed on their driver's license by providing the correct documentation. In addition, the Department of Revenue will share the names and locations of veterans with the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs. The Commission 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 (KPERS). The House did vote and passed-out a measure that takes a big step forward in working to dig Kansas out of the \$9 billion short-fall in the retirement system. HB 2403 proposes to sell \$1.5 billion in Kansas bonds to invest in system. What is pointed out is that we already have the liability side for the system, so this is not new debt for Kansas. What it does do is take advantage of the state's ability to borrow money at low-interest rates and use that money to attempt to yield a higher rate of return in other investments.

In this case, this effort is about 10 percent of the portfolio. 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 Omnibus on April 28 and 29 for appropriations 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

By Ward Cassidy



120th State Representative

State General Fund (SGF).

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

## Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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It's amazing how the right actor enters from the wings just at the perfect moment on history's stage. British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher was one of them.

Margaret Thatcher, the first woman to become prime minister of Great Britain, has died at the age of 87. More important than that, she was the kindred spirit of Ronald Reagan who also took a tough stand on communism and, together, helped bring an end to the Cold War.

Known as "the Iron Lady," a tag she relished which actually came from the Russian Soviets, her conservative policies and determination over three terms from 1979 to 1990 helped to re-

build her country after it faltered following the Second World War.

Baroness Thatcher survived an Irish Republican Army bomb attack in 1984, which killed and injured many of her conservative colleagues at the Brighton hotel where they gathered. Undeterred, party members who lost their clothes in the explosion were given new from a local store and the conference continued on schedule.

She also led her country during the Falkland War of 1982 when Argentina took possession of Britain's islands in the Southern Atlantic. There was no question in her mind that those locales far away should remain a

part of the English Empire.

When strong labor opposition supported a year long coal miner's strike in 1978, Thatcher again was unwavering when she stated, "We should back the workers and not the shirkers." The strike soon ended.

Having grown up during the Cold War years of the 1960s to 1990s I am grateful that we had the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and her friend, Ronald Reagan.

Thus the curtain lowers for one of Britain's finest.

## Hangin' With Marge

By Margaret Bucholtz



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Betty Crocker is not me. I'll bet that I could search my genealogy tree and never find one ounce of blood line between us.

One day Kurt ask me if I would bake a cake and I told him I would love to but it had to be a white one and the frosting had to be just like a real wedding cake. He didn't care what kind he just was hungry for a cake.

I started searching through the cupboards for a cake mix and there wasn't a cake mix in sight. Well maybe one but it was outdated in 2011 so I just tossed it in the trash and told him it didn't matter because I could make one from scratch. He got a funny look on his face and asked me what scratch was. I guess his mother didn't use that word, but in my family that was the way most of my aunts and mother made their cakes.

Once we got pass the word game I started looking at recipes. I chose one that needed cake flour. I got on the internet and found out how to make cake flour and proceeded to get started.

By the time I got the all-purpose flour and corn starch sifted 5 times I had to sit down and rub my hands to get the pain out.

Then onto the cake making that was going to be well worth the time. I got out three round pans and put the wax paper in the bottom. Mixed the cake so carefully and poured the batter in.

It said to bake 33 minutes so that was what I set the timer for. When it went off I opened the oven door and inserted a toothpick to make sure it was done. Prick went the toothpick, and swish went the cake as it falls to a sinking one fourth of its original size. I quickly shut the

oven door and set the timer for at least five more minutes.

Once again I did the toothpick trick and another cake shrink. By that time I just shoved the same toothpick into the third cake and it deflated like a balloon. At least all three were the same size.

After they cooled I put them together and frosted them. It was like trying to put glue on a pile of pancakes. The surprising thing was that the cake had a commel consistency but the frosting must have been kind of good because by the next morning the cake was gone.

Now I have cake mixes in the cupboard once again but who knows when Kurt is going to want another one.

GOD SAYS  
The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?  
Proverbs 18:14

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