

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Kansas has a powerful future

From The Wichita Eagle

Kansas is poised to take a big leap forward on alternative energy, from wind to ethanol.

Despite Kansas' tremendous wind resources, which rank near the top nationally, the state has been slow to seize this enviable energy opportunity. Why is that?

One obstacle, said Parkinson, is utilities' perception (valid or not) that the Kansas Corporation Commission values low rates more than new energy sources. A second obstacle is the lack of transmission line capacity, especially in central Kansas. But working together, he said, stakeholders have made real progress on both fronts.

The KCC and utilities have agreed on the importance of boosting wind. And the Kansas Electric Transmission Authority is studying options on a new transmission line from Spearville in western Kansas to Hutchinson — and utilities are competing with one another to build it.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, in her State of the State address earlier this year, called for 20 percent of Kansas electricity, or about 2,000 megawatts, to be supplied by wind by 2020. At present, of Kansas' 10,000 megawatts of electricity from all sources, only about 360 megawatts — about 3 percent — is supplied by wind.

Can we get there? Absolutely.

Parkinson pointed to Westar Energy's recently announced plan to build a 500-megawatt wind plant in Kansas.

...Among other progress on alternatives cited by Parkinson: — Corn and cellulosic ethanol could meet about 30 percent of America's fuel needs, reducing dependence on foreign oil — and Kansas is well-positioned to develop both forms of ethanol.

— Utilities "are jumping on board" a new conservation effort that could cut electric consumption by 10 percent to 15 percent — the equivalent of two extremely large coal-fired power plants.

That's "huge," said Parkinson.

Clearly, state leaders still face some important, tough questions about our energy future. But Parkinson is hopeful and wants accountability.

"If in four years we don't have close to 1,000 megawatts of wind, then I have failed as lieutenant governor," he said.

Kansas will hold him to it.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkanssas.com or pdecker@nwkanssas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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Relying too much on the Internet?

In the years I've been in this business, I've always used the advice of "go with what you know."

That is a double-edged sword that must be taken care of greatly. One side of the sword got me.

Ever since Colby High graduate Jared Cranston was drafted by the San Francisco Giants last summer, I've tried to keep up with his progress. Since this week was the start of the Major League Baseball season, I thought it would be great to have a story about what happened to Jared since he attended the Giants spring training.

Friday, I was on the phone, online and back on the phone trying to track down what happened to Jared.

I couldn't find anyone at the Giants offices or at the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper who knew anything. The Giants' media relations department still has not returned my telephone call (defeats the purpose, don't you think?)

The person in the Chronicle's sports department, who said he had a database of all the players, had no record of Jared. I finally found Jared's name online under the Giants' Web site listed with the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes. I went with that, since the rest of the Giant's web site was current stating information about the 2007 season, and I put the story in Monday's Free Press.

Tuesday, I got the phone call — from Jared's dad — who told me Jared was sent to Augusta, Ga., not Salem-Keizer, Ore. (see sports, page 10).

Jared's dad was very supportive and understanding of my situation after I told him what happened. Thanks, John, I feared you were go-



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

ing to tell me Jared was out of baseball altogether.

The moral of the story is just because you find some information on a Web site does not always mean it's true. Even if you find something on a legitimate Web site, a follow up telephone call to the people behind the Web site, to verify the information verbally, is suggested.

And now for my intended column this week — with the right name of the team.

Congratulations to Colby's Jared Cranston for being named to the Augusta GreenJackets this year. That is the single A minor league of the San Francisco Giants, who drafted him, again, last summer.

I fell in love with the minors in Iowa and the six teams there while living there. I went to every stadium and soaked up the atmosphere each time. It's a must for all baseball fans.

For those of you who do not know, the minors are the training teams for the majors. Players work their way up to the majors. Single A is the first step, triple A is the most advanced level of minor league play. Minor league teams are spread throughout smaller cities across the country.

Don't get confused. What minor league play-

ers make is probably pocket change to a major league contract, literally. Two years ago, the base pay for single A players was \$1,050 a month. Players usually share an apartment during the season to save money. Single A teams travel to games by bus and eat lots of cheap restaurant food.

I wish more Major League players would be humbled remembering their days in the minors rather than the greed that is so rampant in today's sports. I'd trade places with Jared in a second.

I once knew a man who did the finances for a minor league team in Iowa. He said he was surprised at what the parent team was willing to pay for compared to what the minor league team was supposed to pay for.

Minor league teams try their darndest to involve fans during games. There are silly games and contests sponsored by area stores between innings. Some stadiums have hot tubs in the outfield for fans to enjoy. Tickets are affordable, concessions are too. In Burlington, Iowa, I fed my family of four for like \$10 and got a coupon for free sandwiches at Arby's after the game.

I am fascinated by the South but don't have that on my vacation plans this year, but it would be a joy to watch Cranston throw some heat in Augusta. The GreenJackets season starts Thursday. Good luck, Jared. We here in Colby are cheering for you.

(We have asked Augusta to get us a picture of Jared during a game.)

— *John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.*

Gambling debate increases

Wednesday, March 28 marked "drop dead" day, the legislative deadline for bills from non-exempt committees to receive a vote from the second house, be sent to a conference committee or die on the calendar. The deadline puts pressure on both chambers to reach consensus on priority issues, sometimes at the cost of lesser issues.

For the first time in four years, the House heard debate on expansion of gaming in Senate Bill 66, the lottery reauthorization amended to add casino gambling. After 12 hours of debate on Friday night, the House passed an amended lottery bill expanding gaming by way of state-owned destination casinos in four areas as well as slots at pari-mutuel facilities. The measure passed with bi-partisan support but was still considered controversial. The bill did not receive hearings nor does the policy change allow for a statewide vote on the issue. Revenues of up to \$200 million annually are expected from the expansion, 2 percent of which has been designated for rehabilitation of problem gamblers.

The Senate also spent almost 12 hours on the issues, ultimately concurring with the House position and sending it to the governor for her signature. Kansas is the first state to approve



Jim Morrison

• Capitol Review

state-owned casinos. Already a challenge to the constitutionality of the bill has been filed. It may be awhile before any new casinos will be built due not only to the lawsuit but counties must approve gaming before it can move forward.

School Finance

Early in the session we provided funding for the out-years of the school finance plan and have worked with the House Appropriations committee to look at responsible proposals to address deferred maintenance. The House has passed comprehensive tax relief measures. The franchise tax repeal promotes business expansion, while seniors receive relief through the social security tax exemption, and businesses and workers are assisted by the stabilization of the unemployment insurance rate and other proposals aimed at easing the burden Kansas taxpay-

ers bare.

A House proposal for comprehensive health care reform is being studied and tweaked but has run into strong resistance. A gamut of bills aimed at promoting economic development and tourism and controlling crime and public safety have passed the House and Senate, including Alexi's Law — allowing for prosecutors to charge for the life of a mother and her unborn child in cases involving the intentional murder of a pregnant woman.

With the unexpected revenue the state has enjoyed this year, and the millions more that expanded gaming promises, we will continue to look at spending taxpayer dollars wisely on essential issues and furthering what is in the best interest of all Kansans.

The regular session was due to come to a close Tuesday after the House and Senate conference on bills that survived "drop dead" day. However, problems in the Senate Ways and Means Committee and House Appropriations Committee Conference are at impasse.

Eventually, likely this week, we will adjourn to return home until the veto/omnibus session scheduled to start April 25 lasting through the week.

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

