

# Opinion



## Another Viewpoint

### Public must demand changes in taxes

We have lamented often in this space about how the system is broken.

That the unequal distribution of wealth in America is tolerated only by the presence of a middle class that has real, albeit limited, chances to ascend in the pecking order. That societal debate focuses on unresolvable personal issues while the wolves repeatedly raid the chicken coop.

Despite the release of an incredibly damning report Aug. 12, we anticipate the current U.S. experiment to continue unabated.

The Government Accountability Office reported the results of a study looking at the taxpaying habits of U.S. companies.

After analyzing data from the Internal Revenue Service of almost 2 million U.S. companies from 1998 to 2005, the GAO discovered that a full two-thirds of them paid no income tax. None, nada, nil.

During the same time frame, some 38,000 foreign companies doing business in the United States had zero tax obligations. Zilch.

And it wasn't as if the companies all were losing money or deferring tax payments. Combined, the gross sales of these non-contributors was \$2.5 trillion — and not one penny was generated in taxes.

Talk about the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The average American worker had to work full-time until April 23 this year to fulfill his tax obligations.

And yet one-quarter of the large U.S. corporations that have at least \$250 million in assets or \$50 million in receipts weren't obligated to pay one red cent in federal taxes.

But what will be even more shameful will be the lack of the American public to respond, let alone demand reform.

We don't know which particular straw eventually will break this camel's back.

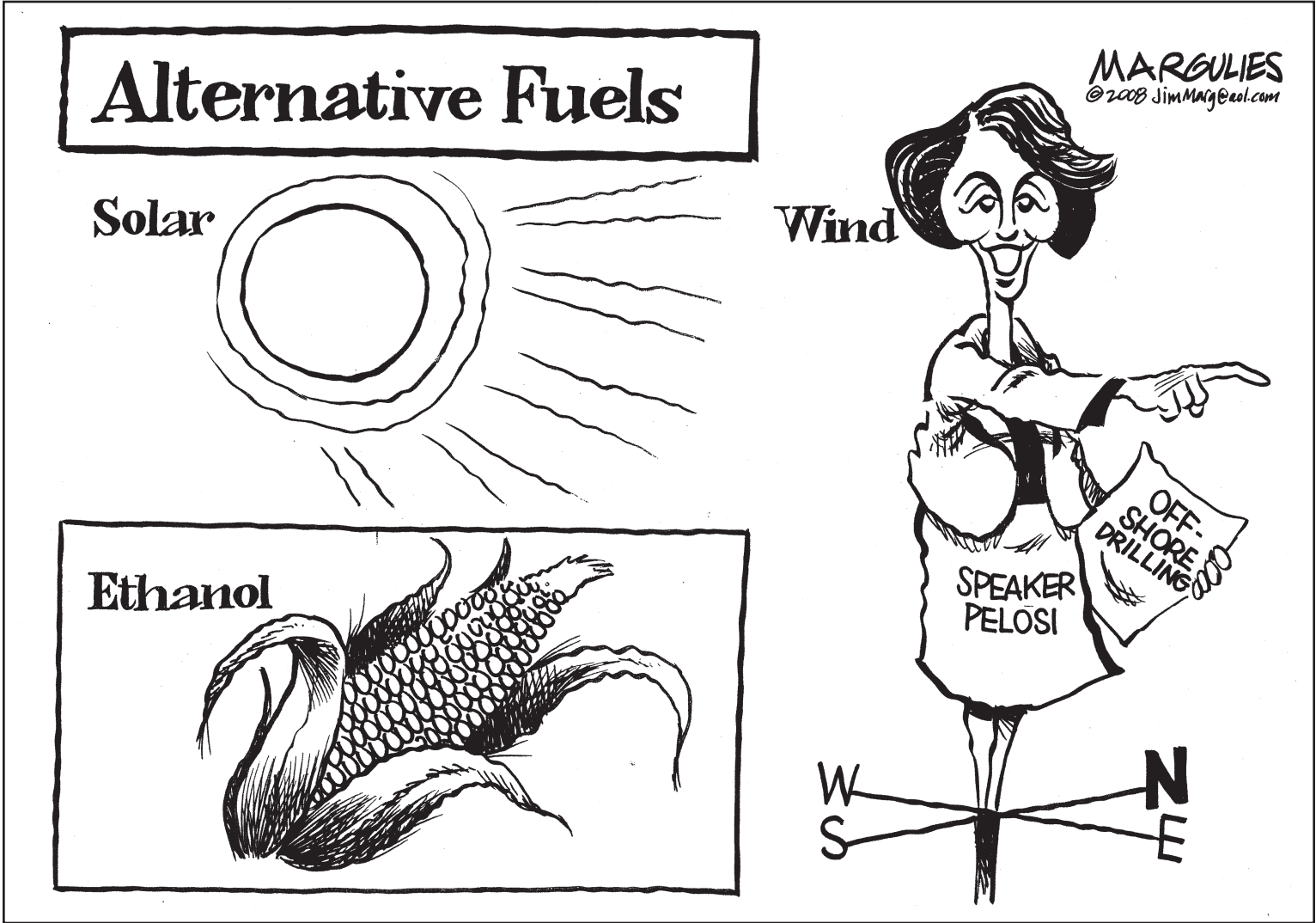
We do know it won't be pretty when it happens. We all could soften the blow, however, if we began demanding change today.

— Hays Daily News

### Where to write, call

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774
- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715, Fax (202) 225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Room 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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## Your turn

### Wind energy a positive step

To the Editor:

Dan Hartman, director for the Logan County Development Corp., put together a very informative and educational meeting on wind energy on Aug. 13 near Oakley, an effort which received overwhelmingly positive comments from the attendees.

The gathering was standing-room-only, which boded well for a regional show of support for the prospects of bringing wind-energy development into this area.

As many in the public are no doubt aware, national interest in wind energy has grown by leaps and bounds in the last several months, and large amounts of capital investment have been flowing into the industry from all over the world, including several of the world's wealthiest investors

Kansas is ranked third in the nation for potential wind energy behind only Texas and North Dakota, but a major obstacle we face in northwest Kansas for realizing our full potential for wind farms (which amount to billions upon billions of dollars in potential investment) is the need for transmission lines to connect this area to the planned super-transmission lines recently approved by the Kansas Corporation Commission and Southwest Power Pool.

Great Plains ITC intends to build a portion of the "Kansas V" plan, a high-capacity trans-

### Letter Drop

#### Our Readers Sound Off

mission line that will extend from Spearville up to Axtell, Neb. To fully develop wind farms in northwest Kansas, we will have to work together and do whatever it takes to make sure that folks in Topeka and Washington get the message that we demand new transmission capacity for our region.

Wind energy can become an increasing part of the northwest Kansas economic base, but only if we work together with a united plan for maximizing our potential as a leading supplier of wind energy to the nation.

We all know that government tends to listen to the loudest voices while the little ones just get ignored.

This is a major reason why it makes good sense to create a united regional coalition to get ensure that our voices are heard and to develop the best strategy possible for bringing the maximum amount of wind-power devel-

opment to our entire region.

We as citizens of northwest Kansas are well aware of the many financial obstacles that face our sparsely populated areas in the face of a continuing population decline in rural America.

That is why we must take seriously this rare economic opportunity for large-scale wind energy development here.

We must be willing to take positive steps to control our region's destiny rather leave it to the whims of chance.

By pooling individual county resources into a well-constructed coalition, we would be giving northwest Kansas the best chance for tapping into this economic development.

Commercial wind projects routinely approach \$200 million to \$500 million in construction costs, and create permanent jobs at good pay, not to mention annual land-lease payments to farmers and ranchers for turbine sites.

Why should we as a region settle for the equivalent of a single drink of water from a tin cup when by simply working together, we could reap the benefits of drinking from waters flowing from a deep and wide economic river?

Marlin Stramel  
Colby

## Penicillin in peril

The miracle drugs of the 20th Century are under threat. Doctors are frustrated by rising numbers of illnesses resistant to their arsenal of antibiotics. When these medicines don't work, patients suffer or even die, and our nation's health tab ratchets upward. Drugs such as penicillin and tetracycline, used routinely to treat respiratory disease and heart infections in humans, are also fed routinely to farm animals — not to treat diagnosed disease but to promote growth and to compensate for the overcrowded, stressful, unsanitary conditions on factory farms.

This reckless use in animals of tried-and-true human antibiotics has contributed to the development of serious antibiotic-resistant human disease.

For example, scientists have long linked excessive antibiotic use in animals with a greater prevalence of resistant forms of food-borne infections — such as those caused by salmo-

nella bacteria - and systemic blood infections. Recent studies now suggest that automatic antibiotic use in livestock operations may also be driving the emergence of a new type of community-acquired superbug, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. This new type causes serious, sometime deadly, resistant infections among healthy individuals — tragically including many high school students and athletes.

Researchers recently found this particular disease in 70 percent of pigs tested on Iowa and Illinois hog farms.

More alarming, they found the identical staph strain in about 40 percent of people who work on the farms, suggesting transmission of the strain from pigs to farm workers and perhaps to the wider community.

The most straightforward way to address resistant diseases such as this new one (CA-MRSA) is to curb the unnecessary use of all

antibiotics important to human medicine in U.S. livestock operations, including penicillin and tetracycline.

While Congress has begun to hear this call to action, it has not yet seriously addressed the crisis. The administration genuinely needs more funding to do its job in an increasingly complex world. But reliance on user fees is a dangerous way to get that funding. User fees set up a scheme where the administration becomes dependent on the very industries it regulates..

Congress must act now to add provisions to the Animal Drug User Fee Act to achieve a prompt review of antibiotics approved well before concerns rose about resistance. If it fails to do so, it risks passing a bill that compromises America's public health. — *David Wallinga, M.D., director of the Food and Health Program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, in Minneapolis.*

### Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

