Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Legislature should join green alliance

The two proposed new coal-fired power plants near Holcomb have not been the fall campaign issue they were expected to be, thank goodness. But voters should be wary of the plants' mention all the same, especially in the same breath with the term "regulatory uncertainty." ...

During the nearly six years of the Sebelius administration, 3,131 air-quality permits have been issued as of last week (914 operating permits and 2,217 construction permits) and only one has been denied.

More than 570 permits have been issued since last October's single rejection by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment — for Sunflower Electric Power Corp.'s proposed Holcomb plants, which would have exported 85 percent of the power while leaving Kansas with 100 percent of the carbon dioxide and other pollutants.

How exactly does a single rejection among 3,132 permit requests "shut the door" on all businesses that produce CO2? Or represent a "major impediment of any new development of any consequence" in the state?

It doesn't — unless you discount, say, Cessna Aircraft's decision to invest \$780 million in Wichita and its Citation Columbus business jet, or Spirit AeroSystems' planned \$260 million plant in Wichita to build the jet's fuselage. ...

As Secretary of Health and Environment Rod Bremby repeatedly has said, Kansas is "open for business." ...

Meanwhile, the prospects for financing two 700-megawatt coal plants continue to dim. Even before the credit market slowed, some banks had declared such plants too risky. ...

Kansans should press their legislative leaders not to refight last session's coal wars. ...

Instead, the Legislature should join agencies such as the Kansas Energy and Environmental Policy advisory group and Kansas Energy Council in planning how to power Kansas cleanly and comprehensively long term.

- The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press

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Cornfield maze feels like home

I enjoy being in the city. Really, I do. But I didn't realize how much I miss the life of having only a handful of stoplights until a few days ago.

My college friends and I were invited by some of my church friends to a corn maze at a pumpkin patch about 15 miles out of town. One of my friends from church works at the maze and was able to get all of us in for free, after hours. It was an offer we couldn't resist.

So we put on our corn-maze attire (that is, grungy clothes and boots), bundled up and headed into the field. As we traveled through the field, we learned that the bird's-eye view of the field showed a picture of John McCain and Barack Obama. We also learned that we had spent a lot of time in Obama's forehead and probably walked around his eyeball several times.

Remembering that we were far from the city lights, I looked up into the sky and saw it painted with stars staring back at me. It felt like home. I told one of my friends that I wanted to hug a bunch of cornstalks.

Being in that corn field not only reminded me of my home, surrounded by cornfields, but also of my dad. As we backtracked trail after trail, I thought about the times during the summer when I rode with my dad in his pickup to field after field.



• A Moment with Michelle

As we drove down those jagged, dirt roads, I would tell my dad about what was going on in my life, what decisions I had to make or what concerns I had about the future. Sometimes we would listen to a sermon on the radio and share our thoughts on what we were hearing. Other times, we would listen to music, often those "oldies" I had never heard before. My dad would say, "Oh! This is a good one!" and he would start whistling in a way I've only heard from my dad.

I always tried to be helpful when I went with him to work on an irrigation well, even though I can barely tell the difference between a screwdriver and a wrench. I would sit on the side of his flatbed pick-up and watch my dad pull out his pliers from his belt. He always seems to know exactly what he needs to do and how he is going to do it.

My dad has spoiled me by being able to fix everything that I break. I think that's why

I often describe my dad as my hero to other people

Taking drives to the fields with my dad is not something I do often, but a summer would not be complete without it. They are rare times when it's just me and my dad, and I get to see the kind of man that I get to call my dad. Those times spent driving down Kansas back roads have been special to me. How could I not think about my dad and my life back home as I stood in that cornfield in the outskirts of Portland?

When I think about home, I think about the sun setting behind a horizon lined with cornstalks or wheat heads. I imagine my dad's headlights shining through the front window as he returns home from another long day of work.

table, my mom and I drinking tea with milk and sugar. We would discuss relevant issues, new thoughts about God, our dreams for the future.

I feel overwhelmingly blessed to be loved

I see my family sitting around the kitchen

by the parents that I have. And then I think, there really is no place like home.

Michelle Myers, a Colby native, is a student at Multnomah University in Portland, Ore., majoring in Bible and journalism. She enjoys the 32 Starbucks found within five miles of her campus.

Consumers trust food system

In a recent survey, U.S. consumers were asked to rank their key concerns today. Their main apprehensions are rising costs, the economy and how this is affecting their ability to put food on their family's table.

Such concerns, along with food safety, have increased dramatically during the last year and far outrank worries like the war in Iraq and other foreign policy issues.

These results came from a survey by the Center for Food Integrity in July of this year. A total of 2,066 people took part.

Seventy-five percent were the primary shoppers in their houses and were representative of the typical U.S. food shopper regarding education, income, political orientation, vegetarian practices and consumer advocacy.

With increasing food prices, U.S. consumers tend to eat out less than they did one year ago. Thirty-nine percent strongly agree that, with such price hikes, they are more likely to buy less expensive cuts of meat. Many are also opting for more canned fruits and vegetables instead of fresh produce.

Americans place the greatest share of responsibility for food safety on food processing companies and U.S. government inspectors. Food packaging companies were next in line, followed by food producers, including farmers and ranchers



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

Consumers expressed a high amount of trust in farmers and ranchers when it comes to food safety. Consumers trust themselves and those who prepare food in their homes more than any one else.

Asked to rate food safety according to school grades (A, B, C, D or F), more than half of to-day's shoppers rate food safety as an "A" or "B." Of this group, 10 percent ranked food safety a grade of A.

Eight in 10 Americans indicated most food safety concerns are related to imported food. Twenty percent believe most concerns are related to domestically produced food.

Concerning the issue of humane treatment of farm animals, consumers said organizations (like Farm Bureau) working with farmers and ranchers can strengthen consumer trust in their humane treatment of farm animals by demonstrating that producers share their values, and by proving farmers and ranchers are doing what

they say they are.

The survey indicated livestock producers have more work to do to earn the trust of consumers today. Still, 55 percent believe farm animals are treated decently and humanely, and they have no problem consuming meat, milk and eggs.

Historically, agriculture and the food industry have relied on immigrant labor or guest workers to help grow, process, transport and serve food. With millions of jobs located on the farm, in processing plants, in transportation, restaurants, food retailing and throughout the industries that support our food system, a stable, legal work force is critical to providing a safe, abundant and affordable food supply for American consumers.

That said, consumers in this survey weighed in on the side of secure U.S. borders and workplace enforcement of this country's immigration policy. There was some support for guest workers under specific circumstances.

The question that consumer's asked was, can that support be increased by coupling guest worker elements with tighter border security and more consistent workplace enforcement?

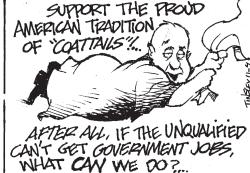
John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Mallard Fillmore

BruceTinsley







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