



Free Press Viewpoint

Tanker bids need yet another round?

The Air Force is taking another round of bids on 179 new tankers to replace aging Boeing 707s ordered under the Eisenhower administration.

Boeing won the bid at least once, but the award was reversed when, among other things, officials alleged that an Air Force official who helped with the review had a promised job waiting for her with Boeing.

Subsequent wrangling over contracts — and political infighting prompted by a plum that could top \$100 billion — have set the project back more than a decade.

There are only two bidders — Boeing, the last maker of large transport aircraft in the U.S. after the departure of Lockheed-Martin and merger of McDonnell-Douglas, and EADS, the government-controlled European Aerospace Defense and Space Co., maker of the Airbus line.

Boeing wants to sell the government a modernized version of its 767 aircraft, first flown in 1982. Production would be in Seattle and Wichita, primarily, as with other Boeing models.

Airbus offers a military version of its A330, a 1992 airframe. The tanker version is already being built for the Australian Air Force, giving the A330 something of an edge. At least Airbus has a picture of its product in action. Production would be at a new plant in Mobile, Ala., and in Arizona.

However, Boeing claims its smaller tanker will save the Air Force as much as \$10 billion in fuel over the life of the planes. The Air Force will have to sort all that out — again. It will make hundreds of comparisons of cost and performance items.

Bids have been submitted several times. At one point, it looked like Boeing would have its way with the departure of Airbus partner Northrop from the bid. However, the European concern has since decided to go it alone.

Senators and representatives from Alabama and Arizona have lined up behind Airbus while the Kansas and Washington delegations back Boeing. Money and jobs are everything in an election year.

Meantime, American pilots are stuck with tankers that are more than half a century old. They're old, slow, small and increasingly hard to maintain. How long can that go on, especially if it could take 20 to 30 years to replace all the old planes?

It'd be nice to say we should settle this on the basis of who has the best plane, but that question seems to be lost in the political and lobbying wrangle.

What needs to happen is to get the bidding process decided so new tankers can be built and delivered. The Air Force is long since past the point where it needs them.

For Kansans, the answer to the question of who builds them should be obvious, but whichever firm wins, let's get these planes flying.

No airline can afford to fly 707s today, and neither can our air force. — *Steve Haynes*

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Squirm the snake deserves better press

Snakes, Steve observed, get a raw deal.

They never get to be the spokes-animal in commercials.

You know what I mean. Think about it.

There is the Geico gecko, the Budweiser clydesdales, plus all those cats, dogs, rabbits, turtles, gerbils, frogs and birds that act in or speak for everything from cleaning products to insurance.

And then there are my favorite animals — the Frontier Airline tail crew — Jack the rabbit, Foxy the fox; Larry the lynx; Flip the bottlenose dolphin; Grizwald the bear and Jim, Joe, Jay and Gary the penguins.

I checked the Internet and found dozens of animal actors.

There are commercials out there where live and animated animals drive cars, chat with each other, play golf, ice skate, dress in funny clothes, drink beer, eat cereal and in general cause assorted mayhem.

Everyone remembers Morris the cat, so why can't Squirm the snake get a slither-on part in a commercial.



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

Now, you'd have to be a little careful about where you put him.

Fashion would be a no no. You might be able to dress dogs, cats, hamsters — even chickens — up in fashionable shirts and shorts set, but try it on a snake and it just doesn't work.

I doubt if the Washington Apple Growers Association would want to hire him, either.

I can just see that commercial:

"Hiya doll-face, you wanna get really smart. Have an apple. They're good for you."

Oh yeah. That wouldn't fly.

Well, how about:

"Hi I'm Squirm, the spokes-snake for Over-the-Road tires. When you hear the hisss. Think

of Over-the-Road."

OK. Not the greatest idea in the world. I've seen worse on the air, just not many.

Poor Squirm. Could be he's doomed to washing cars or cleaning out warehouses in west L.A.

Then again, that gives me an idea. Maybe we can get him a job in an exterminator commercial.

"Hi, I'm Squirm. I'll be right over to help you with that rat and mouse problem. Or, you can call Ready Kill, the vermin mover that doesn't use venomous reptiles."

Or if all else fails, there's always that plumbing job. I hear plumbers make really good money. They always need a snake, even if the job isn't quite as glamorous as television.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Feds hold states hostage in education

The federal government has no authority to make any regulations on classroom curricula or to enforce reform in our schools. So why is every school administrator across America sweating the requirements of No Child Left Behind?

The answer is, the U.S. Department of Education extorts compliance by strings attached to federal money. If you take federal education money, you have to abide by the requirements.

In a previous column, I calculated federal dollars against the state general fund money for education and said federal dollars were 15 percent of the total Kansas school budget. I failed to add in the local school money. That makes the federal share only 6.9 percent of our education spending. The "feds" are controlling Kansas educational policy for barely 7 cents on the dollar!

Before the last economic meltdown, several states were frustrated with No Child restrictions. Nebraska wanted to keep curricular decisions at the school-district level and not write state standards and contemplated pulling out, forfeiting \$70 million in federal dollars. The subtle threat that federal grants, from road construction to U.S. Department of Agriculture free school lunches, might be at risk was enough to keep Nebraska in line. If Nebraska had pulled out, Utah and Iowa would have left, then Arkansas and even Kansas might have left too. The feds won.

Today, compliance with President Obama's "Blueprint for Excellence" is on much shakier grounds. From the start, two states refused to participate in the Race to the Top competition that requires acceptance of Blueprint's Common Core.

Kansas has officially turned down applying for the second round of Race money. This is not "sour grapes" over not winning the first round. The state Board of Education has consistently questioned the wisdom of going after the one-time award when it had so many federal strings attached. Other states are also reconsidering their applications.

Not so Kentucky. Well before the final draft of Common Core standards was released, the



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

Kentucky board adopted it. Desperate for the federal money, Kentucky adopted this pig-in-a-poke curriculum sight unseen and promised the feds to use the next few summers to retrain their teachers to whatever standards were developed. Just award Kentucky the money!

Kansas is not Kentucky. Our state board deserves credit for not selling out our teachers and administrators and students. At the last meeting, the members heard the staffers in charge of language arts and math committees explain the differences between Kansas standards and the proposed federal Common Core.

The board asked the hard question: are the Kansas standards weaker, equal to, or more rigorous? The answer was that, unless 10 percent more was added to the federal standards, Kansas standards were stronger. The federal party line has been that state standards all set the bar low, but that is not true for states such as Massachusetts and Kansas.

The state board discussed having Commissioner Diane DeBacker send a letter of their concerns to the developers of Common Core, and to the U.S. Department of Education protesting the proposal to shift federal money from formulas to competitive funding similar to Race.

The 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." "States rights" has a bad connotation from the 1960s, when the term was associated with racial discrimination, and where states did not enforce justice. But today's educational application of the 10th Amendment is a case of "state responsibility." Education is already detailed in every state's Constitution and consumes over half of

most states' tax dollars.

Under the pretense that math and English "knows no boundaries" and are therefore universal, the feds propose one-size-fits-all standards and procedures. But teaching involves students who are not uniform raw material nor uniform end products.

Teaching students in urban Kansas City and rural Kansas is quite different. Federal reforms targeted at failing urban schools make no sense in rural schools.

Education policy should be made at the level that understands the unique local educational conditions. Policy should also be made by those who pay for it, so that reforms do not outpace the resources and budget.

There is no need for a U.S. Department of Education.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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