



Other Viewpoints

Political rhetoric backfired on plant

Ideologues tend to get their blinders on, and politicians like to pander to their base. That explains why State Sen. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, sought and won a provision in the state budget to bar use of state money for implementing federal greenhouse gas regulations.

It was a mostly pointless effort, but one Huelskamp probably thought principled and one that would serve the interests of anti-environmentalism rhetoric that would please his conservative base.

It seemed like poetic justice, then, when that very budget provision appeared likely to backfire on Huelskamp, imperiling the Sunflower Electric coal power plant project so important to western Kansas and to conservative, pro-coal legislators. An Environmental Protection Agency administrator expressed concern about the language of the Huelskamp amendment, communicating to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment that if Kansas lacked authority to apply federal requirements, then the feds could exercise their oversight authority.

In other words, an effort to block EPA regulation actually could have had the effect of inviting more. If the state wasn't going to regulate air pollution, then the federal agency would be forced to do so. And with the way paved with the state to approve air permits for the Sunflower Electric expansion of its Holcomb power plant, having the feds in the mix would have been a concern.

Fortunately, Gov. Mark Parkinson signed the budget bill Thursday but removed that provision along with 10 others he found objectionable or problematic.

Sunflower Electric President Earl Watkins had written to the governor, urging him to remove the budget provision. Westar Energy also wanted it out.

Huelskamp, however, stuck to his guns, saying Kansans wanted to "combat (President Barack) Obama's cap-and-tax proposal and resist an out-of-control EPA."

Conservative politicians will say whatever they think their base wants to hear these days. In the process, some will take empty symbolism over real results. Same goes for trying to pass worthless state legislation to protest federal health care reform or saying if you get elected to Congress you will get "Obamacare" repealed.

In the case of the language in the budget bill, it would have been ironic symbolism had that resulted in more, rather than less, federal regulation and new delays to the Sunflower Electric project.

— *The Hutchinson News, via The Associated Press*

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Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

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Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell @ nwkansas.com

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aheintz @ nwkansas.com

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Food nannies miss part of picture

The state Board of Education voted to implement "wellness policy" guidelines that will ban sugary sodas and candy from vending machines at schools across Kansas.

The definitions for fat, sugar and calorie content are, of course, more detailed. But public schools will have to meet "advanced" standards this August and "exemplary" levels by August 2011. For example, school milk must have less than 360 calories per serving this fall, and only low fat or skim milk will be allowed by 2011.

Kansas fell in line with other states that are condemning specific foods for the surge in childhood obesity. The recent report "Mission: Readiness" found that 27 percent of Americans age 17-24 are too overweight to serve in the military. But this strategy is simplistic and can lead to even worse regulations.

This movement comes in the shadow of our tobacco regulations, and bases its logic on the health care costs we all have to pay. But tobacco has no nutritional value. Sugars and fats are food, and even in their most "junk food" form have caloric value.

In paying attention to the 27 percent of kids who are overweight, we ignore the over one percent who are undernourished. For kids with allergies to gluten, nuts, etc., some of the so-called "junk food" is an important and perhaps critical source of calories.

Why stop at sugar content? Salt is implicated in blood pressure problems. Cholesterol, a



John Richard Schrock

Education Frontlines

meat-only chemical, clogs many folks' arteries, so how about taxing or regulating meat? Since they cause health-care costs we all pay for, they too are valid candidates for regulation.

New York banned most trans fats in restaurants in 2006. Expansion of regulations is not just hypothetical.

Weight is based on a formula of food calories in versus calories burned by exercise. Several board members emphasized the need to get schoolchildren more exercise, from recess activity to requiring physical education. There is plenty of evidence for this generation of students being far more sedentary. A return to physical education is unlikely to make up for the substantial decrease in rural and other outdoor experiences, however.

Soda has been around for nearly a century, but the rise in childhood obesity has accelerated in the last 15 years, the time kids began sitting down to play electronic games. Ironically, the vending machines in the hallway may be taking the fall for the computers, videogames

and cell phones.

The Kaiser Family Foundation study "GenerationM3" found American kids are on electronics and computers for over nine hours a day! Much of that sit-down inactivity is in the classroom. And if you count on recess for physical activity, it may be nothing more than students standing around texting each other.

The final argument was that "we want our children to learn to make good food decisions." But just how does eliminating their choices allow them to learn to make decisions? While school is in session, we have made the decision for them.

Three board members voted against food censorship. One considered it a local decision. Another pointed out it was a feel-good motion and students would buy even more sodas and chips as soon as they left the school grounds. And a third observed that the policy would have a "very minimal impact on obesity" and that the real solution was restoring physical activity. All correct.

The major cause of childhood obesity – inactivity for the long hours spent with computers, video games, and cell phones – got off free.

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.

Safeguarding children protects future

To the Editor:

I want to express great gratitude to everyone who contributed to Child Abuse Prevention efforts in April.

Northwest Kansas Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect successfully distributed 9,000 blue ribbons and could not have done so without community help. A huge statement for child abuse prevention was made by all who wore their blue ribbon during April.

Unfortunately, child abuse remains in all communities. But anyone can make a difference in children's lives by giving them a voice. Children are our future. And as a community, it is our responsibility to keep them safe.

If you suspect or know a child is being abused or neglected, please report the facts by calling the Kansas Protection Report Center at (800) 922-5330. In an emergency, call 911.

Now that April has passed, please remain committed to keeping children safe. For more information on how you can get involved in child-abuse prevention, contact the center at (785) 460-8177.

Paige Campbell, director
Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
Northwest Kansas
Regional Prevention Center
Colby



Free Press Letter Drop

Our readers sound off

the Republican nomination for Kansas attorney general.

Note that I say "election process" and not "political arena." That is because I think that I am anti-political. I do not curry politicians' endorsements, since that only results in owing someone something, and the attorney general must be above such influences. I have attacked as "abhorrent" the political insult to the public of raising huge war chests of money, bragging about it and hoping (sometimes, unfortunately successfully) that by throwing one's name at the voters over and over again, something will stick and the lack of experience will be hidden. (See Mary Clarkin's article about me in the Hutchinson News last November, and the subsequent editorial "Buying an Office.")

Yes, I take some donations. But the recent financial overachieving in a time of scarcity is outrageous!

There are really two kinds of elected office, though professional politicians try their best to blur the distinction.

Offices involved in the making of laws, such as representatives and senators, are issue-based. When considering people for such offices, the voters are primarily looking to whether the candidate agrees with them on matters which the each voter considers important. If a voter believes that more money should be spent on

roads, the voter will presumably seek out candidates who agree with the voter's belief, and, all else being equal, vote for such candidates.

But there are also experience-based offices. These include the attorney general's office, and, locally, the register of deeds. Although these offices are filled by election, the office holders are graded not by whether the voters agree with them on issues, but rather whether they are experienced in those areas required to make decision.

If a voter is the victim of a crime, and the attorney general is prosecuting someone accused of committing the offense, I doubt seriously that the voter would care whether the attorney general agrees with the voter on how to spend tax money. Rather, the voter wants someone experienced in the procedure required to make justice happen.

Four kinds of experience are needed, and to the extent that an attorney general significantly lacks any of these, the public is shortchanged.

The candidate should have worked in the attorney general's office, have extensive criminal law experience, experience running a large office which is part of a larger organization, and experience running an office of lawyers.

I would hope that the voters inform themselves as to each candidate's experience in these areas. Perhaps more importantly, I hope the voters do not let this office fall victim to professional politicicism.

As to my experience, search for me under "Ralph De Zago" and "Ralph DeZago" and see www.ralphdezago.com, e-mail me at rdezago@att.net or call at (785) 258-0263.)

Ralph De Zago, Herington candidate for attorney general

Mallard Fillmore

Bruce Tinsley

