



## Other Viewpoints

### Mixed messages sent on air quality

The Environmental Protection Agency's idea of common sense leaves a lot to be desired. EPA officials visited Topeka last week to talk with members of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Energy and Environmental Policy about air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Few legislators were happy when the meeting ended, and that's understandable. The federal agency has drafted new rules governing man-made greenhouse gas emissions, which it plans to put into effect Jan. 2. State officials are to have a plan for revising its air permitting program in place by the end of the year. It was the rest of the conversation that made little sense, although regional EPA administrator Karl Brooks said the new rules were "common-sense" standards for limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

Brooks said that the EPA was delaying rules for most businesses for six years to give Congress time to weigh in, and that the approach the agency is taking to implement new standards targets the largest industrial sources — power plants, large factories and oil refineries that emit 100,000 or more tons of greenhouse gases a year — while shielding millions of businesses that make up the majority of the U.S. economy.

Regardless of what anyone thinks about global warming, greenhouse gas emissions or the fate Sunflower Electric Power Corp.'s plans for a new coal-fired power plant in southwest Kansas, there can be little doubt the EPA is sending mixed messages to the public.

Why target large, industrial sources of greenhouse gases immediately if it makes sense to delay rules for most businesses for six years to give Congress time to act? Doesn't anyone at the EPA think Congress would like to weigh in on the new standards for large industries? And why discriminate against large industries if we're going to protect millions of businesses from the effects of any new regulations?

Granted, the wheels of Congress move slowly at times, but not too many of that body's members sit on the fence when it comes to greenhouse gases and new regulations on large industries during a recession. They may be ready to act rather quickly.

When the next Congress convenes after the first of the year, Republicans and most Democrats probably will be very shy about anything that might be construed as a detriment to economic recovery — such as regulations that increase the cost of producing the power that fuels the nation's businesses and lights the country's households.

Despite assurances by EPA officials that action now will save costs in the future, the public hasn't been convinced and remains very nervous about the potential for higher energy bills, and rightly so.

Before any new regulations go into effect, perhaps their elected representatives should be given an opportunity to weigh in.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via The Associated Press*



### Words' definitions hold politics hostage

It never ceases to amaze me how inept Democrats and liberals are when it comes to articulating who they are and what they stand for.

They are always on the defensive trying to prove they are "true patriots." But as liberals and other sectors of the left desperately search for a way to gain the support of the majority of the American people, they still have not grasped the fact that the political language in this country is rigged to correlate with a conservative world view.

Liberals are currently working within a political culture where conservatives exercise a monopoly over the popular definitions of words like freedom, patriotism, big government, family values and socialism. The proper way to be a good Christian has also been dominated by conservative ideology.

For example, the verses in the Bible that suggest that Jesus was a pacifist are rarely discussed in political debate, but religion is always cited as a reason to be against gay marriage or abortion. I'm not arguing that there's anything wrong with opposing these subjects for religious reasons, but it's hypocritical to highlight some parts of the Bible while ignoring others.

If conservatives and liberal Christians were honest, they would conclude that most people willingly sin from time to time, even though the type of sins they commit vary on a person by person basis. And what people consider a sin varies depending on how people interpret the Bible.

Conservatives may honestly believe their definition of patriotism or big government is



**Andy Heintz**

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the only proper way to understand these two terms, but it's surprising what little resistance there has been to their monopoly over political language. Instead of challenging the status quo, liberals seem content to play the hand they were dealt.

They often take hawkish stances on foreign policy issues in hopes that the American people will consider them patriots too. But this strategy is destined to fail because, when liberals adopt the culturally accepted version of patriotism, it looks forced and disingenuous to the American people.

And even when liberals are able to sell a tough guy posture to the public, they almost inevitably slip up and say something conservatives consider a deviation from the acceptable way of being a patriotic American.

These perceived deviations usually include sins such as tacitly criticizing some of our nation's past foreign policies towards countries in Latin America, southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa, opposition to torture, criticism of the Central Intelligence Agency and support for cuts in the defense budget. The fact that these criticisms are valid doesn't really matter in today's political atmosphere.

Unfortunately, it is an unwritten rule in American politics that government officials must spout the official version of the truth even if they recognize that it bears little resemblance to the truth. To do otherwise would inevitably lead to being labeled as a radical who is out of touch with "core American values."

Conservatives are right to praise America's efforts in World War II and Kosovo and their patriotic support for our soldiers is admirable, although it sometimes blinds them to the suffering of the people in the countries we have invaded. And they are also correct when they point out that adopting a rigid anti-interventionist foreign policy would empower the world's worst regimes to brutalize their own populations because they wouldn't have to worry about the threat of American military power.

While liberals should be willing to admit that they sometimes fail to recognize their own blind spots, this doesn't undercut their criticisms of unconditional nationalism. There is a strong case for a new form of patriotism that not only celebrates our nation's achievements, but condemns and vows not to repeat our past mistakes. To recognize past moral failures will not only give our country more credibility in the world, it will also help us build up support to combat the terrorists as well as the brutal regimes who pose a security threat to the world.

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### Federalism strikes back

We're seeing a re-emergence of constitutional principles and federalism across the country. It's a major issue in the health-care reform debate, as Tea Party activists and others have refocused attention on the long-dormant principle concerning the requirements that people buy insurance and excessive spending by the federal government.

The idea that powers not explicitly delegated in the federal Constitution "are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people," as stated in the 10th Amendment, is powerful. Given the overreach of Washington and public disgust with politicians' disregard for their will, a healthy dose of state sovereignty and a reaffirmation of federalism is a good thing.

The concept of the 10th Amendment is also at the center of debate over Arizona's new immigration law. Portions of that law that allowed the state to require those stopped by police to show paperwork proving their citizenship were declared unconstitutional by a federal judge.

The problem stems from a crime wave associated with Mexican drug gangs and illegal immigrants, as well as the inability of the federal government to police the border. Arizonans who support the act have been labeled racists; a sheriff in the state reportedly has had a million-dollar bounty placed on his head by a drug cartel; and pop star Lady Gaga has urged screaming fans to resist the law.

Missourians also asserted their support for constitutional limits on federal power Aug. 3 by saying "no thanks" to federal mandates to buy health insurance. They passed Proposition C by a 3-1 margin, winning 71 percent

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of all votes cast (including those of close to 40,000 registered Democrats), stipulating that the state will "protect the individual's right to make health care decisions." Oklahoma and Arizona have similar measures on their ballots this fall.

While voting for Proposition C may be largely symbolic, as courts consistently have ruled that federal law trumps state law, the Missouri vote is a real sign of frustration at an increasingly burdensome federal government imposing its will on the people. Twenty-three states have joined a lawsuit against the health care reform law, and there is mounting concern about its affordability, as well as the individual mandates.

Some claim demanding that the federal government follow the 10th Amendment at a time when Barack Obama is the nation's first mixed-race president is a sign of racism. They ask where the Tea Party was during the presidency of George W. Bush. He also burdened the country with debt. Why weren't Republicans concerned about the 10th Amendment when they controlled Congress?

Good questions all. There should have been 10th Amendment protests under Mr. Bush. It's

also true that for a century or more, a gaggle of slaveholders, secessionists and segregationists tried to use the Constitution to justify something nefarious, racist and malicious.

But this re-emergence is not about race; it's about our Constitution. People of all races, ethnicities, religions and creeds are concerned about the direction of the republic. Missouri's and Arizona's reassertions of the idea of state sovereignty and of federalist principles may be a sign of a new and long overdue American revolution.

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