



Free Press  
Viewpoint

‘Best science’ says  
climate is changing

This year is said to be “on track” to be the hottest on record, surpassing 2005, and that supposedly is another indicator of climate change.

And maybe it is.  
The “best science” of today says so.  
But remember, we’ve only been keeping weather records for a couple of hundred years, reliably for just a century. And those start in the waning days of the “Little Ice Age,” a cooling period stretching from the 17th century to the 19th when many glaciers and the arctic ice pack were growing.

There have been times when the Earth was much warmer and, during real ice ages, much colder. And when the Earth is very warm, it was very wet, almost inhabitable.

Then remember, the “best science” of the day once told us the world was flat and ulcers were caused by bad diet and stress.

We know today that the world is more or less round, that bacteria causes most ulcers and that cancer can be cured.

The question is, what don’t we know today that we ought to know, especially about climate?

Civilization thrived during those cool centuries, especially in the less-hospitable northern climates. Does that mean civilization won’t thrive in a warmer era? And if that’s true, is there anything we can do about it?

Perhaps cold weather suppresses tropical diseases and generates economic activity. Who knows?

Hotter, drier weather could put an end to the productivity of the Great Plains and kill crops, leaving a hungry world. Call it nature’s way of limiting population, if you will. But instinct tells us men will figure out how to grow food for the world. American farmers are pretty good at that.

Common sense says we should do what we can to abate climate change, and for the most part, we are. We should be judicious, though, careful not to ruin the world economy while we chase elusive targets of global warming.

If some people had their way, we’d be reduced to little more than subsistence farmers, scratching out a living on small plots of ground from “renewable” crops, barely enough in good times to feed us and our pet cattle (for by then, eating animals surely would be banned).

But our ancestors did that, and it wasn’t much of a life  
And it’s not going to happen: we’re not going to give up our electronic gizmos, cheap food and civilized ways, are we?

So we had best be judicious in our measures. We should do whatever we can to make our way of life “climate neutral,” but guard against either destroying our quality of life or going so far overboard that we tip the scale toward cooler days.

It’s unlikely that men could do enough to create another ice age, even a “little” one, but the possibility is no better than continued global warming.

Even then, the best guess is that climate will continue to change, as it always has, becoming cooler and warmer in turns none of us will live long enough to understand.

We barely understand what’s happening today, and odds are, much of what we know isn’t right anyway. As in many things, we have part of the picture.

Reduce greenhouse gasses? Sure.  
End production agriculture, ban electricity, go back to bikes and horses?  
Not gonna happen. — Steve Haynes

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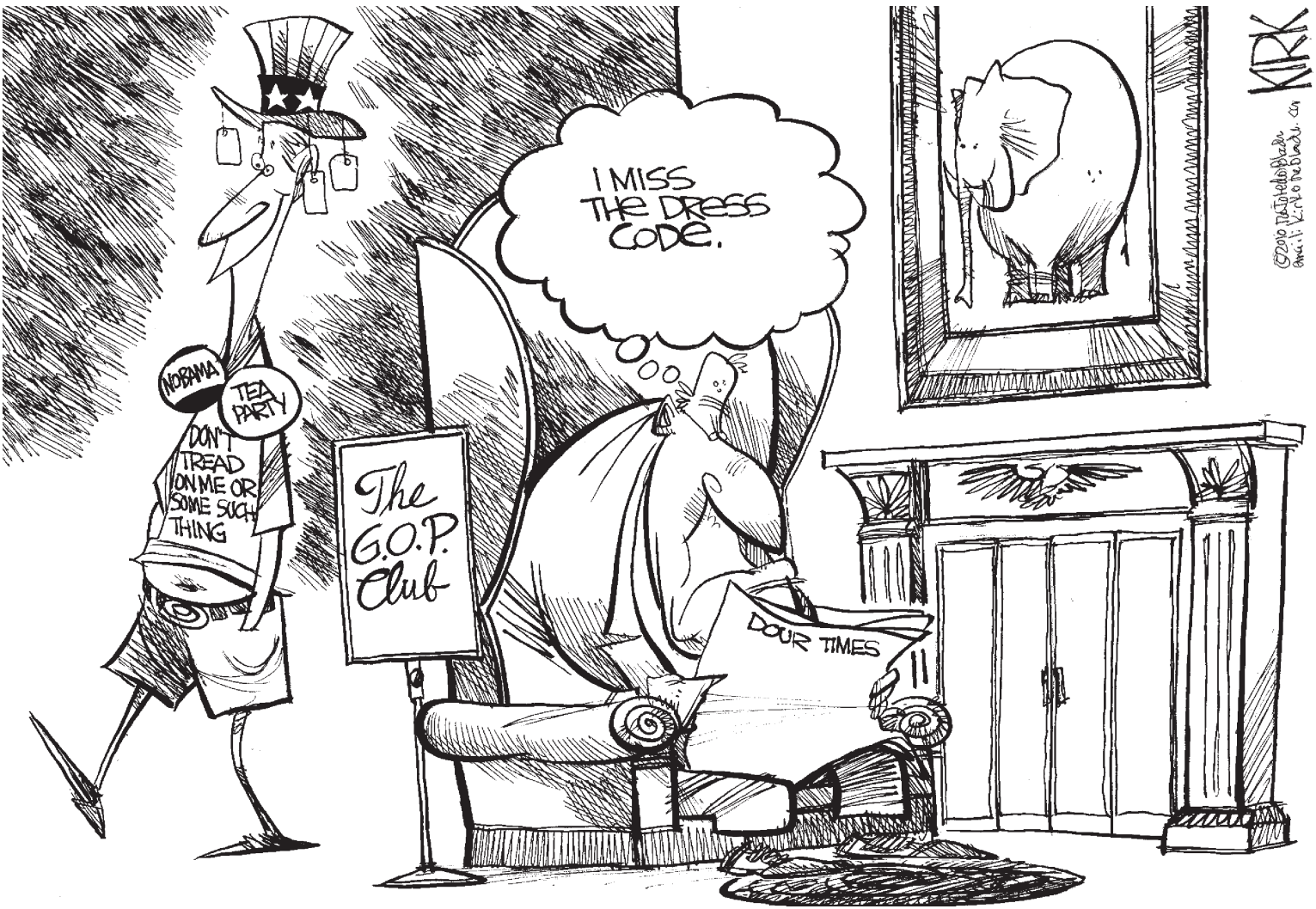
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Water baby’s just following tradition

My daughter is raising a water baby.  
Little granddaughter, just 6 months old, is learning to swim, and she loves it.

Our girls both live in Augusta, Ga. Well actually, the oldest lives in Augusta and the youngest lives in Martinez, a suburb. Still, they are close enough to see each other often and until about eight months ago, their husbands worked for the same company.

The two couples saw a lot of each other, and then the baby came.

Everyone was so excited. Oldest daughter was in on the birth. In fact, she had basically appropriated my role as chief spoiler of the kid. (And yes, I’m a teeny bit jealous, but then I live in Kansas and she’s right there for her sister.)

Oldest daughter and her husband bought a new home in July. It’s a much bigger place with a swimming pool. Of course, nothing worked quite right the first month, and all we heard was the pool needs this and the pool needs that.

But eventually, the problems were worked out and everyone was invited over for a pool party.



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

Then, since it was August in Augusta – a disgusting time in the South – we heard a lot about the pool. Oldest daughter’s place got very popular.

Then came the pictures and video: Daddy or mommy or aunt or uncle helping the baby paddle around the pool or her in her floatie with an adult close at hand.

“My niece is going to learn to swim,” oldest daughter declared after six teens at a “swim” party drowned in a river in Louisiana. It was a horrible accident that could have been prevented if any of them, or those on the shore, had known how to swim.

What she doesn’t remember is her father and me taking her to a pool in Kansas City when she was 6 months old so that she could learn

to swim.

We did the same with her sister, but by the time our son was that age, we had moved to the mountains of Colorado, and there was no nearby indoor pool when he turned 6 months in January. He did, however, go with the first swim class we could get him into. Parents carpooled to take 4-year-olds 50 miles – just to learn how to swim.

We may never have had a pool or owned a boat or spent much of our adult life around the water, but Steve and I both grew up in families that loved water sports – fishing, swimming, skiing, boating – and we both knew that swimming is an important skill for everyone.

So now, we have another water baby and I’m so proud of her.

Here, let me show you the pictures....

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 @ nwkansan.com

Physician assistants clearly qualified

To the Editor:

This is in response to Mr. Voss’ opinion that a physician assistant can’t handle an emergency. I have had the privilege of working in emergencies with some of the finest PAs around. I have never once doubted their ability to run or handle an emergency. I am not sure where you get your information, but I can assure you that mine comes experience. It does make me wonder what other decisions have been made on your part in haste, based on opinion instead of hard facts.

Scott Hubbell, Colby

Editor’s Note: Mr. Hubbell is the registered respiratory therapist director and instructor at Northwest Kansas Technical College in Goodland.

Producers need  
healthy markets

To the Editor:

A longer version of this letter went to Sen. Pat Roberts:

As a serious Republican, I can say that you and your fellow congressmen’s recent letter of attack on the Packers and Stockyards Administration-Department of Justice meeting on competition in Fort Collins, Colo., was a great disappointment to me – again.

Remember Country of Origin Labeling? You called that one wrong, too. Someday, you should get out of the city and learn what is happening in rural America. I don’t see why it is so hard, other than you have taken money from the competition and began to work against healthy markets before you heard both sides at the meeting.

Is this report not true? I have found \$6,723,051 in total agribusiness political action committees and individual contributions – the traceable contributions at least – to these senators: Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., \$3,670,559; Pat Roberts, R-Kan., \$1,754,228; Mike Johanns, R-Nebraska, \$473,149; Sam Brownback, R-Kan.,



Free Press  
Letter Drop

- Our readers sound off

\$498,293; Tom Coburn, R-Okla., \$326,822.

Wonder how much more they and the Republican party were promised by agbiz just for this letter?

I, and many others, attended the meeting in Fort Collins. It was a great meeting with real representation by cattle and beef industry participants, as well as consumers and laborers. I listened to both sides, and it was clear that there are problems with the current condition of the cattle industry and problems in rural America.

We heard that many individual producers receive bids from maybe two, but usually just one serious bidder for their cattle.

We also heard about “willing buyers and willing sellers.” Those who receive one bid are not “willing sellers;” they become price takers because of a lack of competition. Some have to ship cattle over 800 miles to be processed because of the lack of competition.

We also heard several times that larger feed yards do get preferential treatment, with better pricing, based on size alone, not “feeding good cattle or carcass merit.” This leads to unfair pricing based solely on size.

Another important thing I noted was that we have two problems that are seriously affecting every person in the industry. The biggest was the market power and control by big corporations such as Walmart.

The second problem lies in “packer-owned and controlled cattle,” of which many testified, and Justice and Packers and Stockyards both admitted to being fully aware that it goes on. These cattle are never sold in an open and transparent market, and many times they are traded to other packers.

It is well documented just how big the beef packers are. The big four control well over 80 percent of all the slaughter. They make money, but not as much as Walmart. Many stockmen have developed niche markets, marketing alliances (as in formula and contracting of cattle), or they take part in the cash market selling. In Kansas, we are still at about 65 percent cash cattle trading.

My solution offered to Justice and Packers and Stockyards is simple, and will benefit anyone who owns cattle and cares about our industry: Ban packers from owning, controlling or feeding cattle. This is something that could take place tomorrow and will benefit every cattle producer.

I want all stock growers to be more profitable in the U.S., where we do not produce enough beef for our consuming demand, regardless of what a few say. We should be proud to be cattlemen!

Remember to ask for USA beef. It doesn’t get any better!

Mike Schultz, Brewster  
Country of Origin Labeling Committee chair, R-CALF USA member, Kansas Cattlemen’s Association

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Mallard  
Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

