

## Other Viewpoints

### Shock radio tirade certainly no fluke

If, at long last, Rush Limbaugh fans can't see what their hero has become, they most likely never will.

Limbaugh called a Georgetown law student, Sandra Fluke, a slut and a prostitute for expressing her support of requiring health insurance companies to cover birth control. Limbaugh called her a femiNazi who wanted taxpayers to pay for her having sex and told her to post videos of her having sex online so "we can all watch."

After Limbaugh sponsors began canceling their lucrative advertising contracts, and no doubt after consultation with his lawyers, Limbaugh apologized saying he didn't mean a "personal attack on Ms. Fluke."

Limbaugh is a radio talk show giant, a master manipulator who some pundits see as the only remaining identifiable policy maker for the Republican Party. No politicians we know of in the Republican Party have openly separated themselves from his vicious, outrageous conduct, so dependent are they on him to keep the looney fringe right wing "base" on their side.

Limbaugh began his career claiming, legitimately, to be the only national voice for the conservative point of view and millions who weren't hearing their voice in the major media tuned in. They liked hearing their point of view affirmed. His bombast was entertaining, more instructive than destructive. Listenership and ratings soared. In those days there actually was much to be learned listening to the man.

But over the years Limbaugh's presentation has soured. He's found personal attacks and passion attract more listeners than rational debate. He sets up individuals and groups as targets of scorn and ridicule and drums up hostility amongst the "dittoheads," as listeners call themselves, by appealing to their frustrations, fears and sense of victimhood. He builds ratings by convincing his listeners they are victims of a conspiratorial elite who are deliberately trying to take their money and freedoms.

He is mean spirited, vindictive and abusive. Ms. Fluke is just one victim of his savage rants. Most are politicians, particularly President Obama whom he attacks mostly personally with startling abandon. Listening carefully to his rants on Obama should tell listeners a lot.

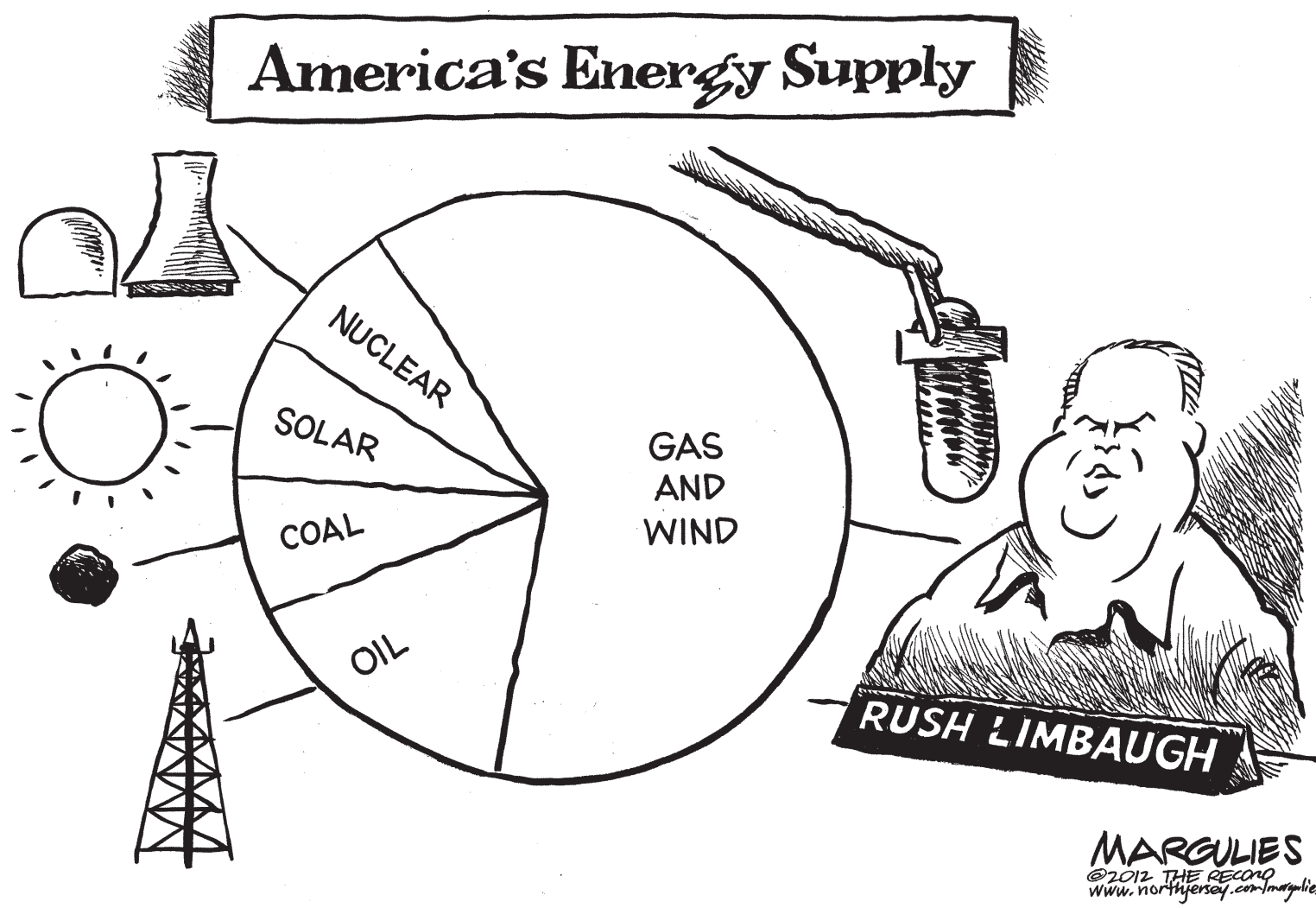
Typically Limbaugh, in a stuttering, screeching hissy fit, will describe Obama as "angry," "arrogant," "mean spirited," a "megalomaniac" who uses "class warfare" to "manipulate" and fool the people. It's in these moments of raging attacks on Obama that Limbaugh describes himself with breathtaking precision.

He calls top Republicans on the carpet if he believes they aren't performing aggressively enough. He recently scolded House Speaker John Boehner who was on the phone with him on air in what should have been a humiliating five minutes for the speaker. We were embarrassed for him. If he was humiliated he isn't saying so - won't risk being "Fluked" by Limbaugh's ire.

Some mainstream media critics claim Limbaugh, and the less effective but equally vindictive Glenn Beck, don't deliver votes. Clearly, our elected representatives believe otherwise and so do we. The partisan war in Congress literally echoes with the spirit and substance of Limbaugh's tirades.

Meanwhile, Congress has become perhaps the most universally disliked institution in the country today.

- The Clay Center Dispatch, via the Associated Press



### Mexican drug wars reflect on U.S.

While the United States remains focused on Iran and Syria, the war next door drags on. I refer to the drug wars that have convulsed Mexico during the past five years. While Vice President Biden was meeting with Mexican leaders in Mexico City this past week, Juarez, Mexico, residents Manuel and Isabel Martinez were in Kansas visiting their daughter who is a student at Kansas Wesleyan University. I found their observations on Mexico's plight on the eve of its own upcoming presidential election in July worth sharing.

Isabel, a hospital nurse, sees the violence first-hand. According to her and her husband, President Rafael Calderon's well-intentioned effort to rid the country of drug cartels is widely viewed as a failure. While violence has abated somewhat in Juarez itself, the war between the drug gangs has spread to other parts of the country.

Associated Press writer Olga Rodriguez cited statistics this week showing that nearly fifty thousand people have been killed in drug violence during the first five years of the Calderon administration.

A key factor keeping the drug mafias in business has been the consistent demand from Mexico's northern neighbor. Most Mexicans see little hope of reining in the cartels as long as the demand for their products remains strong in the United States.

Conservative American commentator Pat Buchanan once famously remarked that "the problem with (our own) war on drugs is that we have millions of Americans collaborating with the enemy," (i.e. the drug users). And



Alan Jilka

#### • A Voice of Reason

in fact *Time* magazine's July 2011 cover story entitled "The War Next Door," cites a figure of \$65 billion annually in reference to Americans' consumption of illegal drugs, a bigger business than all professional sports and Hollywood combined.

There has also been a deluge of arms flooding into Mexico in recent years, mostly from the United States. When President Calderon spoke to a joint session of the U.S. Congress a couple years ago he pleaded with lawmakers to reinstate the assault weapons ban. His pleas fell on deaf ears. During his meeting with Biden, Calderon again asked for help controlling the flow of weapons and drug money south across the border.

Amid such an environment Manuel Martinez expects the ruling National Action Party (PAN) of President Calderon to lose the upcoming elections. Opposition (Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI) candidate Enrique Peña Nieto assured the vice president that his government will be "committed to fighting organized crime." However many, says Martinez, expect him to make accommodations with the drug cartels in an effort to end the violence. The reasoning is that since the government has

proven itself incapable of eliminating the corruption that has assisted the cartels they should return to the old ways of payoffs that ensured a modicum of peace and tranquility. The Mexican people have been traumatized by the daily violence and are ready to do whatever necessary to return safety to the streets, including making unsavory compromises.

To ultimately end the drug wars, Manuel Martinez has become convinced that the U.S. needs to help its neighbor by decriminalizing drugs. His reasoning is simple. Criminalization of drugs has been a huge failure, just like Prohibition before it. For Mexicans the proof is direct - the body count. Drugs, therefore should be legalized, taxed and regulated like another, alcohol, already is.

The U.S. government has given our southern neighbor as much material assistance as the highly-nationalistic Mexicans will accept. But by and large, this war remains an "out of sight out of mind" conflict for most Americans. As long as the violence stays south of the Rio Grande, that attitude likely won't change.

But Manuel Martinez thinks the violence will inevitably spill across the border. The U.S. provides the demand and huge profit motive for the narco-traffickers. Although to date Mexico has borne the brunt of the human toll, Americans too are being victimized by the cartels. Maybe we need to get engaged in the search for another solution before it's too late.

Alan Jilka is a former Salina city commissioner and mayor. He was the Democratic nominee for Congress in the 1st District in 2010.

### Congress broke Postal Service, must fix it

The controversy over the Postal Service's efforts to close the Colby mail processing facility is being repeated in hundreds of American communities as the U.S. Postal Service prepares to close more than half of the nation's 460 mail processing centers.

In Colby and cities and small towns across the country, business owners, citizens, community leaders and elected officials have demanded the Postal Service withdraw plans that will slow down mail delivery, kill jobs and hurt their local economy.

At dozens of public meetings, the Postal Service's answer has been the same: Closing these "plants" is necessary to help solve the Postal Service's financial "crisis," they say.

But the Postal Service is unable to substantiate projected savings, and many observers - including members of Congress - have charged that its estimates are wildly inflated.

And the cost of closures will be high: The Postal Service announced Dec. 5 that massive closures will force the service to eliminate overnight delivery for first-class mail and periodicals, change next-day delivery to two days, and extend two-day delivery to three days.

Locally, closing the mail processing plant means residents and businesses may not receive bills, payments, prescriptions, online purchases and community newspapers on time. Local newspapers will be delayed; prescriptions mailed from pharmacies will be delayed.

Nationally, dismantling the distribution network will have a severe impact on companies that rely on the Postal Service to conduct business - to deliver bills and catalogues, return payments, distribute information about products and services, and deliver goods to customers. The Postal Service is at the heart of a \$1.3 trillion private-sector mailing industry that employs 9 million people and generates more than \$65 billion worth of mail each year.

Closing postal facilities also will have a devastating impact on millions of individual citizens who rely on the mail to connect them to their communities and the nation at large. Nearly 40 percent of Americans don't have broadband Internet access, and 28 percent of Americans have no Internet access at all. Approximately 55 percent of consumers still receive hard-copy bills and statements.

#### Other Opinions

##### • Marcia Coleman Kansas Postal Workers

Fortunately, the massive proposed postal closures are unnecessary. Congress created the problem and Congress can fix it - without any cost to taxpayers.

The cause of the Postal Service's financial crisis is largely misunderstood. Although first-class mail has declined over the past four years, online bill payment and other forms of electronic communication are only part of the problem.

The primary cause of the Postal Service's dire financial situation is a mandate imposed by Congress in 2006 that requires the Postal Service to "prefund" healthcare benefits for future retirees. This obligation drains approximately \$5.5 billion annually from postal accounts to fund a 75-year obligation in just 10 years. No other government agency or private business bears this burden.

Were it not for the financial chokehold Congress created in 2006, the Postal Service would have netted a \$611 million surplus during fiscal years 2006-2010 instead of racking up a \$21 billion deficit.

In addition, the service has overfunded its retirement accounts by billions of dollars. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which oversees these accounts, has concluded that it cannot allow the Postal Service to reclaim these funds without congressional authorization.

In response to the squeeze placed on it by Congress, the service has proposed to close thousands of post offices, slash its mail processing network and eliminate prompt mail service.

Unfortunately, a postal reform bill pending in the Senate (S. 1789) fails to adequately address the problems. Although the 21st Century Postal Service Act would reduce the level of retiree healthcare prefunding, the annual cost would continue to impose significant debt on

the Postal Service and would result in unnecessary cuts in service.

There's a much better solution: Congress must repeal the prefunding requirement, allow the Postal Service to recover overpayments to its retiree funds and protect service to the American people.

Resolving the financial crisis would free up the money the agency needs to maintain service, protect the mail processing network, prevent the closing of rural post offices, retain Saturday mail delivery and modernize. For the Postal Service to remain relevant in the digital age, Congress must permit it to offer new products and services.

The Postal Service network is a vital part of the nation's infrastructure. Destroying it will lead to the demise of the world's largest, most efficient and most trusted mail system - one that our founding fathers expressly authorized in the Constitution.

Congress created the Postal Service's financial crisis, and Congress must fix it, now.

Marcia Coleman, president Kansas Postal Workers Union, Great Bend

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**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. moran.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeier**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeier@senate.state.ks.us

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