



Other Viewpoints

Drilling-friendly, state pumps more

Judging by the explosion of horizontal oil and gas drilling in southern Kansas, our state doesn't have a problem with business friendliness. Moreover, claims that regulations on oil and gas drilling in the U.S. are too restrictive are misleading, to say the least.

More than 500 people attended a day-long conference in Hutchinson on Nov. 27, including Gov. Sam Brownback and U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp of this district. Clearly, the oil and gas industry is expanding thanks to new drilling technology and Kansas' Mississippian Lime Play oil-and-gas formation.

Year to date, the state has received nearly 7,000 "intent to drill" notices, up from 4,600 for all of last year.

Producers use a combination of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing – breaking up the rock formations underground with a pressurized, chemically treated sand-and-water mixture – to tap into pockets of oil and gas that would be difficult to extract using conventional drilling.

While exciting for the potential to mine considerably more oil and gas domestically, the technology is controversial. The jury still is out on whether the process is safe for the environment, namely groundwater. It uses a lot of water, and groundwater resources are an issue, especially in the midst of a serious two-year drought here. Hydraulic fracturing even has raised concerns about the potential to create seismic instability – in other words, earthquakes.

Kansas doesn't seem too worried about these concerns.

"Of all the places we've got operations, not many are as industry-friendly as Kansas," said David Todd, vice president of production for Shell Exploration, which has more than 600,000 acres leased in nine counties.

Todd also told the Hutchinson conference that drilling in Kansas costs about a third of what it does in the Bakken formation in North Dakota, another hot bed for horizontal oil and gas drilling.

State leaders would be wise to worry less about the business friendliness of Kansas, which clearly isn't a problem for oil and gas producers, and exercise a little more scrutiny on the methods being used, to ensure the safety of groundwater and the security of all the state's natural resources.

– The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

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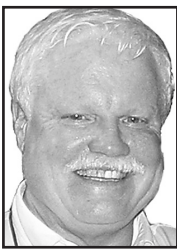


Speedway boss not who you'd expect

What sort of person would you expect to be running a NASCAR track?

Some good ol' boy who went to a southern college and grew up around race tracks?

Or maybe a guy with a law degree from some stuffy place like the University of Kansas, plus a law degree from KU, and a Master of Business Administration from the prestigious University of Chicago?



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

A race fan, or a button-down guy who spent much of his career in a major college athletic department?

You may be able to see where this is going. For the president of the Kansas Speedway is not your everyday Bubba.

Pat Warren joined the athletic department at KU under former Athletics Director Bob Frederick, a legendary figure at the university. He said he loved working there, but left after Frederick was eased out. He went to Chicago and got the MBA, assuming he was out of sports for a while.

And when he applied for the job at the speedway, he said, he had to be honest. He told the NASCAR people he knew next to nothing about stock-car racing.

"They told me they didn't like to hire race fans," he told Associated Press editors meeting in Kansas City this week. "When they did,

nobody got any work done on race weeks."

Listen to him talk, though, and you can tell that Warren has become, if not a true race fan, a fan of the business and the people it draws. He likes to talk about the family atmosphere at the tracks and the way a race is open to everyone, fans and the media alike, in a way almost no other sport can claim.

Where else do the stars sign autographs and mingle with fans before an event? he asks. Where else is the equivalent of the locker room as open as the pits of a track?

And he compared access to drivers' radio frequencies and in-car cameras to football fans being able to listen in on the coach, the offensive coordinator and the quarterback. As if that'd ever happen.

Having two NASCAR races a year is the economic equivalent of two all-star games a year for Kansas City, he says, but the track is

challenged to fill its seats for both races if the second one is to stay in Kansas for the long term.

The track, which has about 35 year-around employees, already is credited for creating more than 5,000 permanent jobs in once-poor Wyandotte County and with prompting millions in associated investments in shopping and hotels around the area. It's all been done without public money, he said, except for improvements built through tax-increment financing – paid for by the valuation of new development.

Now Warren is an evangelist for motor racing, urging everyone to come see what the sport is all about – and to be sure to put on a headset and listen in on their favorite driver, so we learn what it's all about, not just noise and fast cars, but knowledge and logistics on a high order.

It probably doesn't take an MBA to understand NASCAR, but apparently, it doesn't hurt.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

'Next generation' loses science depth

The national "Next Generation Science Standards" are moving into the last phase of review. That means future American students will be studying less science, not more.

Biology comprises seven subdisciplines: zoology, botany, microbiology, anatomy and physiology, ecology, evolution and molecular biology. The Next Generation Standards only addresses three: ecology, evolution and molecular biology. Over half of biology will be discarded.



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

The rationale for this is the old education-school argument that American science has tried to teach "a mile wide and an inch deep." Their solution is to just teach a few ideas "deeply." By using the magic of "inquiry learning and questioning," our students will then be able to somehow fill in all the missing science they never learned.

Of course, you can't solve a chess problem if you do not know how to play chess. And you can't fix a car if you don't know how a car works. And learning to play chess doesn't make it easier to fix a car.

The ed-school folks designing the standards appear clueless to the fact that all future citizens need to know how their bodies work as we handle medical decisions throughout life. Studying just ecology, evolution and molecular biology will not help students understand kidney symptoms or make nutrition decisions. If they know nothing about the life of plants, animals and microbes, just how will ecology and evolution be meaningful – because it is animals, plants and microbes that have ecological relationships and evolve?

Everyone needs to graduate from public schools knowing how their body works. Our ongoing failure to teach detailed human anatomy is one major factor contributing to every man, woman and child in America costing \$2,000 more every year in medical and health insurance costs when compared to other developed countries.

Citizens in Germany know their anatomy

and physiology enough that they can refer themselves to a specialist without going through a general practitioner. Other developed countries spend at least three times more course time on science than do American students, and they are rapidly pulling away from the U.S. in science patents and other measures of scientific achievement.

The only reason the U.S. scientists still win science Nobel Prizes is that it takes a 20-to-40-year lag to assess winners, and our current winners were trained long ago, when the U.S. science curriculum was more substantial.

The promoters of these federal science standards claim that they are supported by the science community, just as they claimed for the earlier reforms of the American Association for the Advancement of Science "Less Science Not More" and the National Science Education Standards of the late 1990s. But these prior "standards" were primarily written by education specialists. Most scientists did not pay much attention to public school curricula, but the many who did point out that "less science is less science" were ignored.

If Kansas continues down the road to approving the standards, we can expect a range of reactions in Kansas schools. Some affluent schools can maintain some academic freedom and ignore the standards because their students all perform well and might possibly have made the 100 percent annual yearly progress mark. But most schools have some poor students and struggle to make the needed assessment scores, and their administrators restrict teachers to teaching to the test. It is the testing that

gives the standards "bite."

No Child Left Behind has not gone away under the recent Kansas waiver, but has merely been renamed. Of the four waiver provisions, raising test scores and narrowing the gap between high and low performers remain test-driven criteria. Testing the standards drives teaching. That means that for most Kansas schools, adopting the standards will mean the elimination of animals, plants, anatomy and physiology and microbiology from the biology classroom.

In addition, the "inquiry" process so lauded for producing scientists ignores the fact that most of our students will not become scientists. And those that do pursue science will not study the four missing subdisciplines.

Why would the state Board of Education continue on a path to approve the next-generation standards? The board has had a solid majority of pro-evolution members for several years, and this will continue. If Kansas did not adopt the national standards, our state standards would be up for their regular cyclical review. While I cannot read their minds, I can only speculate that the majority do not want to have a state-level curricular discussion that could open up the topic of evolution again.

In a state where botany and zoology are at the base of our agriculture, and ignorance of anatomy, physiology and microbiology drive up health care costs, avoiding publicity about evolution is a poor reason to abandon teaching the critical biology desperately needed by our next generation of Kansas students.

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.

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or colby.editor @ nwkansas.com.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

