

from our viewpoint...

Law would protect news reporters

Sometime this week, a decades-long effort to protect news reporters from the almost unlimited power of federal judges may come to a climax in the U.S. Senate.

Supporters hope to get a vote before the August recess on a federal Shield Law, known as the Free Flow of Information Act.

Kansas Sen. Pat Roberts may be a critical vote on the bill, but so far, the senator has been sitting on the fence. He may be under strong pressure from the Bush Administration, which does not like this bill, to vote no.

We think, though, that Pat Roberts — who has a journalism degree from Kansas State University and worked as a reporter many years ago — should see the injustice a few judges have visited on reporters and vote yes.

Tonda Rush, lobbyist and legal counsel in Washington for the National Newspaper Association, points out that efforts to force journalists to talk have become more common, even in civil cases, as lawyers get the idea they can punish the press.

One, Toni Locy of *USA Today*, was fined \$5,000 a day. The judge, in an implicit threat of personal bankruptcy, told her she could not call on her friends, her family or her employer to help pay the fines.

That amounts to the courts leaving an individual to fight the immense power of the Justice Department on her own, an extraordinarily unfair situation.

"The vindictiveness of the order was stunning," Rush said. "That got attention on Capitol Hill."

Where once lawyers might have hesitated to subpoena reporters, today it's becoming more common. The losers here, though, are not the press, hard as it might be for an individual newsman to fight the government alone.

The reporters who get haled into court have been investigating government corruption, organized crime, security lapses, lying and cheating in Washington, corporate greed and white-collar crime. Things the people want and need brought to light.

Their work is not political, though attempts to block them or out their sources often are. They want only to bring wrong-doing, stupidity and greed to light.

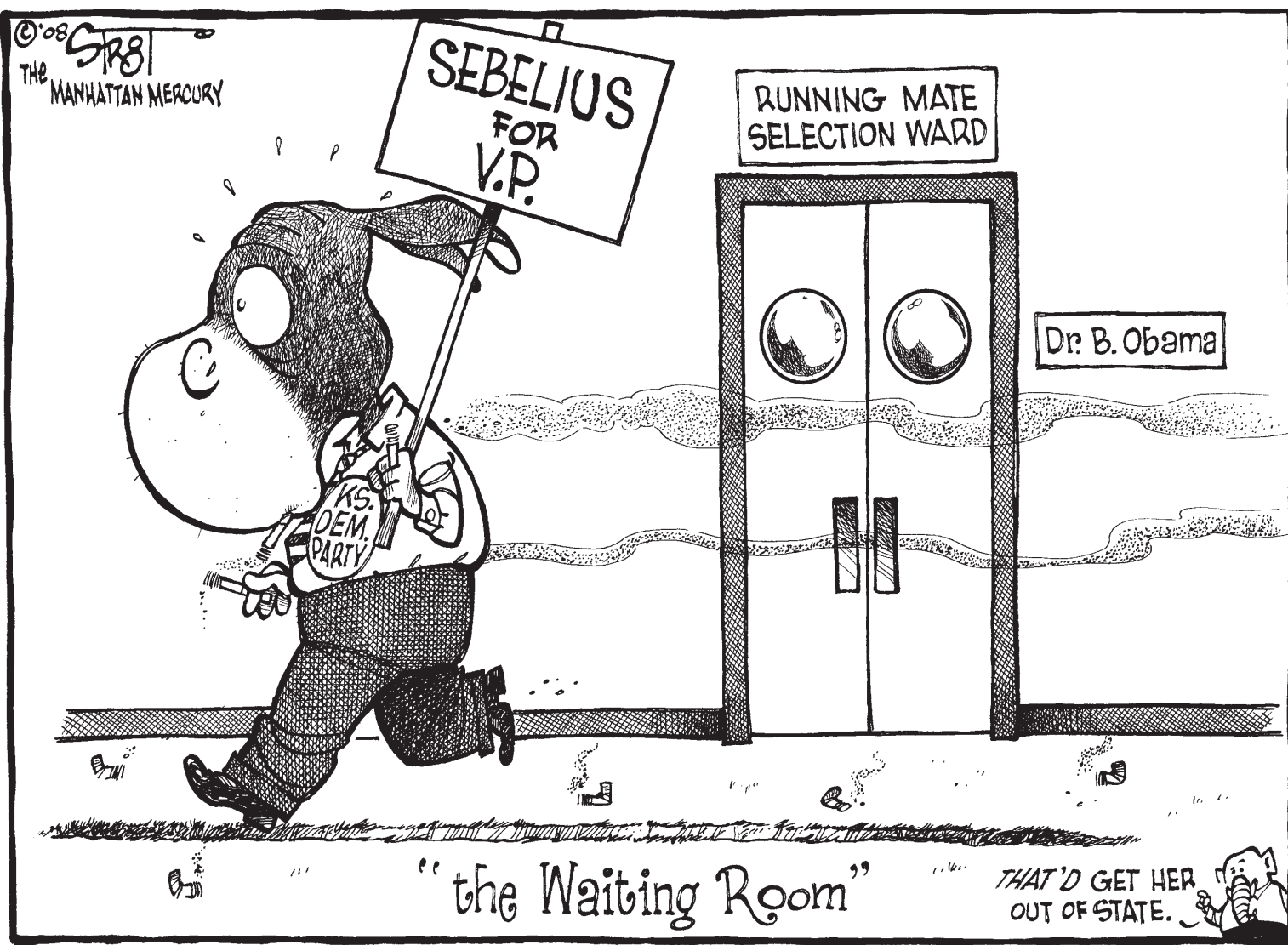
All of us lose when the government and the courts can make reporters fear them. Sources afraid to be outed will clam up. The next generation of whistle blowers will hide under their desks.

Then we might never know about the next set of Pentagon Papers, or how the mayor of some large city has been on the take. Subpoenas could be used to discourage reporters and threaten sources.

This is a case where government power clearly is abused. This bill is not a pure "shield law." Compromises and exceptions protect national security and ensure that information the courts must have will be revealed.

But it should slow the advance of government power and protect reporters — who really represent all of us, looking after our interests in ways we cannot do alone — from unwarranted and unfigurable oppression.

Hear the call, Sen. Roberts. Vote for the defense of reporters' rights and against the ever-expanding power of government to suppress and block reporting that stands between corruption and liberty. — *Steve Haynes*



Cookbook full of train 'friends' favorites

"Soot, It's What's for Dinner" Sounds tasty doesn't it?

This book, which I bought in Chama, N.M., is a compilation of recipes by members of the Friends of the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, and the title is apt.

While on vacation in Colorado last week, we took a ride on the Cumbres, an old narrow-gauge railroad that winds back and forth across the Colorado-New Mexico border for 64 miles. The train is pulled by a coal-burning engine, which throws sparks and cinders into the air with the abandon of a Mardi Gras carnival-goer tossing candy and beads.

Environmental officials have suggested making the railroad change its historic engines over to burn oil, but so far the line, owned jointly by the two states, has resisted the change.

You have a choice. You can board the train in Antonito, Colo., and ride to Osier, Colo., which is a mountain meadow in the middle of nowhere reachable only by train or a gravel track. Or, you can board in Chama and ride to Osier.



cynthia haynes

• open season

At Osier, there is a large dining hall and a small gift shop. Passengers have their choice of taking picnic lunches or eating in the cafeteria-style lunchroom. When I say cafeteria-style, I mean as in high school cafeteria, not the multi-choice places at colleges. The food is decent and plentiful, but not cuisine. They cook it. You eat it.

Our train consisted of an engine, coal tender, three coaches, snack/bathroom car, parlor car and an open gondola. The parlor car costs twice as much as seats in the coaches, which have neither electricity nor water. Steve selected the second passenger car and got us seats near the front.

The cars are coupled together so that you can walk between them via little platforms. The

doors at each end are kept open to facilitate movement.

As we huffed and puffed up the mountain-side, I could see what looked like a fine rain falling through the space between the cars. It was a sunny day, not a cloud in the sky. I soon realized, looking at the floor, that what I was seeing was soot and cinders. My white jeans were soon smudged, and when I took off my sunglasses, you could see where they had been.

While Steve roamed the cars and talked to the crew, I read my cookbook, contemplated the free ingredients, which were spewing from the engine ahead of me and thought:

"I'm glad Gov. Kathleen Sebelius isn't on this trip. She'd try to get the whole railroad closed down."

Fortunately, she's governor of Kansas, and Bill Richardson is governor of New Mexico. He's a former secretary of energy, and a liberal Democrat, but they say he loves trains.

Food and gas pains



tom purcell

• commentary

"Life isn't much fun anymore now that the wife has me doing all kinds of nutty things to economize."

"Ah, yes, you speak of the way Americans are responding to rapidly rising fuel and food costs."

"You got that right. The wife and I used to enjoy dining out. Now we sit around clipping coupons, searching for bargains and thinking up ideas to cut our household costs."

"The horror."

"Take one of the wife's bright ideas. Because meat and poultry are so high, she decided we're vegetarians now. I wake nights dreaming of juicy burgers. As one wit said, if God didn't want us to eat animals why did he make them taste so good?"

"An excellent point."

"But it's not like vegetables are cheap, either. So the wife made me plant a large garden. I spend hours digging, planting, pruning and weeding. I thought mankind invented the suburbs so sluggards like me could avoid menial labor."

"I feel your pain."

"What's worse: the wife is so cost-conscious all we ever eat is leftovers. I got so frustrated, I took the advice of humorist Calvin Trillin. I hired a crew of archeologists to search for the original meal."

"That's no good."

"Then the wife reads an article in *Money* magazine about homemade laundry detergent. Next thing I know I'm grating natural soap, boiling it, then adding borax, baking soda and essential oils. It only takes several hours of what used to be my leisure time to make a batch."

"Rapidly rising fuel and food costs are surely agitating many Americans, but aren't there some upsides?"

"Upsides?"

"To reduce fuel and food costs, more families are dining together at home. They're carting their kids off to organized events less often and staying in. Such quality time is surely a good thing."

"Except that we spend our quality time doing menial labor and making soap."

"Many Americans are realizing how spoiled and wasteful we have been. We used to grab anything we wanted at the grocery store. Now we think things through. We look for lower-cost items and we're finding lots of ways to enjoy a healthier diet on a smaller budget."

"Believe me, the wife has mastered the concept."

"A little pain can be good. The hope is more

As a result of hefty government subsidies, one quarter of our corn is being converted into fuel. That has increased the demand for corn, which has driven up its cost. It's driven up the cost of beef and pork, too, because cows and pigs eat corn."

"So everything is connected?"

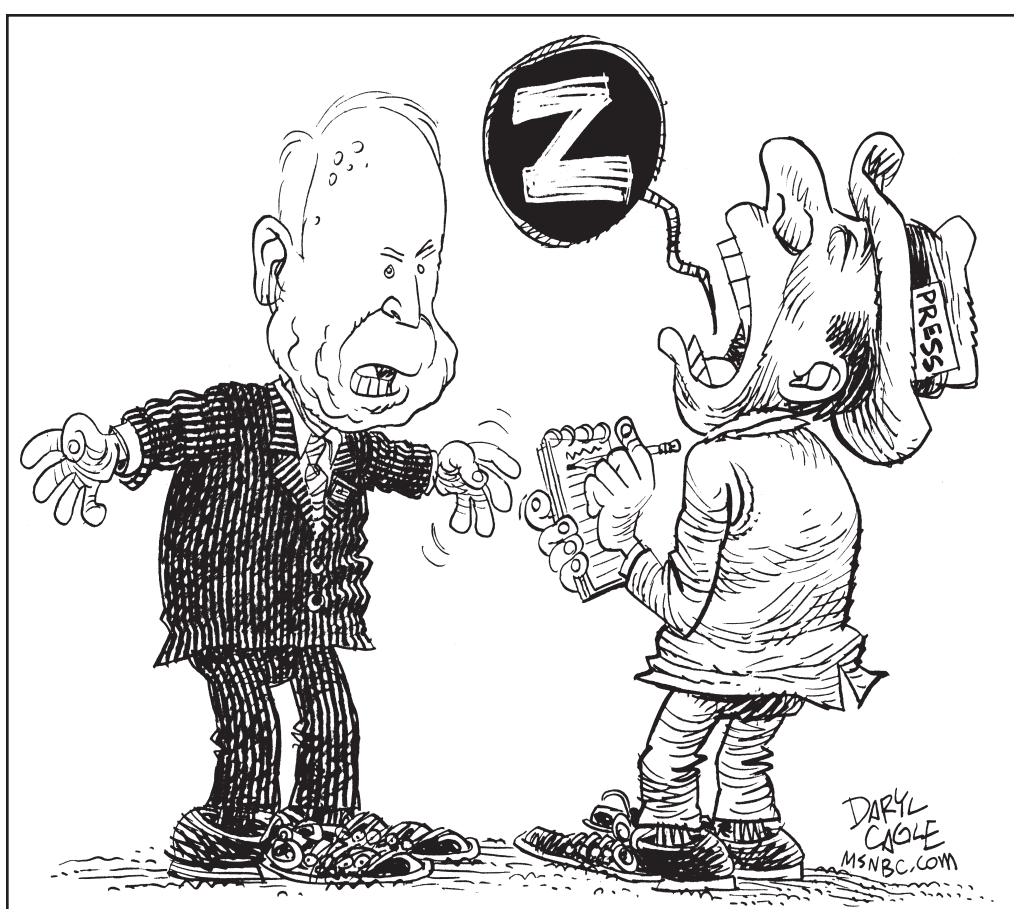
"To be sure. It ties into the presidential election, too. One candidate will raise taxes and one won't. Higher taxes will slow economic growth, which will hurt the profitability of businesses, which will limit their ability to pay you higher wages. Won't that make it even harder for you to keep up with rising costs?"

"You're saying we can vote our way out of our food and fuel woes?"

"Not entirely, but it's an important place to start. Ideas matter and we'd be wise to carefully examine the policies our politicians hope to impose on us."

"Will do, but I have to go. The wife rigged up the stationary bike to a power generator. It's my shift to pedal."

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