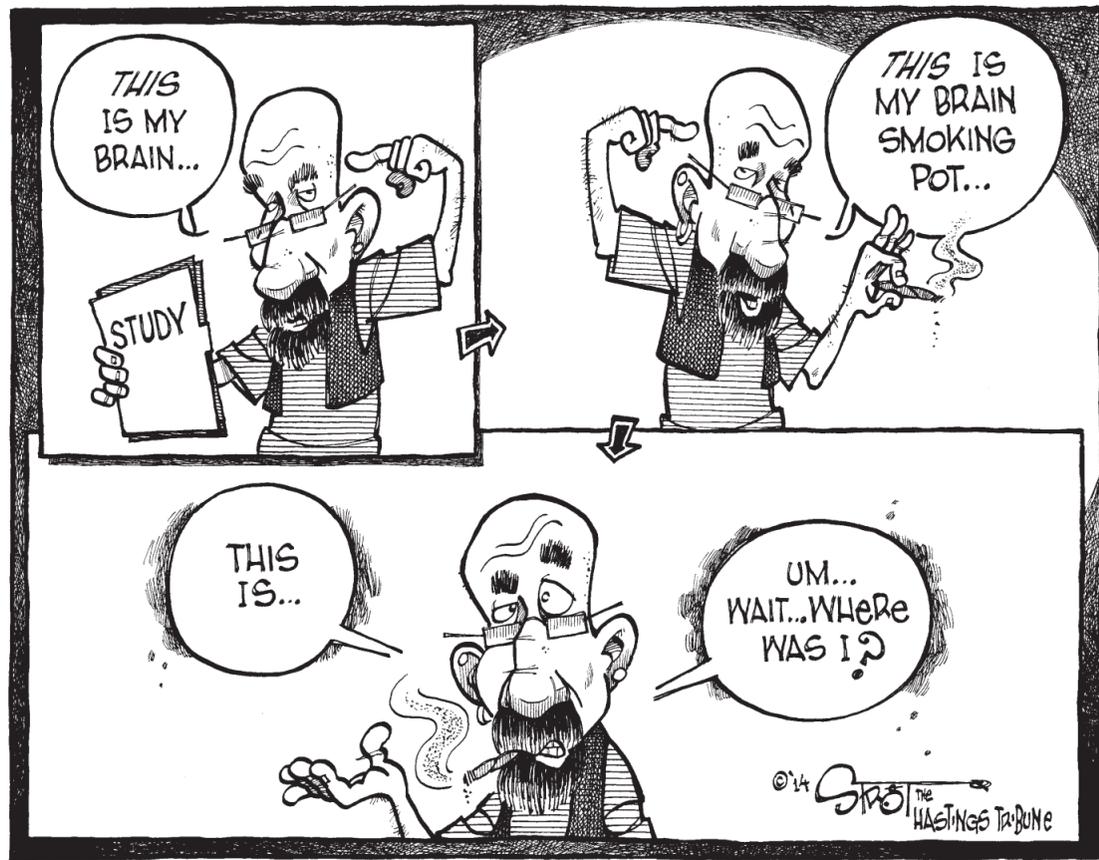


The ongoing debate over the Keystone pipeline

The administration has put off any decision on the embattled Keystone XL pipeline, which would deliver oil from Canada to the U.S. distribution system at Cushing, Okla., helping ease our imports of expensive, undependable Mideast crude. The project is beset by an odd combine of supposedly conservative Nebraska farmers and ranchers worried about the disruption of their land, and environmentalists, who never saw a barrel of oil they liked. These groups tend to talk out of both sides of their mouths. Environmentalists decry our huge imports of oil, but when offered an alternative, criticize production of any oil from the tar sands of the far north. Or anywhere else on this continent. Some, we're sure would be happy if we all went back to the horse and buggy. Like they were going to give up their iPads and lattes. Many ranchers became environmentalists when they heard the pipeline would cross their land. They say they fear an oil spill would compromise the groundwater under the Sand Hills of Nebraska they depend on for irrigation and domestic water. The safety record of existing pipelines doesn't phase them. Not in My Back Yard, they cry. But the Canadian oil will be sold somewhere, likely to foreign competitors rather than to the U.S., if we don't approve the pipeline. Or it will be shipped south in solid trainloads of oil, much more susceptible to spills and explosions than a pipeline.

Across the country, groups have tried to stop or slow other advances in domestic energy production, which together have eliminated the threat that we will run out of oil or gas any century soon. There are, to be sure, questions about new production methods, including water flooding and hydraulic fracturing, both of which are sometimes blamed for the increase in earthquakes in Oklahoma, Kansas and elsewhere in the "oil patch." It's hard to realize that a nation which once thought of itself as basically out of the game in oil and gas production now leads the world in energy reserves, or that cheap natural gas now competes with coal to produce our electricity — and makes far less carbon pollution to boot. But that's where we are today. You can argue about what's best in terms of global warming. We think the nation as a whole will continue to use less energy and release less carbon, where possible, but it seems unlikely that we will revert to the pre-industrial era any time soon. We will need energy to run our gizmos and light our houses, and it's far better to use what we can produce here than to import from unstable countries in this hemisphere or the other. It's a cowardly political move to delay approval of the pipeline until after the elections, but it will eventually be built because we need the Canadian oil, just as we need more domestic production. Meantime, it's politics as usual in Washington, where getting re-elected usually trumps everything else.

— Steve Haynes



What really counts when judging success

I don't know if it is true, but when we lived in Tuscaloosa, it was reported that University of Alabama's football coach (1987-89) Bill Curry said, "Someone who places his career in the hands (and feet) of a group of kids kicking around a piece of pigskin, has got to have something wrong with them." Questions have been circulated in recent years about evaluating teachers based on their students' performance. Let's face it, some years would be better than others. I guess one might compare it to evaluating a farmer based on crop yield which would be better some years than others too. For the football coach, if the team suffers considerable, or not so considerable losses, the coach is generally soon on a job search. However, the college coach has a say in who he recruits and who he chooses to have play. Not so with public school teachers. It is an open playing field. You get what comes through the door.

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



To say a child succeeds because of a teacher has an element of truth, but it certainly is not the entire picture. Some believe once a child is in school, others, not the parents, become the greater influence. Research indicates, however that if a parent provides a secure base for a child, he/she will continue to be influenced by their parents and will thrive and develop self-confidence. It takes a combined effort on the part of all those in a child's circle to help bring that child to a secure and successful adulthood. Some would like to see doctors sub-

ject to evaluation as well. But once again there are factors to be considered. It isn't like measuring the number of parts a machine spits out; or the stacks of wood in the lumber yard. One must consider the will of the patient, a patient's adherence to the doctor's orders; and the specific disease or condition which will be treated on an individual basis. For most careers, there are too many variables; for the farmer, the quality of seed, the moisture, number of cloudy days, etc. For a teacher, it is dependent on the child's home life, the health, ability and maturity of the child, and the family's respect for education. As Albert Einstein said, "Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted." mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

Greetings USD 211 Patrons,
An unsuccessful bond issue election was held in USD 211 on April 1. To help determine why it was unsuccessful and what improvements our District patrons will support a survey has been developed. Your help and opinions are being requested by completing this anonymous survey. It can be completed electronically by using the link found at usd211.org or DiscoverNorton.com. Paper copies of the survey are available at the USD 211 office at 105 E. Waverly, or can be requested by calling 877-3386. Completed surveys will be accepted through Friday, May 9.
Thank you for your help.

Greg Mann, Supt.
USD 211 Norton



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Chriss McDiffett 785-877-2216	Gary Lacy 785-877-2867	Jeff Urban 785-877-5535

Do we really want to know the answers?

A couple of weeks ago I admitted my ignorance as to what exactly the Big Bang Theory is. I wish to apologize to any science types out there whom I may have distressed. Part of the title of this phenomenon is "theory". Everyone (including myself) has a theory about one thing or another. Many theories are not provable. Conversely, some things are facts, even laws. It is a fact that driving a car when intoxicated is risky behavior. It is also against the law. Therefore, it is important everyone recognizes that particular fact and law, making society safer for all. In contrast, even if the Big Bang Theory has now been proven (in which case they should maybe change the name to the Big Bang Law); what difference does it make in our daily lives? A recent AP poll indicates only 21 or 22 percent of those polled are confident the Universe began with a Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago. One thing I am not confident about is the accuracy of our news reporting. I read two different stories about the AP poll; one story used 21 percent and one 22 percent! 27 percent believe the earth is 4.5 billion years old. These figures apparently stress out scientists. The poll asked a series of questions about "politically controversial scientific inquiries". Some of the other topics were: Does smoking cause cancer? Are childhood vaccines safe and ef-

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



fective? 82% are confident about the smoking/cancer link, 54% think childhood vaccines are safe. Personally I believe it is fairly important we realize both those things are true. I'm not sure either is politically controversial. Or that the Big Bang Theory or the age of the Earth is. There were questions about the overuse of antibiotics and greenhouse gases which are perhaps politically charged. 69% believe overusing antibiotics results in super bugs so it seems unlikely efforts to curtail their usage would be too "controversial". The greenhouse gas question was the only one in my estimation where there are political implications. Opinions are fairly even all along the spectrum. So passing laws has and will continue to spark much debate. The Big Bang Theory was the one that inspired the least confidence. But again what are the political issues? One of the articles concluded by saying researchers are "depressed and upset" by this poll.

Both made much of the fact that Christians are most likely to disbelieve the Big Bang Theory and the age of the Earth; as are Republicans. Christians disbelief is explained by their literal interpretation of the Bible. The Republicans? The implication is they are ignorant. As am I, it appears. I believe the earth is 4.5 million years old but I just do not understand how we can know as an absolute fact the Universe began as a result of a "Big Bang". I accept it is plausible. It is great there are scientists spending their lives proving it. Give them a NSF grant! I just hope they forgive me for barely giving it a thought. For finding the debate interesting but no practical applications for my life! It puts me in mind of the sign I once saw: "Obey Gravity! It's the Law!" We won't change how the Universe began with legislation. We won't end it by believing the wrong thing. Knowing might help in some way to predict how it will change. But do we really want to know? Sometimes I think we get more satisfaction from proving those who disagree with us wrong than we do from proving our own theories right. What silly people we are. Maybe I do believe in the Big Bang! There is precious little evidence the world was intelligently designed!

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Thumbs up to Whitney Brothers Construction and Gerald Speer for the fast clean up at 602 North Second. You did a great job and it needs to be recognized. Called in.

Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up: e-mail dpaxton@nwkansas.com or to write 215 S. Kansas Ave.

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