

WESTERN FRONT

Conservation effort

Maria Dreisziger's recent column rightly brings attention to conservation work along the Platte River of Nebraska, but for the wrong reasons. The collaborative effort among federal agencies, the states of Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska, water users and a number of nonprofit conservation groups, including The Nature Conservancy, represents one of the most innovative approaches to large-scale land and water conservation anywhere in the Great Plains. The guiding principle for the Platte River Recovery Program is that, when all the stakeholders along the river work together, our costs of recovering the Platte's endangered species will be much less and our effectiveness increased.

Over-appropriation of water for development and dam-controlled flows have reduced the braided channels and broad sandbars of the Platte into a series of narrow, vegetation-choked channels unsuitable for its native wildlife. Far from becoming the "desolate area" she suggests, the Platte River ecosystem is being restored to a more healthy state full of wildlife, including record numbers of migrating sandhill cranes and waterfowl, once lost species in Nebraska like the river otter and wildflower-rich prairies that mostly disappeared under the plow long ago. Endangered species like the least tern and piping plover - species that we thought only a few years ago would never be seen breeding again on the Platte's sandbars - have now returned.

The Nature Conservancy is proud to be one of the many partners in the recovery of the Platte River, lending our 30 years of experience working along the river and in its communities. Beyond owning and managing a number of natural preserves, our primary role is as an adviser to the Platte Recovery Program, not as a recipient of its funding. Indeed, less than 5 percent of our annual budget comes from federal grants with the large majority of our support stemming from the generosity of Nebraskans.

We see this as an unprecedented opportunity to secure the future of this amazing natural area for the benefit of its wildlife and its people. But don't take my word for it - come visit the Platte in central Nebraska and see its abundant wildlife and natural beauty for yourself. To get the facts about the recovery program, visit www.platteriverprogram.org.

MACE A. HACK, Ph.D. Omaha, Neb.

No good for lake

I'm writing about the July 21 article in the Great Bend Tribune ("City gets great report from state agency"). I too would like to congratulate the city. But there is much more we can do before we have a big party.

First, I'd like to talk about the dog park that some people want to put in Veterans Park. Myself, I think it's a good deal, but not at that location. As you know, as well as the people who visit the lake, the last couple of years the lake has had some big fish kills from runoff from construction and fertilization. That has caused toxic algae blooms. I

have taken pictures on the northwest corner in the rain, and in the place where the park will be located, water will run into the lake. Yes, you can pick up dog poop, but who does? And what about urine?

I'm not here to bash dog owners. I just have a passion for fishing and clean water and clean lakes. I go fishing at Vet's Lake a lot. When the fish don't bite, I walk around the lake and pick up trash. I do see a lot of people come to the lake and let their dogs out of their cars to do their "job" and drive off. May 14, in public forum, John Mitchell, director of environment for KDHE, did a fine article about algae blooms. I quote the last paragraph. "The KDHE is continually trying to implement best management practice to reduce nutrient inputs into our state waters. Our goal is to improve water quality conditions in our state that will also reduce algal bloom events. All Kansans, working together, can improve the water quality in our state."

Second, go to www.greatbendks.net and click the link "Doing Business." Go to the "Stormwater Program" and read the Pet Waste Tips Brochure. It says our most cherished resource is water; they got that right. City code 6.08.190 states that the animal owner is responsible for removal of animal excrement on public or private property not owned by the animal owner. You can be subject to a fine. When I was growing up they called them sand pits, but whatever it's called we have to take care of it. Let's pass in on to the next generation as clean and clear! And if there is another toxic algae bloom, I hope the city warns the people and puts up signs that warn people with the health risks associated with it.

Come on, Great Bend; taking the volleyball nets down isn't a health advisory. And for the people who are handicapped and want to use the handicapped dock, I'd contact American Disability Act or Terry Hoff at the city office. And for the people who fish there and don't catch fish, please take your trash with you.

GARY DUNHAM Great Bend

We must resist

Not only are the citizens of Arizona being invaded from Mexico, it would seem the invasion also includes mercenaries bused in from neighboring states.

Evidently Arizona citizens aren't capable of handling their problems without help from George Soros of the Open Society Institute and his crowd of thugs.

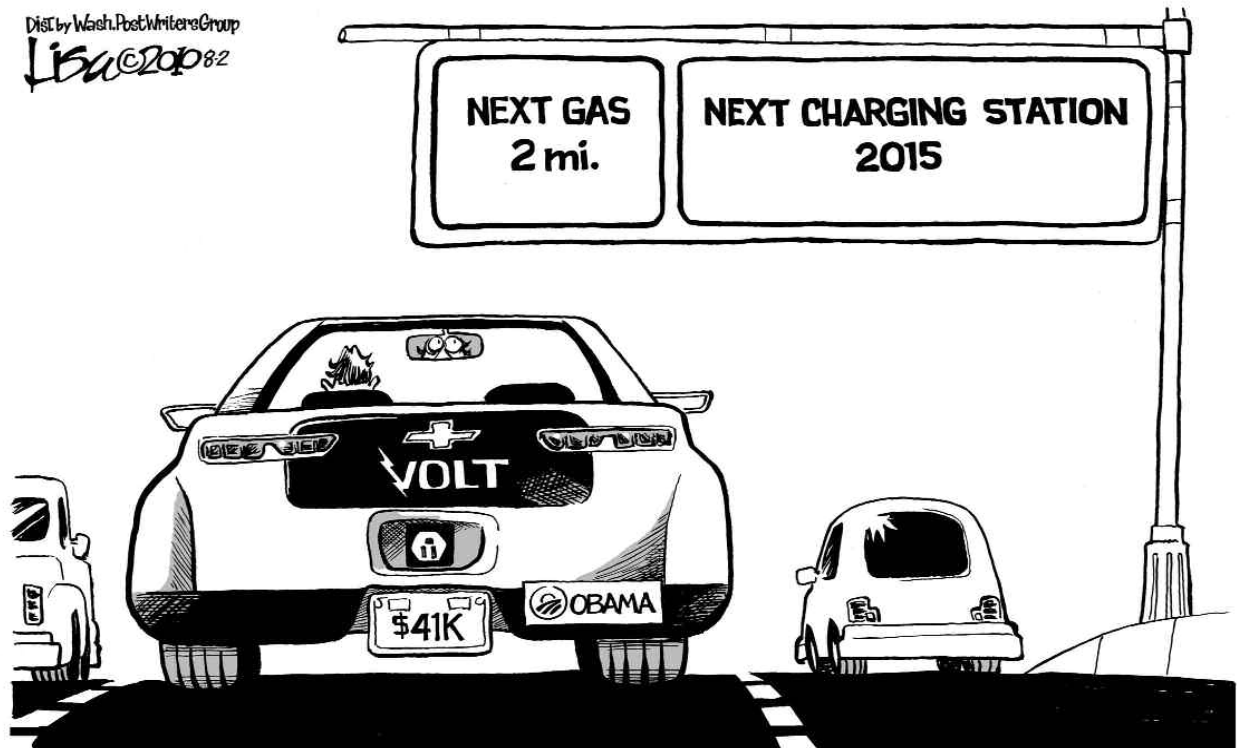
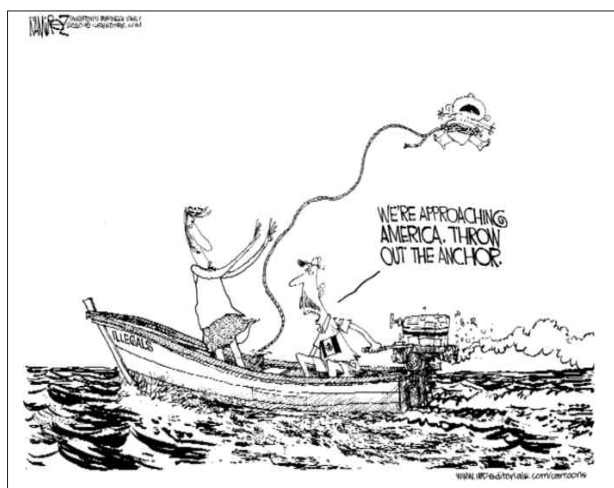
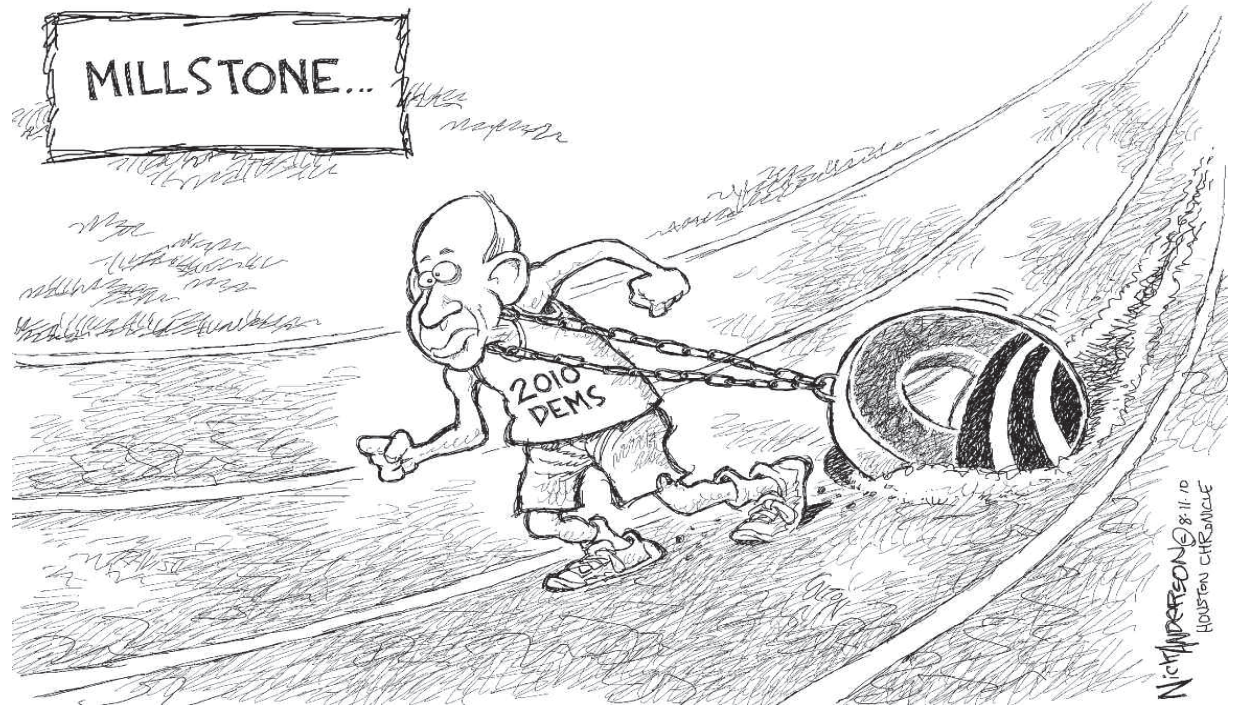
As left-wing fascism strikes at the heart of our nation, heroes like Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Ariz., stand firm in the face of provocation by radical left-wing organizations like the Service Employees International Union.

These barbarians are no longer at the gate. They have metastasized into the body politic of our sleeping nation. With insidious deliberation, we are being devoured from within by forces alien to our Constitution who are replacing our beliefs with their distorted progressive dogma.

We must be aware, we must resist, or we will lose all that we value.

GREGORY H. BONTRAGER Hutchinson

ON THE RIGHT

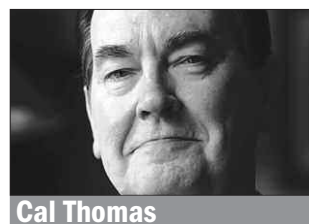


Cutting defense could be bipartisan objective

As Republicans take their case to the voters in November about the Obama administration's massive overspending and record debt, they should seriously consider what could be a rare bipartisan objective: cutting defense spending.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates - a George W. Bush appointee and an Obama holdover - has announced plans to reduce what he calls the "cumbersome" American military hierarchy. Gates also wants to cut spending by more than one-quarter on support contractors and close the Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Va., which, according to the Washington Post, "employs about 2,800 military and civilian personnel as well as 3,300 contractors, most of them in southeastern Virginia." Gates' proposal got the attention of Sen. James Webb, Virginia Democrat, and Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, a Republican. Closing a national security facility would cost jobs and Virginia, which recently announced a budget surplus and houses the Pentagon and other military venues, doesn't want to regress.

It is one of Washington's major embarrassments that no matter which party controls Congress, members use defense spending to create jobs and do



Cal Thomas

favors for political contributors in their states and districts. But like the bipartisan Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, which operated through Republican and Democratic administrations and resulted in the closing of 350 outdated military bases, a similar approach to cutting unnecessary defense spending might also produce benefits to taxpayers.

The problem has been that the Left too often wants to cut defense for its own anti-war and political agenda and the Right thinks all defense spending is good and to cut it is unpatriotic. So how about starting with the most outrageous and unnecessary spending, which should make harder cuts a little easier?

Citizens Against Government Waste (www.cagw.org) offers some useful places to begin. In the 2010 defense budget, "\$3,385,000,000 was added anonymously for four projects. Ac-

ording to the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, signed into law on Sept. 14, 2007 by President George W. Bush, members of Congress are required to add their name to each earmark. However, they continue to violate this law by adding anonymous earmarks to fund projects - often big-ticket items - at the expense of taxpayers." Why can't Congress live under laws it passes to regulate itself?

Another anonymous earmark for \$250,000,000 was added, "For advance procurement of components for the two DDG-51 destroyers planned in fiscal year 2011. According to a Sept. 29, 2009 Associated Press article, the DDG-51 destroyer is "to be built in Pascagoula, Miss., home to Republican Sen. Thad Cochran," Ranking Member on the Appropriations Committee. "Sens. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), John Kerry (D-Mass.), (former senator) Paul Kirk (D-Mass.) and Rep. Travis Childers (D-Miss.) added \$8,100,000 for a hybrid drive system for the DDG-51 destroyer."

Spending may be Washington's last bipartisan activity.

Again anonymously, \$2,500,000,000 was earmarked for "10 additional C-17 aircraft. In a floor statement posted on his website, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) voiced his opposition to the C-17 funding: 'What we would do in this bill is effectively fund the purchase of new aircraft that we neither need nor can afford with critical sustainment money. That would have a significant impact on our ability to provide the day-to-day operational funding that our servicemen and women and their families deserve.'"

It will take more than spending reductions to make the Pentagon - and the American economy - healthy again. Ultimately, the political leadership must develop a policy about the proper role of the United States in the world and what weapons are necessary to fight modern wars against terrorists.

President Obama has said (and so have his predecessors) that he doesn't like the pork in defense bills, but he has to sign what Congress sends him. The least he could do is to shame those members who won't attach their names to spending measures, or who support spending for weapons the Pentagon neither wants, nor needs.

Wasting money on the Department of Defense may strengthen the political careers of politicians, but it weakens our defenses.

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Secretary of Defense Robert Gates speaks at the Pentagon Monday, Aug. 9, 2010, in Washington. Gates said that tough economic times require that he shutter a major command that employs some 5,000 people in Norfolk, Va., and begin to eliminate other jobs throughout the military.

Manuel Balce Ceneta The Associated Press

Columnist David Brooks is on vacation.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

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