

EDITORIAL CARTOON PAT BAGLEY, SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



OTHER CAMPUSES STAFF EDITORIAL, THE DAILY IOWAN (UNIVERSITY OF IOWA)

Gas too expensive? Slow down

It is time to consider all possible strategies that could ease the burden on American drivers, not to mention slow the amount of pollution our vehicles belch out every day now that oil prices have soared to a staggering \$145 per barrel, and the national average is hovering above \$4 per gallon.

Congress is sure to debate the expansion of domestic drilling for some time, but even if ill-advised expansion of drilling goes through, short-term strategies need to be in the works.

One such idea is developing on the floors of Congress. John Warner, the influential senator from Virginia, has asked his colleagues to reconsider imposing a national speed limit of 55 or 60 miles per hour. At lower speeds, the Energy Department expects cars to operate at optimum efficiency.

As a result, drivers could expect to see fuel levels upheld and prices at the pump reduced. This proposal is the first nationwide strategy on oil conservation to emerge, and its figures are convincing. If Americans hope to avoid an even greater fuel crisis, this strategy should be adopted.

In 1974, in response to an oil shortage caused by the Arab oil embargo, Congress set the national speed limit at 55 mph. It was not repealed until 1995. In that time, significant strides were made in terms of fuel preservation and lower pricing. Warner has cited studies showing that the national speed limit saved 167,000 barrels of oil a day.

In a letter to Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, Warner writes, "Given the sig-

nificant increase in the number of vehicles on America's highway system from 1974 to 2008, one could assume that the amount of fuel that could be conserved today is far greater."

However, oil and money were not the only things saved. Warner also provided statistics that showed while fuel consumption was lowered, lives were saved. An effect of the slower, safer speeds was an average decrease of 4,000 traffic-related deaths per year. Even after the oil crisis of the mid-1970s was abated, the 55 mph speed limit was retained because of its safety aspect.

Those drivers who claim to be incapable of driving at slower speeds should be advised of some alarming figures.

Fuel efficiency decreases rapidly at rates higher than 60 mph. Every additional 5 mph above 60 is estimated to cost motorists essentially another 30 cents per gallon.

Hybrid vehicles that average around 38 miles per gallon can reach 50 mpg when traveling at 55 mph.

If that speed jumps to 65, the efficiency in terms of mpg drops dramatically to the low 30s. Driving slower is something we all can do. It is an imperative step to take and one of which everyone is capable.

Yet setting a national speed limit is really only the first step. As we all do our small part to battle the fuel crisis, Congress is then allotted more time to consider long-term strategies.

This is an opportunity for Americans to save gas, save money, and save lives. Never mind that Sammy Hagar couldn't "drive 55(!)" in his 1985 hit single. We can, and we must.

Hey, Fox News Channel! Come on, do your worst

There's a code of ethics in the news media which, as far as I can tell, serves no practical purpose. You'd sell a lot more papers if you could make up headlines like "McCain grows to colossal size; uses laser-vision to slash budget." That's why working at Fox News is such a plum job – they don't worry about things like "journalistic ethics."

Here's what Fox did last week. After New York Times media reporter Jacques Steinberg wrote accurately about "ominous" ratings trends for Fox News, which is losing ground to CNN and MSNBC, anchors on the "Fox & Friends" morning show called Steinberg's work a "hit piece." They also referred to Steinberg and his editor, Steven Reddcliffe, as "attack dogs." So far, the network was still within the bounds of standard journalistic practices – you see this stuff all the time from respected media, like NPR's recent report, "Peggy Noonan: Stupid Tramp Or What?"

But Fox News went beyond its trademark name-calling when it aired doctored images of Steinberg and Reddcliffe, passing them off as real. Reddcliffe's face was narrowed, his teeth yellowed, his eyes darkened, and his brow enlarged to the point you could project movies onto it. Steinberg got a giant chin, giant ears, a giant nose, beady eyes, and a penis growing out of his forehead.

Okay, there was no penis on Jacques Steinberg. (Not in the photo, I mean.) But his Photoshopped face was added to a photo of a poodle, with Reddcliffe's fake mug pasted on the head of guy holding the leash. The whole thing was a pretty underhanded move, even for Fox News (motto: "Bare and Phallused").

At least I thought it was out of the norm, until I read Times columnist David Carr's piece on Monday. Carr wrote about Fox's reputation for dragging journalists who report negative things about it through the mud. Fox employees do this both in their programs and through a network of conservative internet outlets, making it a lot like the Salem Witch Trials, but with fewer silly hats and more blogging.

Well, that sort of publicity sounds pretty good to me. I'm a columnist at a college newspaper, for crying out loud. I need to get my name out there! So in the hopes of national exposure, I thought about going after Fox



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News with some childish name-calling.

But unlike the most watched news channel in the world, I'm too mature for that. Instead I'll share a true story that gets at the root of the Fox News problem, before it grows into a tree of spin so large it blocks out the sunlight of truth from the flowers of hope in the forest of cable news near the Geraldo Rivera of pretension, or whatever. Metaphors aren't really my thing.

In 2004, University of Illinois alumnus and then-President of MSNBC Rick Kaplan spoke to one of my journalism classes. He told us about his relationship with Roger Ailes, the former media consultant for Presidents Nixon, Reagan and Bush the elder, who has run Fox News since its inception. Ailes has also eaten babies for sport. No, he hasn't. But he did win awards for journalistic integrity, including a couple of Pulitzers. No, he hasn't.

As best as I remember, Kaplan told us Ailes would say mean things about Kaplan publicly, things that even bothered Kaplan's mother. This wasn't a big deal, Kaplan explained, because he and Ailes were buddies and Ailes didn't actually mean anything by it – he was just building hype. In other words, the president and ideological center of Fox News was willing to lie and berate a friend for a little attention.

So maybe Steinberg and Reddcliffe shouldn't worry too much. Maybe Fox News is just following Ailes's example. Maybe the network is trying to make friends.

But it's more likely they're just a bunch of doodie-heads.

Okay, maybe a little name-calling.

Scott is a third-year law student. He would like any doctored photos to play down his receding hairline.

Readers' opinions

The Daily Illini reserves the right to edit or reject any contributions. Summer letters must be limited to 200 words. Contributions must be typed and include the author's name, address and phone number.

University students must include their year in school and college.

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