

From the *desk* of the *Editor*

Transmission project needs transparency

Following the community forum earlier this week, the Mark Twain Transmission Project once again has become a hot-button topic of conversation in Kirksville and the surrounding area. This 100-mile proposed electrical transmission line would link Palmyra, Missouri, with a new substation just outside Kirksville, and then continue north to the Iowa border.

The path of the project site would cut across rural Missouri, including land that houses private farms and homes. Since Ameren revealed the initial plans and began working with the community during 2014, the project proposal has met stiff opposition from landowners in the proposed path of the project. The chief voice of opposition is Neighbors United, a grassroots organization committed to stopping the project from proceeding as planned in northeastern Missouri. Ameren has responded by organizing forums for public discussion about the project.

Based on the literature available from Ameren and Neighbors United, we, the Editorial Board, find the project details leave us with more questions than answers. Consequently, we ask that Ameren be more open about exactly what it wants to accomplish, and how the end goal of reduced transmission congestion would justify using eminent domain to seize rural Missouri land.

The bottom line is Ameren needs to be more upfront about why this project is taking place. At least on Ameren's website, it is unclear why the project is necessary or whether it is fulfilling an expressed need other than to meet government regulation standards such as the Renewable Energy Standard and the Missouri Renewable Energy Standard. We do not think those standards are bad or unimportant, but sometimes overregulation can harm more than it helps. Interestingly enough, Ameren just submitted an application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the Missouri Public Service Commission.

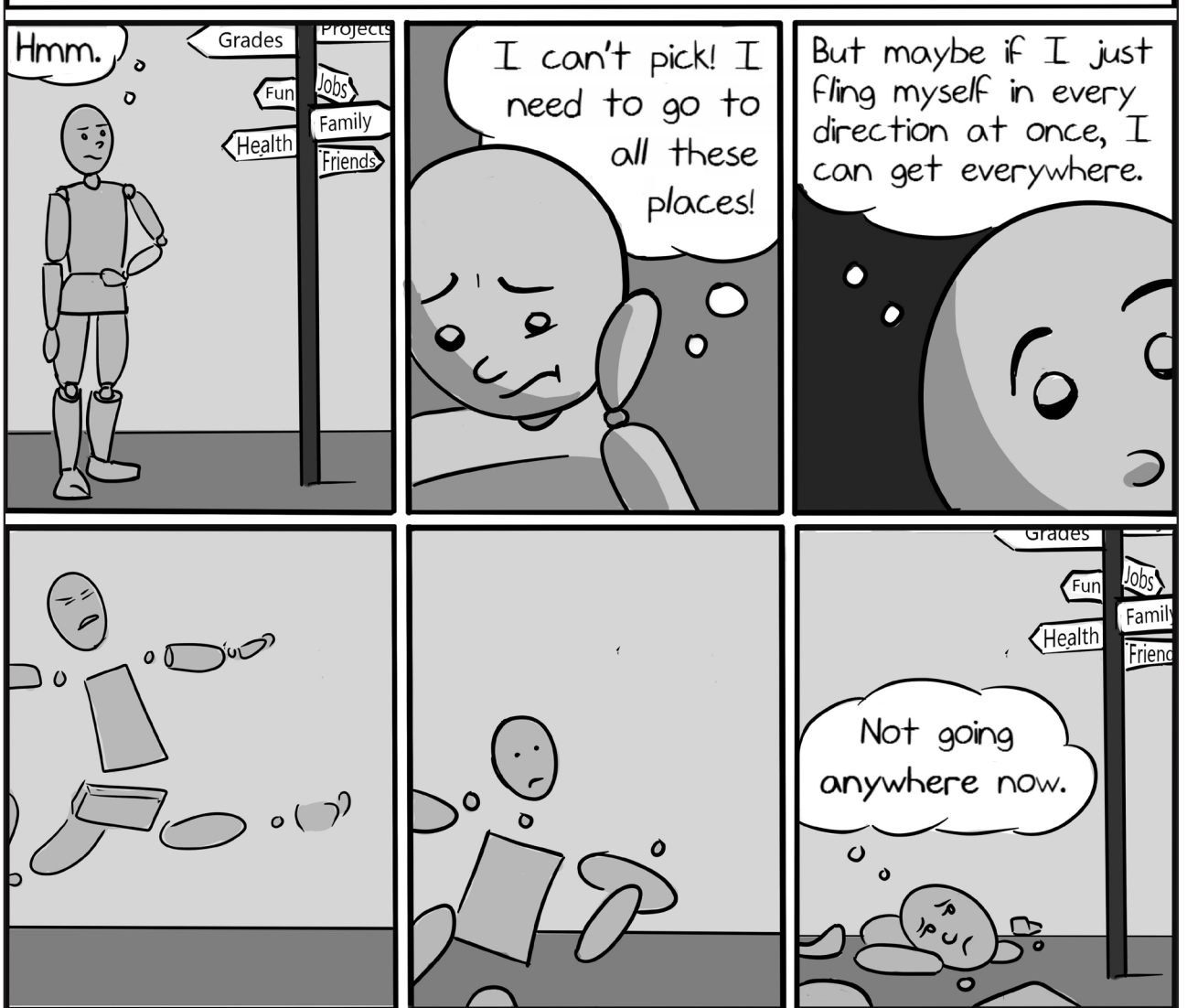
The Ameren website lists several benefits of the new line, including reliability of electrical service, access to low-cost energy and access to renewable energy. The first question we must pose is whether unreliable service is a current factor. Nowhere on Ameren's websites or in its reports is it mentioned consumers have complained about unreliable service. If that is the case, it would make sense to undertake a project to improve a service consumers pay for. However, if complaints or a lack thereof do not seem to indicate the need for a large-scale overhaul of the transmission system, it begs the question — why is this happening?

Second, the Ameren website lists "improved access to low-cost energy" as one of the benefits of undertaking the project. However, the same website says the project is being undertaken by Ameren Transmission Company of Illinois, an Ameren transmission subsidiary that does not necessarily deal directly with energy consumers. We question what constitutes low-cost energy and — practically speaking — how the project will accomplish what Ameren has said it will. For example, will the Mark Twain Transmission Project actually increase the areas which can receive coverage? Are there currently places in Missouri with limited access to electricity that would then have the ability to be better connected to the grid? Or is it a matter of the quantity, that the available transmission means in affected areas demands a load pushing the capacity? Or even a third option, dare we say it — will this project lower energy costs for the affected areas?

Looking at the stark opposition online, at the open public forums and throughout the Kirksville community alone, Ameren needs to realize it will take more than a few talking points and peace talks to silence or satisfy the people whose homes and communities would be affected by this project. In this case, does the end justify the means? Neighbors United is making it very clear that its members don't think it does. We encourage community members to continue to ask questions and Ameren representatives to continue answering them. We, the Editorial Board, commit to joining the discussion with questions of our own during the coming weeks, in the hope that together we can work toward a consensus for what will be best for our community.

Typical Truman Choices

Megan Archer



Letter to the Editor

I, and Truman State University faculty members I have communicated with are pleased with the announcement covered on page one of the October 8 Index that Governor Jay Nixon will ask the legislature to increase state funding for higher education by 6 percent over that allocated in the last fiscal year. We also are hopeful that President Troy Paino, as indicated in that article, intends to use much of that funding to address the salary inequities Truman's faculty have lived with since before the turn of the century.

Truman's faculty, unfortunately, have heard all too many times that equitable salaries for instructors are a priority; however, since at least 2000 we have seen our salaries slip well below that of faculty at our COPLAC peers. As the editorial in the same issue indicates, even our Missouri colleagues at every other state institution of higher learning except Lincoln, an open enrollment school, receive considerably more money for their work. Indeed, full professors at Truman earn a paltry 74.3 percent of what full professors earn at other Missouri state universities, or an average of \$72,072 per year compared to \$96,975.

The Index editorial notes that "nothing [in the budget process] is ever guaranteed." Truman State University Faculty understand this all too well. In the 1990s, after the name change from Northeast Missouri State University to Truman State University, President Russell Warren singled out praise for the faculty as the single most important reason that Truman had become the leading public liberal arts and science institution in Missouri. Shortly thereafter President Warren announced that the faculty would not receive a salary increase. One reason for this is that the legislature, though heaping praise on Truman State University, abandoned its tacit commitment to fund the liberal arts and science mission. Worse still, the legislature has made the decision to defund all Missouri institutions of higher learning.

This history makes the Index point ominous—why should the students and faculty expect their legislators to change their budgeting priorities and fund Nixon's proposed budget?

Possibly more alarming is that the administration and board have not done much to rectify the salary disparity facing Truman's professors although on many occasions President Paino and his predecessors have made comments strikingly similar to Warren's. In 2000 the Faculty Senate's Faculty Compensation Ad Hoc Committee reported that Truman's faculty were well behind compensation for both COPLAC sister schools and other Missouri universities. Nothing was done by the administration then or since to close the salary gap, and the faculty opted not to press for better pay.

Six years ago then Vice President Paino acknowledged what he considered inadequate compensation paid to the faculty. Then he told a

leadership forum that the budget was very tight and that this limited what he could do to improve salaries. Moreover, he declared he would have to raise salaries of incoming hires in order to attract new faculty. I, and others in attendance, pointed out the obvious inequity and danger to morale from not increasing the compensation for existing faculty. Yet, as president, he, and the board, have pursued a compression policy whereby new faculty receive, in some cases, almost the same salary as associate professors who have been at Truman for seven or more years. There are full professors at Truman who receive less than \$8,000 more than new faculty in the same department with the same professional obligations.

So where does that leave the faculty at Truman State University? Let me take a lesson from Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in April 1963 to illustrate a point. King was in prison for challenging segregation in that city. During his incarceration by the white power structure, local ministers criticized him for demanding an immediate end to discrimination based on race. His response was to ask how much longer should African Americans have to wait before white supremacists stopped undermining rights guaranteed to all Americans by the Constitution.

I do not suggest in any way that faculty salaries at Truman State University rise to the gravity or scope of King's point about civil rights inequities. My purpose is to raise the question: in the face of near total inaction by the administration and board to even begin to raise salaries at Truman so that the gap at least begins to rise above the 74.3 percent of what we get compared to faculty at other schools, how much longer are we to wait for action?

I suggest that time has run out. What do I mean by that? Throughout history employees have had little recourse but job actions in the face of pay inequities. I propose that Truman State University professors consider what to do to make the administration understand that action must come now, not later, even if that means reallocating monies from the General Fund to do what other campus administrations have done, that is, increase the funding of their faculty as a matter of policy.

Editor's Note: Submitted by history professor Thomas Zoumaras

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the academic year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor-in-chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the editor-in-chief, managing editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor-in-chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

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