

## Congressmen support open records

The Sunshine movement is gathering steam, in Congress and at home.

Rep. Jerry Moran announced Monday that he had signed on as the first House co-sponsor for the Open Government Act, a bill to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act.

And while, as editors, we usually confine ourselves to comments on this page, once a year, we go to Washington to lobby for the National Newspaper Association and the Kansas Press Association.

There, we got an update on Sunshine Week and the Government in Sunshine Initiative, a coalition of press and civic groups backing the Open Government Act. Supporters were passing out orange "Govern in Sunshine" bracelets, and we picked up a few bags.

This is one of those issues where editors come out from behind our desks. One of our first stops on Capitol Hill was the Rayburn Building office of Rep. Moran. We gave him a bracelet, which he quickly put on.

At our next stop, Rep. Dennis Moore of Olathe donned a bracelet. When you can get a conservative western Kansas Republican and a

liberal eastern Kansas Democrat to agree that quickly, it says something about the issue.

In fact, the Open Government Act has been endorsed by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, and the American Civil Liberties Union, which many feel is about as liberal as you can get.

But it's the people's right to know if an issue that cuts across the usual party and ideological lines. Its Senate sponsors are John Cornyn, a conservative Texas Republican, and Pat Lehey, a liberal Vermont Democrat.

It's an issue that attracts good guys, and Reps. Moran and Moore fall into that category.

By the time we got to the Senate side, we found Pat Roberts wearing an arm band. He grinned when we asked him where he got it.

"As chairman of the Intelligence Committee," he said, deadpan, "I can't tell you my source."

As long as he supports the bill, we probably won't dig too much.

This really is an issue we can all agree on: The right of taxpayers, citizens and voters to know what their government is doing.

Sure, there are exceptions. They are, for the most part,

reasonable.

But the bottom line is, taxpayers are the stockholders, the owners of our democratic government. The government shouldn't have many secrets from them.

And while the press often is seen as the main backer of open government, this is not a reporters' and editors' right. The press knows the rules and knows how to get government information. Ordinary citizens often are the ones shut out by secrecy.

When the average person goes to a government agency and asks for information, they're often met with lack of cooperation, refusal, hostility or questions about "why" they want the documents.

Sometimes it's ignorance of the law on the part of a poorly trained clerk. Sometimes, the government has something to hide.

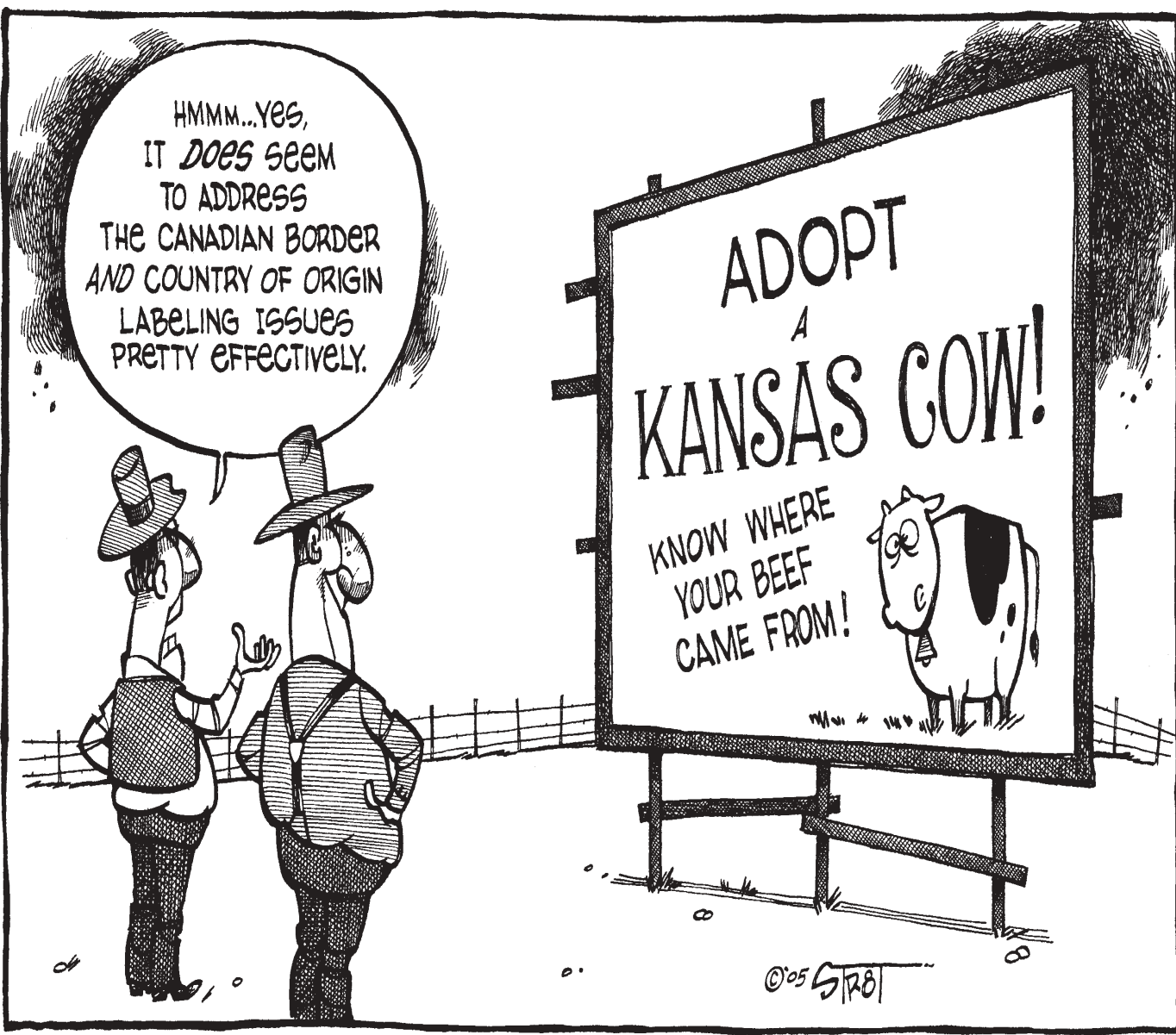
But it just shouldn't happen. That's what Sunshine Week and the Open Government Act are all about. That's why we had no reservations about going to Washington, or to the meetings here, and boosting open government.

This is a basic right in a democracy, something we should all believe in.

— Steve Haynes



Congressman Jerry Moran got his orange bracelet in the House reception room, and later signed on to co-sponsor the Open Government Act.  
— Telegram photo by Cynthia Haynes



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Man disagrees with editorial content

To the Editor:

In regard to your write up (Immigrants want a better life) in the March 4 issue of *The Norton Telegram*, I think you might get a better handle on this if you knew a few facts.

Over 3 million illegal immigrant crossed our southern borders last year. Of these, 45,000 to 48,000 were not identified as Mexican. In these last few years, it's estimated that over 20 million illegals are in our United States.

I have no argument with the legal immigrants.

You say our economy is so good that we can't find workers at home. This is a crock, as all the big businesses know that the immigrants will work for less. This brings down the labor costs for the companies that hire them.

Why don't we just send all of our businesses to China and India? This way we don't worry about our huge trade deficits, as they will have it all.

All of you good Republicans are attempting to throw up huge smoke screens so as to cover up the huge blunders of our politicians. As long as we have lobbyists in Washington, we are going to have corrupt politicians.

It is time to take action, or in a few years we won't be called the United States of America.

I will be watching carefully to see if you have enough sand in your craw to print this.

Jack Roberts  
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## Community blood drive does well

To the Editor:

It is clear our community cares about others. I was so glad to see 146 people come in to donate blood at the American Red Cross Blood Drive on March 17. We can feel proud we did our part as a community to ensure lifesaving blood is available. Thank you to everyone who made an impact on others through their contributions.

In addition to the citizens who gener-

ously came in to give blood, there were 25 people who worked to make the blood drive a success. I am proud of a community to so unselfishly give of themselves. Our next drive will be on Sept. 14. Volunteers are always needed. If you would like more information on being a volunteer, please call me at 877-3665.

Laura N. Gilhousen  
Norton Blood Drive chairperson

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## Anyone is capable of being a hero

Heroes and saints have a lot in common. One is that what makes them a hero or a saint is an isolated event, not a lifetime of good works, which makes all of us a candidate for either honor.

My grandmother used to say even in the worst of men is a glimmer of goodness.

When a young lady in Georgia last week was able to convince an accused rapist to not kill any one else, a hero was born.

We are bombarded nightly with the weaknesses and sadnesses of humanity and in her, an everyday person, a strength was revealed and a power discovered. The beauty of this story is she admits her weaknesses, identifies her strength from a higher power and acknowledges her ordinariness.

Everyday there are heroic acts and

Phase II

Mary Kay Woodyard



saintly encounters, but mankind seems to revel in the negative aspects of a situation.

Just look at television ratings to discover what draws people.

Is it jealousy or cynicism? I don't really think it is either, but rather a belief in our own unworthiness. I was deeply saddened to hear remarks by people claiming "something wasn't right" in the young woman's account or "there's more to this story" rather than rejoicing in a "good" end to tragic happening.

It doesn't really matter if there is more to the story.

The bottom line is he didn't kill any more people. And somehow I like to believe this young woman was pivotal. In this hunted man was that "glimmer of goodness" and she was able to preach to it. She paved the way for the police to enter and arrest him.

We are not all placed in positions to help capture a killer, but we all, each day, are confronted with situations that require us to make saintly comments and act heroic.

Much of this comes when we see the good no matter how bad and focus our attentions on that "glimmer".

As the childhood hymn claims, "You can meet them on trains, on boats or at tea — they are all saints of God, just like you and me."