

Good news for rural America

Good news for rural America is a new U.S. Department of Agriculture program to help states lease land and improve habitat for public access.

Called the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, the effort is authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill.

It offers states and tribal governments up to \$50 million in grants through 2012 to expand or create public access programs.

"We believe that encouraging outdoor recreation activities in rural communities represents a real opportunity," said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack.

The number of hunters and fishermen has been declining for years as America becomes more urban and less rural. Once, hunters could knock on the door and expect to be welcomed by a farm owner.

Today, with many farmers living in town or miles from their fields, it's increasingly difficult to get permission to hunt or fish. Private leases take more land out of the pool.

But \$50 million isn't much money in this day and age, so why is this important?

First, with much land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program, farmers maybe can use the money. The federal money might preserve some habitat that might otherwise be lost to the plow.

Second, rural America needs all the friends it can get. Face it: there aren't many of us compared to our brethren in the city. We don't vote in numbers anymore. So anything we get from Washington will be the result of partnerships with city folk.

We need them on our side.

We need them to understand our positions, our needs. We need them to care. And hunters who visit the farm and get to know farmers are just the type of supporters we need.

What we loosely call the Farm Bill today really is a welfare bill. Most of the money goes to urban programs. We've seen what happens when city-bred environmental interests get their hands on this money: Conservation Reserve cut, ethanol programs under attack, cheap food always in the forefront.

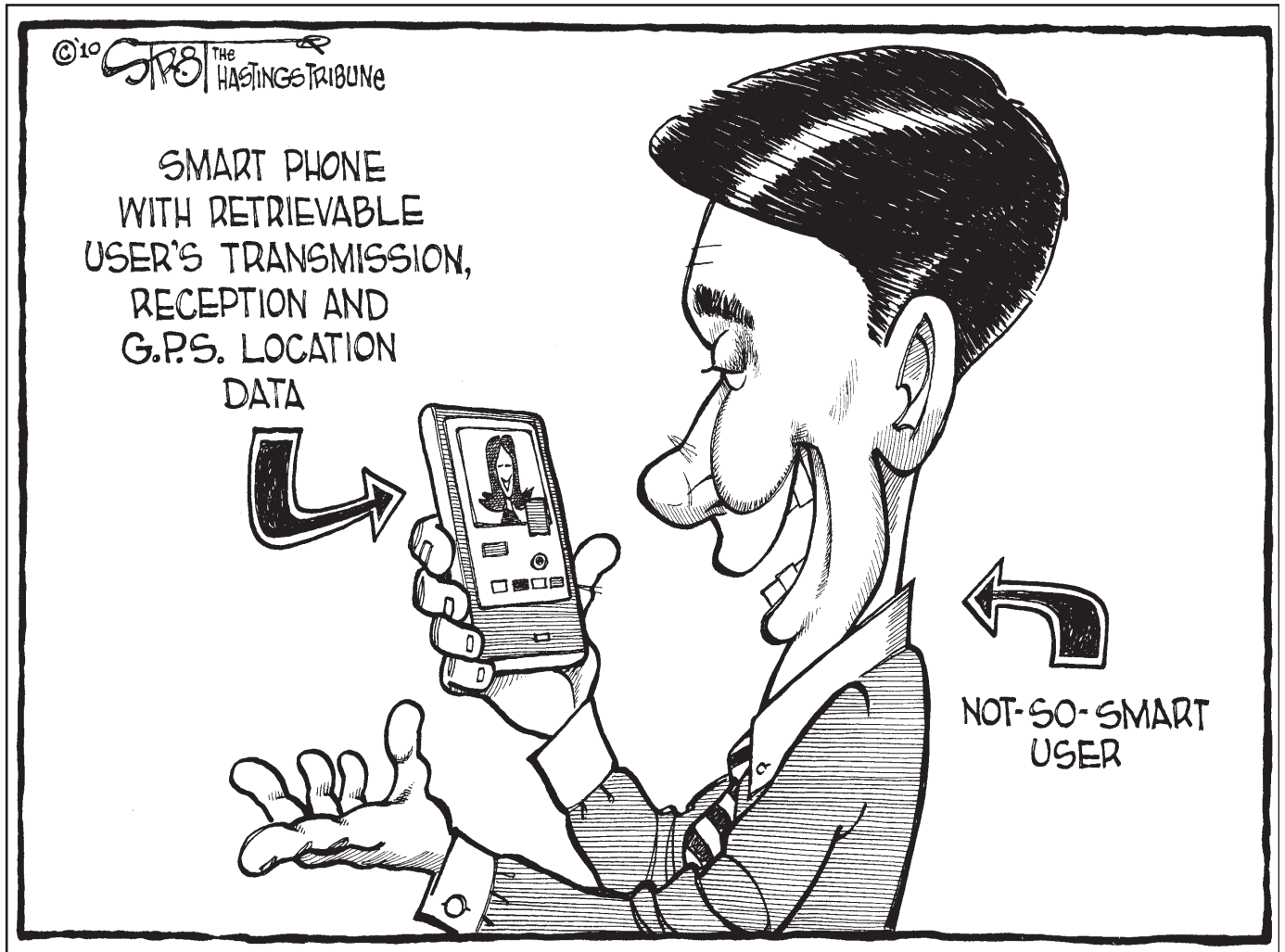
Rural Americans, as few as we are, cannot go to Washington and force anyone to do anything. Not enough of us. Farmers are fewer still. So we need all the friends we can find.

Third, hunting, fishing and recreation are big business. Secretary Vilsack estimates that and people using public lands under his department spend \$12 billion a year in nearby towns, creating a quarter-million jobs. The department sees a chance to spread that around, and those of us surrounded by private land could use some of that business.

Kansas officials, knowing how little public land we have in this state, welcomed the new program. Kansas already has 1 million acres under lease and might be able to do more with some federal money.

We wouldn't say \$1 million per state was enough to change the world, but it's a start. To really help us, this program needs to grow and expand. But anything Washington does to help us is welcome.

- Steve Haynes



Voter fraud, illegal aliens major issues

Dear Editor: Voter fraud and illegal aliens have become major issues nationwide. Fortunately, Kansas Secretary of State candidate Kris Kobach does more than talk about these concerns. Kris, a law professor, assisted Arizona



in constructing a new law which is likely to survive a constitutional challenge and protect all Americans.

Richard J. Peckham
Chairman, Kansas Judicial Review
Andover, Kan.

Enduring the ultimate test

Our marriage endured the ultimate litmus test and survived: we worked together all last week and are still speaking.

Jim got a job replacing the front of an office building and needed a "ground man." Since I'm mostly unemployed, except for the occasional feature article or two, it seemed logical for me to be his sidekick for the job. Now, I've never shied away from hard work but, Jim has this ridiculous idea that we need to be on the work-site before 7:30. That's a.m. Do you know how early I have to get up in order to be ready "to roll" (his words, not mine) by that time? I don't care if I am just "schlepping" hammers and nails. I still have to do my hair and powder my nose.

Jim's been very patient with me. Intellectually, I know that being married to a carpenter no more makes ME a carpenter than standing in a garage makes me a mechanic. However, I have learned a few things over the years by watching him work. One is "measure twice - cut once."

Perhaps I didn't learn it too well. That's

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



why after I cut the wrong end off a piece of wood - twice - he came close to losing it. But, when I reminded him that "you get what you pay for" he backed off. I may not be good help but, I am cheap.

-ob-

Good news from Texas. Our granddaughter, Taylor, arrived home safe and sound from her two weeks in Canada. Her mother said she had tried to deny that she was tired after her flight. But, with only a little encouragement, Taylor took a four-hour nap.

After she's had some time to rest and catch up with her friends I'll grill her about her trip.

-ob-

It's becoming obvious my list of

friends has shrunk. You know, the whole Friendship Bread Starter thingie. I still have one bag of starter left from this last batch and I'm desperately looking for a home for it. Seems like I'm not the first person to be sucked in the "chain letter" of starters.

I managed to coerce a friend who wanted one bag to take two. She has three daughters who bake. Surely, they can keep it going for years.

When I asked one friend if she wanted a bag of starter, she didn't even wait for me to finish the question.

"No, no, no," was her immediate reply. Adding, "I don't want to be tied to any schedule like that."

-ob-

I was alerted to the impending surgery of one of my high school classmates. That led me to call other classmates to let them know.

Each one added a piece of information about the failing health of other classmates until I surmised that we are falling apart. As my friend, John, put it, "Growing old isn't for sissies."

Future full of challenges

Dear editor: The recent state budget year ended on June 30. Organizations such as DSNWK, which serves some of our most vulnerable citizens, shouldered much of the budget cuts that hit our state, totaling more than \$1 billion dollars.

Our organization alone was cut \$1,400,000.

In just the past three years, we have had to lay off 70 staff and eliminate vital services.

Meanwhile many people who still need services languish on long waiting lists (totaling more than 4,000 across the state, 147 in Northwest Kansas alone).

We worked very hard during that time to inform our neighbors in the region about the damage to services to persons with disabilities, which nearly everyone agrees is a necessary and vital service in Kansas.

Some legislators worked hard in this past session to propose more cuts: to schools, to disability services, to public safety and other programs which strengthen our communities.

Thankfully, most legislators cast their votes to protect persons served by DSNWK from further harm.

These votes took courage and leadership, and were votes to do the right



thing.

Thanks are owed to Governor Parkinson; Senators Lee and Ostmeyer and, Representatives Johnson, Hineman and Phelps.

Their efforts helped restore previously eliminated resources and will help allow services to continue for our neighbors with disabilities.

Their efforts this session helped avert disaster for our communities, for which we are grateful.

The future also looks full of challenges for our state, and we pray that our public servants in Topeka show this same kind of leadership for our future.

A grateful community partner and advocate,

Jerry Michaud,
President - DSNWK

Office hours:

8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.

Phone: (785) 877-3361

Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail:

nortontelegram@nwkansas.com

STAFF

Dana Paxton.....general manager
advertising director/
email: dpaxton@nwkansas.com

Dick Boyd.....Blue Jays sports
Erica Bradley.....managing editor
Harriett Gill.....society editor
Sherry Hickman.....bookkeeping/circulation
Vicki Henderson.....computer production

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002

