

Making job creation an attractive proposition

By: Congressman Tim Huelskamp

When the latest jobs report was issued the first week of July showing 8.2 percent unemployment, it was not a shock. While we may not be in a formal economic recession, the recovery we so desperately need has yet to appear.

While the unemployment rate seems to be leveling around 8 percent - still too high - the rate is staying where it is because so many people have left the workforce. Since 2009, the labor force participation rate has declined steadily to its lowest level in a generation - and about one-in-three able-bodied, non-elderly adults are not working. Among those who are part of the workforce calculation, but still looking for a job, they can expect to spend 40 weeks, on average, finding one. In January 2009, it took half as much time.

In Washington, there is a stark contrast between the solutions to get America moving again. On the one hand, politicians could spend more borrowed money on repeating failed initiatives like the stimulus or more welfare programs. Or, we could simply improve conditions that affect job creation in the United States.

First, the Bush-Obama tax cuts are set to expire at the end of the year. Businesses of all sizes will be affected when suddenly investors have less to invest and consumers have less to spend. I believe all of the Bush-Obama tax cuts should be extended now and fundamental tax reform passed early next year - including reduced rates for businesses and individuals, broadening the base by repealing hundreds of billions in tax subsidies, and enacting other significant reforms.

Second, the House has voted to repeal the President's health care law, and we will continue to work toward another solution that is affordable and provides the access Americans need. Nearly three-in-four small businesses surveyed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce say that law will negatively impact their abilities to hire. Such a statistic is not surprising; after all, the President's health care law will drive up the costs of offering health insurance and discourage employers from hiring additional workers. Under the law, a business will be required to offer health insurance if it has more than 50 employees; why hire the 51st?

Ultimately, we need to move away from the system that associates an individual's health insurance to his or her employment. Such a system may have worked 70 years ago when a worker may have stayed with the same business for his entire career, but not for the self-employed, the retired or unemployed, or a modern economy where Americans change jobs often. Rather than an employer-based or bureaucrat-centric (as ObamaCare is) system, we need a patient-centered alternative that allows individuals to make their own health decisions.

Third, we need an economic climate that favors investment and job creation here in America. Excessive government deficits and debt as well as regulation make America an unappealing place to do business.

Unless and until we fix the tax code, implement health care reform that encourages competition and lowers costs, scale back overregulation, and put an end to out-of-control government spending, we can expect more bad news on jobs. Out-of-work Americans can wait no longer for Congress and the President to make job creation an attractive proposition again.



Travel brings appreciation and family

In the last two weeks I've logged more miles than an over-the-road trucker. I've been from Steamboat Springs, Colo., to Dallas, Texas and back again.

All this travel made me consider how far we've come since pioneer days. A distance that would have taken weeks to cover can now be accomplished in hours. The only plus to covered wagon travel is that they got to really see the countryside instead of it rushing by at 70 miles per hour.

My thoughts in Colorado were that the countryside would have been beautiful if it weren't for all the people. I could only imagine what a pristine Colorado mountain meadow would have looked like before it was subdivided and developed.

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The trip to Texas produced a granddaughter (Taylor) who will get to stay with us two or three weeks. She will get in at least one county

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



fair, perhaps two. It all depends on whether her Aunt Halley can come get her or if I will have to meet her mother half way to return her. We're just playing it by ear.

Taylor and I, both, have been so tired since our return that we've scarcely done anything but sleep. My kitchen is still a wreck from having left Jim alone for four days, but quite frankly, I don't care. Except we are running out of clean silverware.

Jim may not be much of a housekeeper, but he did do something that earned him more Brownie points with me. He started construction on our library shelves. I was pleasantly surprised

when I walked in the front door Thursday night to find the framework for cabinetry and shelving started. It's one of the last major projects to tackle on the inside. And I couldn't be happier. Finally, we'll be able to put all of our reference books in one room and not have them stored in boxes in the basement. I'm hoping there will even be room for some knick-knacks. I love my little chach-kiis, but have never had enough display space for everything.

My friend who occasionally helps me clean may not be too excited about having more dust collectors setting about. If we're garage saling together or at an auction she will say, "Carolyn, put it down; you don't need that."

I know I don't need most of the things I have. And it's a fine line between need and want. I can usually rationalize myself out of buying something. But every now and then I just have to step over that line.

Mother Nature brings on the dry blistering heat

"You just can't drink enough water," Steve Tuttle said draining a tall cup of cold water he poured out of a 1-gallon cooler tucked in the back of his farm truck.

Like so many other farmer/stockmen across much of this country, the Wyandotte/Leavenworth County producer battles the continuing lack of moisture and 100 degree days that are scorching the land where he grows crops and forage for his momma cow herd.

This spring was the warmest on record for many areas in Kansas. As of July 15, this summer ranks fifth with the most 100-degree days - 14. In 1980 there were 22 days of 100 degree weather by this date.

Blistering heat and lack of rainfall have devastated this year's corn, milo and soybean crops in Kansas. Ranchers are also facing severe hardship due to a lack of available feed caused by the drought. Nearly every county has been affected by these severe conditions.

Tuttle says much of the dry-land corn in his region is burnt up. Pasture conditions are in dire condition.

"The brome and mixed grasses we grow - timothy and some fescue - are yielding about half of what we usually bale," Tuttle says. "During a normal year our hay fields produce approximately 6,500 pounds per acre. This year we're averaging about 3,700 pounds."

Demand for hay is tremendous because of the drought. Tuttle receives calls all day long and late into the night from people hoping to buy food for their livestock. The northeastern Kansas producer has stored plenty of hay for his own 80-head cow herd. He is selling the rest.

Insight

John Schlageck



"We have a niche market for what we call 'pleasure horses' in the Kansas City area," Tuttle says. "We sell a lot of small square bales to these local customers."

While he's trying to accommodate these long time buyers, Tuttle only has so much hay. And with the price nearly doubled from last year, he could sell his hay crop for more money.

Large round bales sold for \$40-50 last year and small square bales brought \$4-5. This year the large bales are bringing \$80 and up to \$100. Small square bales are selling for \$8 or more.

"We'd like to help them out, but we've got to make sure our own cattle have enough forage for the rest of the summer, fall and winter," he says. "There just doesn't appear to be any relief in sight."

On this day of July 18, the temperature topped out at 106 degrees with 25 mile-per-hour winds out of the south. Tuttle began hauling water to one pasture of cattle approximately a month ago because the pond dried up. He's also feeding the cows in another pasture where there's no grass left. This all takes more time, manpower and cost, not to mention the toll on his herd.

While Tuttle believes he'll have enough hay for later, his biggest concern is the health of his herd. He knows the dry heat impacts conception rate. He also knows his next calf crop

will be smaller.

"We're weaning the calves off the momma cows early to help reduce stress," Tuttle says. "We need some rain soon and we need temperatures to drop below the century mark."

Some of his corn in the Kansas River bottom is already cooked. The veteran farmer of 35 years tries to remain optimistic and hopes some of his crop will make 50 bushels per acre. He says yields are dropping every day on land that has the potential to make 200 bushel.

His soybean crop is also in danger of crop failure. Tuttle says that without rain his beans could hang on for another 10 days to two weeks. The soybeans are loaded with blooms but they fall apart like burnt paper when picked from the plant.

With a little help from Mother Nature, soybeans in this region of Kansas have the potential to yield 60 bushels per acre.

"If we harvest 30 bushels per acre, we'll be jumping up and down," Tuttle says. In his heart he knows the yield will probably be closer to 15 bushels per acre and some fields may not be harvested.

All across Kansas farmers and stockmen tell similar stories. Some include accounts of range fires with the tinderbox dry conditions. Dry clouds full of thunder and lightning and no rain can start such fires.

These are indeed trouble times. Still, crop and livestock producers have experienced them before.

"We're hoping and praying for better times," Tuttle says. "You just take each day as it comes and do what you've got to do."

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