

No proposals for reform

On the Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



Our valiant secretary of state makes all kinds of excuses, but the fact remains, 838 Kansans were turned away at the polls last election simply because they did not have a current photo ID – or forgot to bring it.

Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who invented the “need” for voters to have identification by creating the fiction of possible voter fraud, sighs and points out that is something like .07 of 1 percent of the total vote.

So, it’s no big deal, right?

Unless you are one of the 838 people, whom we guess are mostly citizens who forgot their wallet or purse. No one has any evidence of anything else.

No one is claiming these were illegal aliens or other unqualified voters. The number represents far too small a percentage to indicate any kind of problem with fraud or improper voting.

That threat is something Mr. Kobach, who apparently has no conscience, invented so he would be elected. It was practically his entire platform. Yet, neither the secretary nor anyone else has any proof that any problem exists.

Kobach is a prime example of what’s wrong with the Republican party today. His entire existence is founded on fear of illegal immigration, an issue that’s all but in the past. Pity the state if the Legislature ever gives him police powers.

And while it’s true that our country’s immigration system still needs to be fixed, Mr. Kobach has no proposals for reform. He’s still fighting the problems of the last decade.

But the Republican party cannot move forward with a base grounded in fear, catering only to a small and ever-shrinking xenophobic minority.

21st century America is different. The Republicans will have to face facts and apply their principles to all Americans if the party is to survive.

Kris Kobach, whom we’re sure believes he is doing the right thing, is not the guy to lead us into this new century. He’s about 100 years out of date.

Republican principles – smaller government, less spending, more freedom – mean as much as they always have. The party needs to reject those, like Mr. Kobach, who want more, and more intrusive, government, no matter their cause.

Fear and uncertainty do not make a platform. Principles and answers to real needs do. Republican principles appeal to all groups.

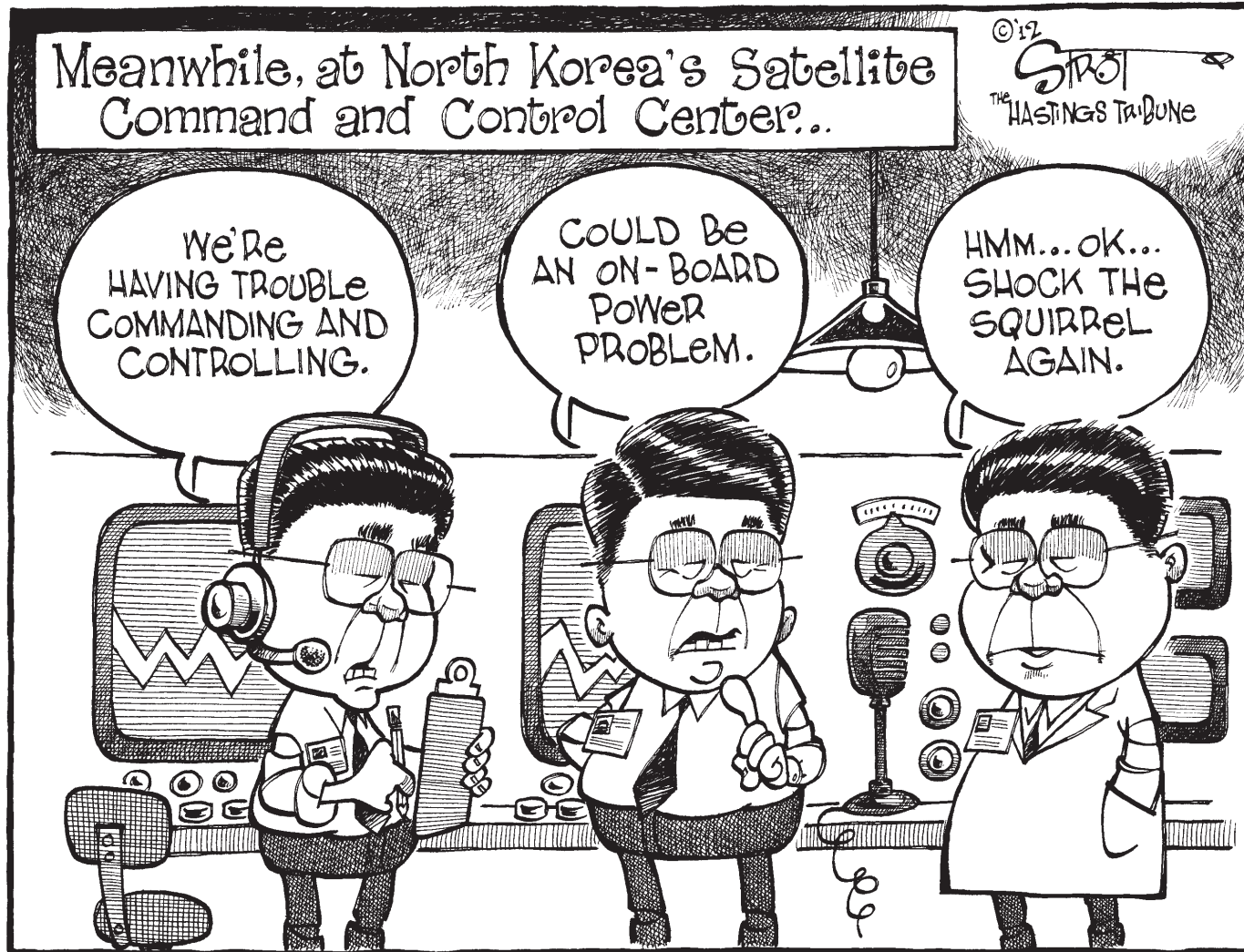
And those 838 Kansans who were refused their right to vote for no good or sufficient cause, other than not having a big-government-issued ID card on their person?

Who will stand up for them – both the 306 who later showed up at the courthouse with their ID, and the 532 who didn’t bother? What about their right to vote?

We are headed fast to a Kobach-induced police state where people can be stopped on Kansas roads for no reason and subject to search, even arrest, because they have no “papers,” just like in the communist societies of the last century.

That is not America, and that is not freedom. Wake up, Kansas, before it’s too late.

– Steve Haynes



Best laid plans for the holidays

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



Have you seen that commercial where two women friends reassure each other they have plenty of time to do their Christmas shopping. One says to the other, “We’ll start right after Halloween.” A Halloween scene flashes by. They calmly say, “Right after Thanksgiving. A glimpse of Thanksgiving is seen. Still calm. Then they see a Christmas tree on top of a neighbor’s car pull into the driveway. They look at each other and begin to scream in panic.

That’s the stage I’m in right now. I’ve always been a procrastinator, but this year, I’ve taken it to a new level. No shopping is done (except for Jim’s overalls, so don’t tell him); not all the candies are done; and as for the house being ready – forget about it.

I’m actually in a worse mess than usual. I don’t know why I thought two weeks before Christmas would be a good time to rearrange my kitchen drawers. Several drawers in my kitchen don’t contain one whit of items used

in the kitchen. They morphed into junk drawers. Granted, everyone needs one junk drawer in the kitchen, but you don’t need four. When Jim completed the library shelves and drawers, that was the plan. Transfer the contents of the kitchen drawers to the library drawers.

Of course, I also thought I would finish the project the day I started it. But you know how the “best laid plans go.” Consequently, on my counter top, I now have kitchen drawer “stuff” mixed in with regular kitchen “stuff”.

The problem is, I know what’s going to happen. Instead of the well-planned, methodical sorting of aforementioned “stuff”, and its reassignment to the new

drawers, I’m going to panic because company is coming. In desperation I’ll end up dumping everything into a box and taking it to the basement.

Which, actually, may not be such a bad idea. It’s not “stuff” I need, anyway, and then I’ll have two sets of empty drawers.

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This last week before Christmas, let’s try to slow it down, take a deep breath and remember why we do all this. Spend time with your family. If family isn’t close, spend time with someone else who is alone. Leave your waitress an extra-generous tip; visit someone in the hospital; take a cup of hot chocolate to the trash men as they go by; pay for the meal of the car behind you at the drive-up window; write a nice note to your mailman. There are lots of ways we can “gift” without having to buy a thing.

So, from Jim and I to all of you, have a merry Christmas and remember: Jesus is the reason for the season.

All we want for Christmas is a farm bill

Insight
John Schlageck



Though critical to farmers, ranchers and consumers, the farm bill has not been at the top of the list of issues on Capitol Hill. Instead, lawmakers are debating how to avoid what’s known as the fiscal cliff. In case you haven’t heard, this fiscal cliff is a series of tax increases and spending cuts set to take effect Jan. 1.

Many farmers are hoping lawmakers will see passage of a five-year farm bill with its \$20 billion-plus in savings as one way to keep from going over the economic precipice.

In any case, agriculture will be looking at a one-year extension of the farm bill, according to Mary Kay Thatcher, American Farm Bureau Federation senior director of Congressional Relations.

“We have 38 programs in the 2008 farm bill that expired in October,” Thatcher says. “There is no funding and no plan for continuation at this stage.”

And while disaster assistance for livestock producers may be one of the biggest concerns for Kansas producers, every one of these 38 programs have proponents clamoring to make sure their interests will be in the extension, or next farm bill.

The other key issue yet to be resolved is how to pay for it. Livestock disaster assistance alone is estimated to cost between \$600 and \$700 million.

That money doesn’t fall out of the sky.

Where do we find it?

Do we take it from direct payments, the conservation reserve program, food stamps, nutrition – where does it come from?

In spite of the dwindling funds available for agriculture, Thatcher believes Congress is well aware of the crisis impacting livestock producers. She is hopeful this will translate into some form of livestock disaster assistance.

And while most people in farm country are betting there will be a one-year extension of the farm bill, hammering out the details may be even more difficult because of the polarized Congress. An example of this is the struggle on how much to cut from the food stamp program.

Participation in the food stamp program has increased nearly 70 percent since 2008. Republicans would like to cut this program by nearly \$16 billion while the Democrats don’t want to cut a nickel from the \$770 billion.

Only one in three children pays for his/her school lunch, Thatcher says. And only one in 16 pays for his/her school breakfast.

Now that direct payments have been cut dramatically during the last couple years, crop insurance is the next farm program to be targeted.

“Crop insurance already has a big bull’s eye on it,” Thatcher notes. “It’s the same idea behind why people rob banks. It’s where the money is – it’s easy picking.”

Farmers must continue to voice their opinions to members of Congress about the importance of crop insurance. Thatcher says the number of producers who contacted their congressional delegation on farming issues dropped off during the past summer. She says this is a trend that must be reversed.

“While your Kansas congressional delegation is well aware of the stakes involved in the next farm bill, your own neighbors, friends and those people in your urban and suburban areas are not up to speed,” Thatcher says. “Take time to tell them what’s happening in agriculture.”

Some of these Kansans could be the guy who sits behind you in the pew at church. They may be from rural America but that doesn’t mean they understand 78 percent of the farm bill goes toward nutritional programs.

“We’ve got to start (telling our story) somewhere,” Thatcher says. “Five years ago, less than one half of farmers or ranchers knew that less than 1 percent of the HSUS money goes to animal shelters.”

Others believe if some farmers are doing well, all farmers are prosperous, Thatcher continues. That’s not necessarily the case.

Kansans all know livestock producers are paying dearly for the feed for their stock. The drought has caused ponds to dry up and pastures haven’t provided adequate grass for three years in some regions of the state.

There’s a story to tell about agriculture and no one tells it better than engaged, knowledgeable farmers and ranchers, Thatcher says. Today, everyone must step up and speak out.

Dear Editor,
In Mary Kay Woodyard’s editorial, Our Christian Beliefs, Tradition or Factual, Mary Kay says that “(Christianity) doesn’t have to center on Christ’s death, but rather on his example of how we live our lives.” While the second part of the statement is valid, Christians should look to Christ for their life example – the first part of the statement, Christianity “doesn’t have to center on Christ’s death” couldn’t be further from the truth. Without the life, death and resurrection of Christ, Christianity is nothing more than a moral code; a moral code that is impossible to uphold. It is only through the death and resurrection of Christ that we receive unconditional grace and as a result eternal life. Christianity is the only religion that offers the free gift of eternal life. All other religions are works based where one must earn the approval of whatever god is worshipped.
Without the death and resurrection of Christ, we are left only with a man who claimed to be the only way to heaven (John 14:6). If He was not the only way and He said he was, then He is a liar and not a good man at all. If He really thought He was the only way to heaven and in fact He is not, then He was a delusional person and not someone we should hold up as an example. If He claimed to be the only way to heaven and He in fact is, then He is Lord. He is a Lord who died and who was resurrected. That makes His death very much the center of Christianity.
I appreciate that everyone has a journey, but Christianity is more that just the trip. It is very much about the destination and who is footing the bill.
Taking the Cross out of Christianity is like taking the Christ out of Christian.
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