

## Immigrant reform helps Kansas farmers

### Insight

John Schlageck



The immigration debate has begun in Washington, D.C., and not a moment too soon. It is past time our failed immigration and guest-worker program was fixed.

Too often, "immigration" is used as a bad word. The truth of the matter is, a reliable guest-worker program makes sense for Kansas farmers and ranchers, our communities and our food system.

Farmers and ranchers face a shortage of workers who are willing and able to work on farms and in fields. Most U.S. residents don't find these jobs attractive; yet for many prospective workers from other countries, these jobs present real economic opportunities.

Immigration is directly responsible for about eight percent of the Kansas economy. Every job held by an immigrant, on average, equates to nearly one additional job created in the state. Furthermore, Kansans should not fear losing work to immigrants. If every unemployed non-immigrant in our state were to be immediately employed, there would still be roughly 50,000 jobs available.

This state has a long history of utilizing workers from other countries, even other states. Folks from Missouri and Arkansas have helped harvest Kansas wheat since before World War II. A handful of Aussies from "Down Under" have also been known to show up as harvest help.

Workers from Mexico showed up in southwestern Kansas in the '50s to help with the fledgling irrigation crops. Shortly after, they became heavily involved in the feedlot and packing industries in this region of our state.

This same minority came to northwestern Kansas where I grew up at the start of the '60s. In Sherman and Sheridan counties they hoed weeds in the sugar beet fields.

Today, some workers from South Africa are working the fields of northwestern Kansas and plenty of people from south of the border still provide a needed labor force for the Sunflower State.

It's past time for this country to figure out a workable immigration policy. One that will benefit our country and those willing to come to these United States and provide valuable labor.

The U.S. Senate is now debating an immigration bill that deals responsibly with our existing workforce, gives farmers and ranchers access to a usable, legal, stable supply of workers and addresses border security and employer enforcement.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office recently released a report stating the Senate's immigration bill could save our nation up to \$197 billion during the next 10 years and an additional \$700 billion in the decade to follow. The report also said the legislation would increase real U.S. gross domestic product by 3.3 percent through 2023 due to the influx of new workers.

If Congress can't fix our broken immigration system, we'll be forced to import more food and agricultural products from foreign countries. More U.S. and Kansas farmers and ranchers will go out of business, crippling the rural communities that are the backbone of our nation.

As we struggle to pull ourselves out of the Great Recession, can we Americans afford to ignore the economic and social benefits that will come with immigration reform?

Immigration reform is right for the economy, for the business community, and for immigrants who follow us in their hopes for a better life.



## Amazing, what makes headlines

Sometimes when I hit a blank for a column, I go to the newspaper and Internet headlines to scan what is raising people's ire on that particular day. Such was the case on Wednesday and I seriously hope some of it surfaced just because it was a slow news day. I would hate to think readers see some of this as serious, valid news. Much of what I found seemed to center around people getting upset over things, trivial things. Many, although irritating, do not warrant coverage in any news outlet or any intervention by the legal system.

For instance, there was the father who took his young son to a primarily adult bar and grill for Father's Day. He had called first, asked permission, and they agreed. When his check arrived, there it was right after the BBQ Sauce and the plate of chicken, 1 F\*\*\* needy children. I understand he was hurt and irritated, but I have been in restaurants with that kid and I feel for the waitress.

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



An inside joke gone awry? Sure, but not life threatening.

Then there was the school suspension of a 14 year old eighth grader for wearing a NRA t-shirt to school. It was probably in poor taste and bordered on "in your face," but to charge him and have him face a possibility of a year of jail time? That seems a bit excessive. Should he be sent home to change his shirt and he and his parents attend a How to Dress for School Seminar? Absolutely, and if it was in direct conflict with the school dress code setting up community service would be a good start. There is a big difference

between wearing his shirt and carrying a gun. The solution could quite likely cause a greater problem than the issue itself.

I felt badly for the young girl at the Wendy's drive-thru. A customer, standing at the window, not sure what happened to his car, was swearing at her because he didn't get what he ordered. My advice would be cook at home. I know it is irritating to order your meal, sit down to eat and WHAM, it is all wrong. That is infuriating, but, in the course of world events, is it really worth losing it and pushing your blood pressure to its upper limits?

Of course, with some of this you have to wonder about the people who post these things on Facebook, or whip out their phone cameras to record this moment of history. Maybe they have too much time on their hands, or they see this as their one claim to fame. Either way a sorry state of affairs. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

## Proud to be a Wildcat because we are everywhere

My Alma Mater has a very nice Alumni magazine: "The K-Stater", published quarterly. I look forward to it and read it cover to cover.

Part of the appeal is it is a slick magazine with no advertising (except the requisite booster stuff).

I heard "People" magazine stories are to take no longer than 90 seconds to read. Supposedly that is the average time a person spends on the toilet, thus all the longer a writer can expect a captive audience! Obviously they timed women! The average man could read "War and Peace"!

"The K-Stater" is sort of like "People". The stories are short. Makes one wonder where they intend it be read!

Each issue has a section of "Class Quotes". Readers answer a question posed in the previous issue. The first two responses in the Summer 2013 issue were from people we know.

Question: What was the best piece of advice you received at K-State?

Answer: "Best advice came in classes in both journalism and then the Institute of Citizenship. It was 'Question Authority!'----and I deeply hope it's still being taught." Ann Thackrey Berry '51, Raleigh NC

Answer: "Going to school is the easiest thing you will ever do." Greg Mann '75, Norton, Kan

COOL!  
Someone once asked me to name a famous K-State alum. I replied, Richard

### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



Myers. At the time he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. My answer was not the one they were looking for. No one had a clue what a Joint Chiefs of Staff was or what their chairman might do. Even I could not explain it. So much for trying to be intelligent in a "People" world!

So right now, I suppose, that would be Eric Stonestreet! I don't watch Modern Family but he is a very funny guy plus a huge supporter of KSU and Kansas in general. He was in 4-H, how awesome is that!!!!

Another place I oft see someone I know is the photo section where people pose in front of landmarks, or on vacations, or at weddings, forming the letters KSU. Just like Willie does after a touchdown.

My sister, Rachel, has been in there twice: atop Mt. St. Helens and at the Grand Canyon. She's climbed up the former two times and is preparing for her third trip down the latter. I'm telling you, there is no way we came from the same gene pool.

Patricia was in one of those photos. She and some friends struck the pose

in front of a Veterinarian's office in Lincoln, NE. The business sign indicated the Veterinarian was a K-State alum. The caption said something like "K-Staters are everywhere."

On our vacation Nancy Hagman '73 attempted to get a shot of Alums Kate Hagman '02, Patricia Betzold '08, '10 and Gene Hagman, '72. They posed in front of Mt. Rushmore.

After a couple of shots, we realized the K (Kate) was backwards. I did a couple more then discovered the S (Patricia) was also backwards. Lucky for the hubby, it is pretty hard to mess up U!

I hurriedly snapped some more. It's weird doing this while 100's of people are walking by. Though no one seemed to take much notice! Apparently odd rituals are an everyday occurrence in our National Parks!

Later I checked the photos to see if any were "K-Stater" worthy. Somewhere along the line I began lowering the camera. By the time we figured out how to correctly form the letters, only two of the presidents were partially visible in the background.

Five degrees and we can't get a suitable photograph! In general I'm not feeling rather incompetent right now. This story takes over 2 minutes for me to read and I'm a fast reader. Sorry, I just can't do 90 seconds! But I am proud to be a Wildcat!

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