

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint

Fields of opportunities

From The Hutchinson News

Despite a lingering drought and, consequently, a lackluster year for farmers in much of Kansas, good news is out there. Long-needed new markets for Kansas farmers are beginning to materialize. ...

Grain-based fuels are starting to pick up some speed toward cultural integration.

Wind energy is picking up steam as an industry in Kansas.

And farmers willing to try nontraditional crops have just harvested a decent cotton crop.

Some Kansas farmers might even find themselves in the unlikely business of growing rice soon for a pharmaceutical company planning to locate in Kansas.

Grain-based fuels always have been a common sense industry to develop. They are clean-burning and reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels, particularly imported oil. And they could become a significant new market for grain farmers, who long have struggled with stagnant prices for their crops. ...

Kansas has eight ethanol plants in operation with four under construction and another dozen on the drawing board. Meanwhile, biodiesel production is starting to develop as well.

Wind power is more about energy than agriculture; however, farmers who lease land for wind generators make good income. ...

Finally, we have nontraditional crops, and cotton seems to be the latest-greatest. Kansas cotton farmers, it turns out, are producing some of the best crops in the Midwest. Yields this year were not great, but it was a profitable endeavor.

Kansas farmers are harvesting 115,000 acres this year, up more than 50 percent from last year. Cotton planting has moved as far north as McPherson and Rice counties.

Expanding markets for grains mean higher prices for farmers. And flexibility to plant nontraditional crops is helping farmers not only diversify but hedge their bets a little better against the unpredictable Mother Nature.

These conditions seemingly have put Kansas farmers in their most optimistic position in many years.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvanostrand@nwkskans.com or pdecker@nwkskans.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

Where to write, call

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e-mail: jmorrison@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmorrison
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us



Give to Caesar what is Caesar's

Wow.

Of all the things to miss where I used to live.

This week I renew my Kansas license plates. I first registered my cars in Kansas earlier this year, but that was only for a certain amount of time. I was told then I had to come back the month that correlated with the first letter of my last name to pay the remaining balance.

After doing the math, Kansas charged me more than double of what I would have paid in Iowa for a year for the same two cars.

Let me write that again — more than double for 12 months for the same two cars.

Gulp.

So much for thinking those rural states in the middle of the country are all the same. Supposedly Kansas is the state where things are moving forward. My pen will move forward when I write that check.

Strange how states get their income.

I am trying to pay more attention to economic development strategy by various levels of government. Economic development has been the buzzword of politics to avoid more companies from heading to China, Mexico and India. Governments usually offer a variety of financial incentives (fancy way of saying massive tax breaks) to lure companies to open up shop.

Government officials think they will eventually get the lost revenue back when those incentives expire and by the various taxes paid by employees at the new company. Only those employees who previously lived out of state will pay sales and property taxes to put more into the



John Van Nostrand

• **Line in the Dust**

government's accounts. The current residents already pay those taxes.

The auto industry in Detroit is not what it used to be. Wichita is always paying attention to the airline industry. I think a town, county or state's best strategy is to look out for those smaller companies. Better to have 10 companies each with 50 employees than one company with 500 employees. It really hurts an area when the one big employer has to layoff or shutdown.

But what are level of governments doing for the people?

Doug Gross, a Des Moines, Iowa, attorney, began an extensive research project on the financial structure and trends of rural Iowa and other Midwest states, including Kansas. Gross, a Republican, lost the election for governor of Iowa in 2002.

He used the most current statistics he could find for every county in those states. I heard his presentation twice.

One of the trends he noted in some of those Midwest counties was the more money a county's residents had in their pocket, the bet-

ter off that county was. It was not just because those people had higher paying jobs either. Gross said lower taxes make a positive difference in local economies.

With the exception of those well-disciplined people, the more money people have, the better chances those extra dollars will be spent. A former editor of mine once told me the more you make the more you spend. Those well-disciplined people either save, pay off remaining debt first or wisely invest. God bless them.

But the people who spend an extra few bucks because of having lower taxes should boost sales-tax revenue, and maybe even property-tax revenue, should they be able to afford a bigger and better house. More money is circulated through the economic system that way.

Our sister-paper in Goodland has ran an ad from Burlington, Colo., merchants. Included in that ad is how Colorado does not charge sales tax on grocery items. Kansas does. There are other states that have tax-free groceries.

That strategy can be interpreted as how a state respects its heritage and history of agriculture, like Kansas. But it's odd how a state says its loves and respects its agriculture businesses, but then "asks" those same people to pay a tax on their own products.

But those people are not alone. For as much as I will pay this week, I will still only get one license plate for each car. I had two plates in Iowa.

John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Your turn

Driving to Denver for procedure

Berna Towns

Colby
Dr. Hildyard is our family doctor.
Today, I saw a doctor from Denver at Colby

Medical Citizens and Surgical Clinic. I need an outpatient procedure and was scheduled to have it at Citizens Medical Center. I informed the specialist from Denver I will not support a hos-

pital that won't support my local doctor.

I will drive to Denver to have this procedure done and, by the way, I think shopping in Denver will be fun.

A change of address, safe at home

By Robert T. Stephan, Chair of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board

In May 2006, Governor Kathleen Sebelius signed House Bill 2928 enacting a groundbreaking law to protect and serve domestic violence and sexual assault victims. The new law becomes effective Jan. 1, 2007 and allows domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or stalking victims the right to establish a new confidential address.

The new law was the result of the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence and Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, as well as others working together to propose the legislation which passed the House and Senate unanimously.

Domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or stalking victims often are subjected to increased risk by the perpetrator of the crime because the residence of the victim is known. HB 2928 allows victims to establish a substitute address that can be used by state and local agencies to respond to requests for public records without disclosing the confidential physical lo-

Other Viewpoints

• **From Pens of Kansans**

cation of the victim. The Secretary of State is authorized to designate an address for a victim as a substitute mailing address.

One of the reasons, among others, that domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking and stalking victims do not report the crime is the fear of retaliation by the perpetrator. Cutting off access to the victim is not only important in protecting the individual, but in assisting the enforcement of law.

The Secretary of State is in the process of creating rules and regulations for processing "Safe at Home" applications, brochures explaining "Safe at Home", a training program for those tasked with enrolling victims in the program and training materials for agencies that will be re-

quired to accept the substitute addresses.

HB 2928 also prohibits an employer from discharging, discriminating, or retaliating against an employee who is a domestic violence or sexual assault victim. Hopefully, this meaningful legislation will increase the momentum to assist and protect domestic violence and sexual assault victims by allowing the victim to take time off work to:

1. seek injunctive relief
2. seek medical attention
3. obtain services from a domestic violence shelter, domestic violence program, or rape crisis center; or
4. make court appearances in the aftermath of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Perhaps the passage of this legislation is an indication that the legislature and the public are hearing the cry of domestic violence and sexual assault victims, and intend to continue to move forward to assist the victims of these terrible crimes. Kansas has taken a step in the right direction and the governor and 2006 legislature should be congratulated for the passage of this legislation.

COLBY FREE PRESS
155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher
jvanostrand@nwkskans.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkskans.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcx@nwkskans.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter
ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director
crystalr@nwkskans.com

Jasmine Crottinger - Advertising Sales
jasminec@nwkskans.com

Joe Hayes - Advertising Sales
jhayes@nwkskans.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager
lea@nwkskans.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
japplegate@nwkskans.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkskans.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

Mallard Fillmore

• **Bruce Tinsley**

