

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

It can be done

By Steve Haynes

You hear so much about border protection these days, but what does it really mean?

Most countries today are opening up their borders, encouraging visitors and investors alike, while the U.S. is tightening its entry requirements and driving people away.

Other countries make people feel like guests, with perfunctory customs inspections, or none at all, and quick processing. America makes visitors — and returning Americans — feel more like criminals.

While Europe is eliminating the need for passports as it becomes more of a nation, the U.S. is making even its own citizens get them to come and go. It's not our neighbors who want more controls, but our own government.

Foreigners who've been to our country tell horror stories about entanglements with the customs and immigration cops, especially the Arabs. Border protection, it seems, can't tell our friends from our foes, so treats everyone as a fiend.

There's a movement to build a wall along the Mexican border, though curiously, not along the Canadian line. Maybe that's because we see Canadians as our northern cousins while we see our neighbors to the south as racially and ethnically different.

Just what is the magic about a border, anyway?

Most controls are aimed at enforcing tax and drug laws, artificial regulations that have little to do with our security. Preventing terrorism, while important, is a law enforcement and intelligence problem, and there's little evidence that our government has gotten much better at either since 2001.

The government has expanded its ability to track everyone, though, and no one knows quite where that might lead. The mania to track and record border entry, especially by Americans, isn't really to prevent terrorism, though. It's just a way for the security apparatus to have more power over us all.

Our immigration system is broken, no doubt, but walls and cameras and record-keeping won't fix it.

If people want to come here to live, well, we used to welcome settlers who wanted to build a new life. There's plenty of room for more.

If people want to work here and send money home, well, American needs workers as much as people need our jobs. Instead of building a wall, we should build a system to register workers and let them in legally, so they'd be sure to pay taxes and get driver's licenses and buy insurance for their cars.

Today, people pay thousands to be smuggled into the country because, simply put, there's no way to get in legally to work. We should make it easier to come here legally than illegally, and make it a serious crime to be here illegally.

Then, the law would be easy to enforce. Today, it's impossible.

Sure, terrorists may try to come. Some may be here already, though there's not much evidence of that. We need to develop sophisticated ways to watch for and track them, as the Europeans and especially the Israelis have done, and not worry so much about making everyone a suspect.

It can be done, but it takes good intelligence and sophisticated law enforcement, not more red tape and ill treatment.

Immigration reform is way overdue, but walls and a bigger border patrol aren't the answer. We need to welcome the world while watching for criminals with a wary eye.

It can be done. — Steve Haynes, president of Nor'West Newspapers.

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 jvannostrand@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com or nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the Free Press.



Why the world hates America

This is why the world hates America.

On one of the back pages of the *Rocky Mountain News* sometime last week there was an article about Haitian mud cookies. The cookies are made of dirt, salt and vegetable shortening, and have become a regular staple in the diets of the poor in one of the poorest countries in the world.

"With food prices rising, Haiti's poorest can't afford even a daily plate of rice, and some take desperate measures to fill their bellies," the Associated Press article stated. "Food prices around the world have spiked because of higher oil prices, needed for fertilizer, irrigation and transportation."

Prices for basic ingredients such as corn and wheat are also up sharply, and the increasing global demand for biofuels is pressuring food markets as well.

"When my mother does not cook anything, I have to eat them three times a day," said Charlene Dumas, a Haitian mud cookie eater, who added that though she doesn't mind the buttery, salty taste, the cookies "give her stomach pains."

You think?

In Haiti, according to the article, two cups of rice now sell for 60 cents, up 10 cents from December and 50 percent from a year ago. Beans, condensed milk and fruit have gone up at a similar rate, and even the price of the edible clay has risen over the past year by almost \$1.50. Dirt to make 100 cookies now costs \$5, the cookie makers say.

"Still," the article said, "at about 5 cents apiece, the cookies are a bargain compared to food staples."

About 80 percent of people in Haiti live on less than \$2 a day and a tiny elite control the



Kevin Johnson

• Tales from a Colorado import

economy.

A "tiny elite" instilled and maintained the Haitian government by U.S. influence.

But, for right now let's just forget all of that.

Let's forget for a moment that America's "democracy" spreading foreign policy is the reason that the Republic of Haiti is in such sorry shape. Let's forget about "Wilsonian ideals" that lead F.D.R. (who referred to the Haitians as "little more than primitive savages") to rewrite the Haitian Constitution during a 1915 U.S. military occupation that permitted U.S. corporations to take over Haiti's land and resources, leaving Haiti in tatters by the time the occupation had ended in 1934.

Let's forget about Haiti's first democratically elected leader in 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the U.S. led coup that ousted the widely popular leader twice after Aristide was accused by the U.S. of "misdeeds" (a.k.a. "You didn't do what we told you to do") and sent into exile in Africa due to Aristide's resistance of Washington's prescriptions for Haiti's economy, insisting instead on social spending for the poor, the absence of which has led to wide spread violence and poverty in Haiti. This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to American-Haitian relations, but let's forget all that right now.

The world doesn't hate America because of our freedom, as our leaders would lead us to believe, they hate us for the "freedoms" we impose.

But this is not about American Imperialism and its consequences, this article is about American ignorance, apathy, and misdirected priorities.

Next to the article about the poor Haitians who must eat mud cookies in order to survive, tucked right in on one of the back pages of the newspaper where all the inconsequential blurbs and random happenings are posted as filler to make up the space around the add space, next to the epitome of world poverty was the epitome of ugly American greed and self-indulgence: "Tom Cruise to buy \$75,000 Ducati Motorcycle".

The world hates America because we see no problem here.

The world hates America because we don't see the difference.

The world hates America because we don't see what the big deal is.

The world hates America because these two stories are on the same page.

The world hates America because Britney Spears checking into rehab is breaking news; because Reality TV is very real to us; because Paris Hilton is a hero and Donald Trump is a success story; because more people will vote for the next "American Idol" than for the next president.

The world hates America because we reward gluttony, greed, and megalomania.

The world hates America because we see nothing wrong with this picture.

—Kevin Johnson is a reporter for the Colby Free Press

Veterans' mileage reimbursement goes up

By Rep. Jerry Moran

Good news for veterans — on Friday, the veterans mileage reimbursement rate increase went into effect for veterans traveling to Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities. I successfully offered the amendment that led to the increased rate during House consideration of the 2008 VA funding bill last year, which was signed into law in December. Veterans will see an increase from 11 cents to 28.5 cents per mile for travel to routine medical visits. This is the first increase in the travel reimbursement rate for veterans since 1978 and will assist more than one million veterans as they travel to VA medical facilities.

President Bush Delivers State of the Union

The President delivered his final State of the Union address. Kansans were well represented with Senator Bob Dole and Greensburg City Administrator Steve Hewitt joining First Lady Laura Bush for the speech. Senator Dole was recognized for his work on the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Steve Hewitt was there representing Greensburg and Kiowa County citizens — a recognition of their tremendous work to overcome the damage sustained from a tornado last May. Kansas Wesleyan University President Dr. Philip Kerstetter was also in attendance as my guest at the speech.

The president covered a number of topics, including the budget, energy, health care, education, foreign policy and global hunger. I was disappointed that the president made no mention of agriculture or rural America. In a

country I believe there is more to be done. As co-chair of the House Hunger Caucus, I look forward to working with the President to make sure that the hungry here and around the world are fed and given opportunities to provide for themselves.

Health care: The rising cost of health care is a concern for most Americans. The government must find ways to slow escalating prices while expanding accessibility for all Americans. Increasing our capacity to serve people at community health centers, investing in health information technology and allowing groups to band together to purchase health insurance at discounted rates are all steps that should be taken to help address this important issue.

Veterans: I am pleased President Bush recognizes the importance of caring for our veterans and continues to advocate for Congress to approve the recommendations of the Dole-Shalala Commission. I share Senator Dole's goal: to ensure our country is providing the best care and services to our military men and women and veterans, especially for those wounded in service to our country. Putting in place a strong support system for those who have served our country must be a priority.

War in Iraq: Reports seem to indicate increasing military success in Iraq under the leadership of General Petraeus.

We must continue working with the Iraqi government toward political reconciliation so that Iraq can stand on its own and our troops can return home.

Energy: The price of energy remains one of my top concerns. Our nation is too reliant on foreign sources of energy to power our economy. I was pleased to hear the President call for greater use of clean coal, solar, wind and nuclear power. Kansas can play a leading role in helping America become more energy independent by growing crops for fuel and harnessing the winds of the Great Plains while maintaining a balanced approach to meeting our energy needs.

Global hunger: I agree with the president that the state of our union is strong, but as long as we have children going to bed hungry in our

country I believe there is more to be done. As co-chair of the House Hunger Caucus, I look forward to working with the President to make sure that the hungry here and around the world are fed and given opportunities to provide for themselves.

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