

# Opinion



## A Kansas Viewpoint

### Bill doesn't cut it

By Rep. Jerry Moran

After months of delay, Congress passed the 2008 Farm Bill last week. Despite my work to get a farm bill that is good for Kansas agriculture and my efforts to improve this bill, I opposed passage of the 2008 Farm Bill for its failure to adequately address the needs of Kansas farmers and taxpayers.

I had two basic guidelines in deciding how to vote. First, the new farm bill should be at least as good as the current farm bill. This is clearly not the case. Second, Kansas farmers repeatedly told me to protect direct payments and maintain strong support for crop insurance. The 2008 Farm Bill failed on both accounts.

With skyrocketing fuel and fertilizer costs, now is not the time to reduce direct payments. Under this bill, it is projected that farmers will not receive any countercyclical or loan deficiency payments. Therefore, the direct payment is the only part of the safety net that will be available to help farmers meet the challenges of dramatically rising input costs. Instead of investing in trade compliant programs such as direct payments, programs that are market and trade distorting received increased funding.

As a member of the committee charged with working out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the farm bill, I offered an amendment that would have restored the cuts made to direct payments. I also supported an amendment that would have restored cuts to crop insurance. Unfortunately, both of these amendments failed on party-line votes. Cuts to these programs had less to do with real reform and more to do with using them as a bank to fund other items.

With the limited amount of funding available, Congress owed it to farmers and taxpayers to use those funds in the most responsible way possible. There are provisions in this bill that spend money on things such as salmon recovery in California and land purchases from a large timber company in Montana. The money spent on these items alone could have prevented the cut to direct payments. I cannot put my stamp of approval on a bill I know fails to meet the needs of Kansas farmers and poorly spends taxpayer dollars.

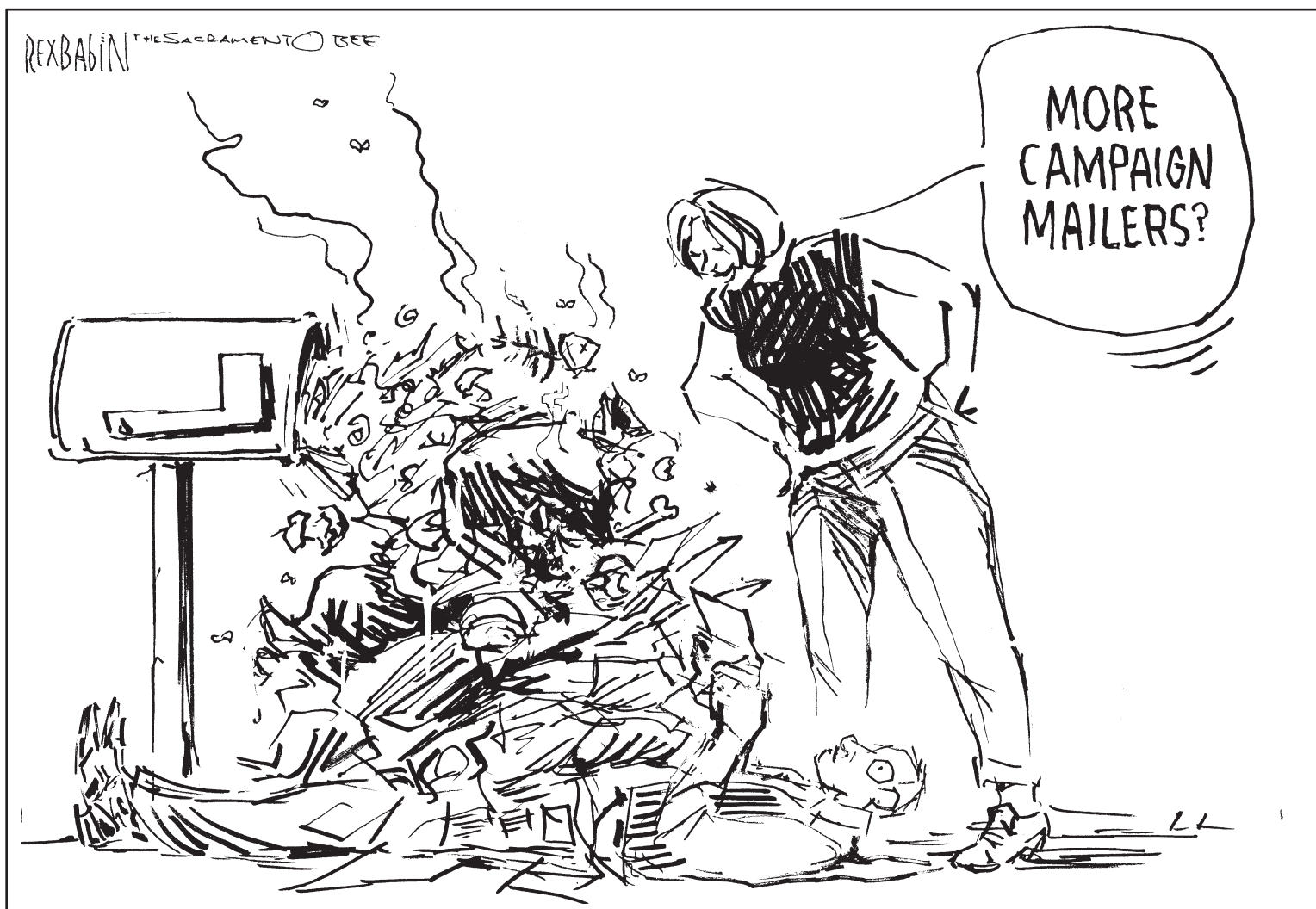
Although I oppose the direction this farm bill takes American agriculture, the measure passed the House and Senate with enough votes to override an expected veto by President Bush. It appears that this legislation will be the farm bill for the next five years.

I pledge to continue doing all I can to support agriculture in Kansas.

#### 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**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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



### Colby needs more than fries

*"We live in a craven time. I am not the first to point out that capitalism, having defeated Communism, now seems to be about to do the same to democracy. The market is doing splendidly, yet we are not, somehow. Americans today no longer work mostly in manufacturing or agriculture but in the newly risen service economy. That means that most of us make our living by being nice. And if we can't be nice, we'd better at least be neutral. In the service economy, anyone who sat where he pleased in the presence of power or who expatiated on his own greatness would soon be out the door. 'Who does he think he is?' is how the dismissal is usually framed. The dream of many of us is that someday we might miraculously have enough money that we could quit being nice and everybody would then have to be nice to us, and niceness would surround us like a warm dome."*

— excerpt from Ian Frazier's book "On the Rez" released in 2000.

I think it's great that the Northwest Kansas Employment Expo will be held in Colby May 31 at the community building. People from our corner of the state can meet others who are looking for employees or employees looking for the right place to use their skills.

The concept of the expo is great. But, unfortunately, it will be few who will actually find a job that could be interpreted as a career or first-income job. Like Frazier wrote in his book (which I highly recommend), Colby seems to be securing itself in the service economy.

That has its benefits. Having a wide assortment of fast-food restaurants, convenience stores and hotels, there will always be a teenage kid looking for that job to earn money to



**John Van Nostrand**

• Line in the Dust

buy the first car, or tank of gas. There are also the moms, and maybe dads, who wait until both kids are in school before finding some sort of second income for the family. Then there also may be the older, perhaps retired, person who still has enough umph to work a little bit more.

But yet another service-oriented merchant just waters down the labor pool. When Super Wal-Mart opened two years ago, our classified page was full of employments from places where Wal-Mart employees left from.

But reviewing who will be at the Expo and what is offered, a select few will have the jobs that are most needed in Colby.

Paying someone \$8 an hour only goes so far. That may be enough for that teenage kid working, at most, 25 hours a week during the school year. But those are not the jobs that will entice home mortgage companies to offer loans to people looking to purchase a home in our fair town.

Sure, the full-time management positions at those places are coveted, and can be alluring, but there are not enough of those jobs to take Colby to the next level. I'm not saying we should turn Colby into something the size of Hays. With proper planning and marketing, we can grow Colby and still keep its easy pace.

Colby's major employers include the college,

school district and hospital. But not everyone who moves to town is equipped to teach or has medical skills to be a valuable asset to the hospital. So that leaves our service-based economy to fall back on. You also might wonder if that is why people don't choose Colby.

It's exciting to see the McCarty family dairy operations near Rexford and Bird City grow. Seeing any growth in agriculture is appreciative, especially with livestock. There are people in this country who think America should stop agriculture all together.

With their operations, and with the dairy near Scott City, I wonder how much milk is needed on a daily basis for some kind of milk processing plant to have an interest in opening up shop around here.

Seeing what is happening in eastern Colorado and the ongoing legal debate over water between Nebraska and Kansas, I'm worried how much longer irrigated farming will last. If it's not the lack of water that will stop operations, I'm sure \$4 plus diesel fuel will.

Frazier also reminded the readers of his book what happens, economically, with rural America.

*"Many towns in rural America, and especially on the Great Plains, have lost businesses over the last 30 years. Vacant storefronts and boarded up buildings along a town's main street are a common sight. When the businesses go, usually the people go, too; kids grow up and move to big cities, parents age and enter nursing homes, the few residents who remain drive long distances to do their shopping in supermarkets and the towns begin to die."*

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

**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**  
 jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

**NEWS**  
**Patty Decker - Editor**  
 pdecker@nwkansas.com

**Joe Falkoff - General Assignment/Sports Reporter**  
 jfalkoff@nwkansas.com

**Jan Ackerman - General Assignment**  
 jkackerman@gmail.com

**ADVERTISING**  
**Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director**  
 crystalr@nwkansas.com

**Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Sales**  
 jstewart@nwkansas.com

**BUSINESS OFFICE**  
**Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping, Ad Building**  
 japplegate@nwkansas.com

**Kathy Arendt - Circulation, Classifieds**  
 karendt@nwkansas.com

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
 support@nwkansas.com

**NOR'WEST PRESS**  
**Jim Bowker - General Manager**  
 Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Becky Foster, Jim Jackson, Kris McCool, Betty Morris, James Ornelas, Cheryl Holub, and Amanda Campbell

## Your turn

### Wins and losses are only a fraction

**Doug Johnson Colby**

It's an understatement to say sports writer Joey Falkoff is beating a dead horse by focusing on the poor performances of Colby Community College athletic teams. He not only beat the horse, he's bombed it, vaporized it and sent it back to the eighth century. Many of the athletic teams struggled this year. We get it.

I supposed there can be controversy anywhere, but recently it seems the theme from Dagnet should be cued with each article about CCC athletics. Coaches leave, coaches are fired. It's a fact of college sports.

This isn't to suggest that everything in the Free Press should be sunshine and lollipops, but I doubt there would be complaints if more positive news about athletes were printed. If that's not possible, at least tone down the negativity so each piece doesn't read like a script from "As the World Turns."

As much as want them to win, please keep in mind that these are student-athletes. Wins and losses are a fraction of the college learning experience.

Here are the grade point averages from the fall 2007 semester: men's cross country, 3.25, eighth in the nation; women's cross country, 3.6, second nationally; volleyball, 3.45. And if

we want to focus on past events, in 2006-2007, 12 of 13 teams were nationally recognized for their academic performance. (Source: JUCO Review 2007, 2008)

Women's basketball will likely be in the top 10 nationally with a 3.61 GPA. Even the much-covered men's basketball team finished with a respectable 2.82. Baseball and softball teams area also nationally known for their work in the classroom.

In addition, many of these students have positively touched the lives of people in the community. But unfortunately, that doesn't show up in the conference standings.

#### About those letters . . .

The Free Press encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

#### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

