

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Smoking ban bill a breath of fresh air

Arizona passed the country's first clean indoor air law way back in 1973. Since then, 34 more states have decided to protect their residents from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke in public places.

However, Missouri and Kansas are among the 15 that stubbornly remain on the sidelines.

The Show-Me State is at the back of the pack. Missouri legislators have been unwilling to even debate serious bills that could help prevent health problems and thus cut medical costs for residents and taxpayers.

But a breath of fresh air just blew through Kansas on this issue.

The Kansas Senate has approved a proposed statewide ban on smoking in most public places, including bars and restaurants.

The law would serve all residents, not just those in Overland Park, Olathe, Leawood and other cities that have already approved their own smoke-free ordinances.

The bill's future in the Kansas House is unclear. Opponents are dragging out the old arguments that have long stifled progress: That businesses have the right to allow smoking, that smoking is a personal choice, and on and on. These arguments ignore the fact that smokers and the businesses that allow smoking are hurting the health of nonsmokers.

The Kansas House should approve a tough law, too. It should allow cities to have even stricter bans to protect their residents.

The governor could then sign the legislation, as promised.
 — *The Kansas City Star, via The Associated Press*

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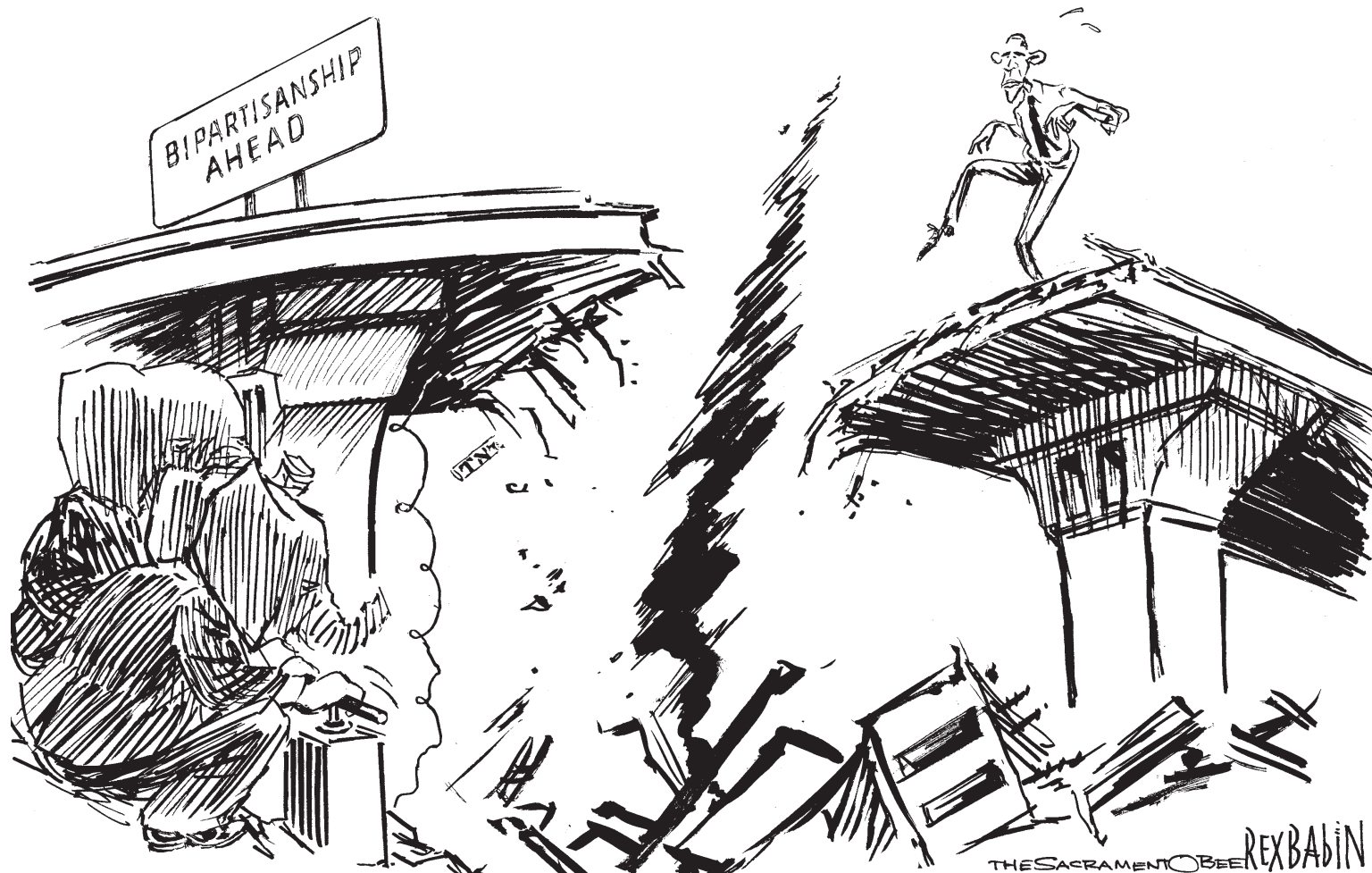
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BRIDGE TO NOWHERE



Hard work offers long-term solutions

I applaud the governor's decision to take a responsible approach to solving the structural imbalance in the budget by signing the recession bill cutting spending for the current fiscal year.

House members worked hard to craft a bill that provides for long-term solutions. While the governor's softening the cuts this year with her line-item vetoes only creates a need for deeper cuts in 2010, I am pleased that she agreed with the Legislature that over \$300 million in reductions were needed to balance the budget.

I look forward to working with leadership and the governor in making fiscally sound choices for the 2010 budget.

In the hopes of clarifying any misconceptions about the governor and the time-line surrounding the signing of the revised 2009 budget bill, the delay was caused because the bill was being printed, enrolled, and proof read. It is a process that neither the governor nor the Legislature has any control over. The governor knew the contents of the bill and its provisions. She knew that until she signed the bill, asking for additional certificates of indebtedness went against Kansas law.

This was not a partisan issue. Violating the law is not an option for the Legislature. We are now able to issue the additional certificates as the recession bill, signed into law, eases our cash flow for the remainder of the fiscal year. Payroll was never in jeopardy. Below is a copy of the communication the Legislature received from the director of the Legislative Research Department, a nonpartisan agency:

"The governor has flexibility in managing



Jim Morrison

● Capitol Review

the state General Fund, which would include when to pay bills, when to process payments and how to pay those bills.... the availability to get \$25 million in the General Fund by Friday should be workable and the payment of the state payroll should not be in question...."

Tele-Medicine and Tele-Health Monitoring
 The Vision 2020 Committee heard more than seven hours of presentations on the technologies associated with monitoring and providing quality health care to people in rural areas.

The value of tele-medicine is that the combined video and audio capabilities are far superior to a phone conversations in which one doctor tries to describe details to another.

Health Care providers, insurance company representatives and the Kansas Health Policy Authority staff have committed to developing a strategy to expand the use of telecommunications technology.

The parties promised to return to the committee in early March with a plan, noting that they will come to the committee next January with a more complete proposed "road map."

Cell Phone Location

House Bill 2126 passed on final action Friday. This bill requires wireless phone providers to provide information about the location of

users. A wireless company would be required to furnish call location information to a law enforcement agency asked to respond to an emergency by a subscriber, customer or user.

The provider also would be required to respond to a request to provide caller location information, using a "ping locate," in an emergency that involves danger of death or serious physical injury to any person where the information is required without delay.

Graduated Driver's License

In an effort to prevent injury and death among teen drivers, Substitute for House Bill 2143 passed in final action Friday. The bill requires that every teen must hold a learner's permit for 12 months before obtaining a restricted or a full license. It will limit teen drivers to no more than one nonsibling passenger under the age of 18 during the first six months of full licensing. It will also limit night driving to 9 p.m. during the first six months except for driving to and from work or school. The bill makes no changes to the existing farm permit or restricted license provisions.

This bill will ensure that teen drivers have more experience behind the wheel before they receive their full license. It will remove distractions from the new driver's vehicle, allowing them to focus on the road. Additionally, it limits teen drivers from exposure to difficult driving situations keeping them, and other drivers, safe on Kansas roadways.

I want to thank you for your ideas and concerns on many of the issues you have called, e-mailed or written me about. Government works for you and because of you. I truly enjoy serving as your representative.

U.S.A. label does matter

To the Editor:

After reading the Feb. editorial by John Schlageck for Kansas Farm Bureau: what a disappointment. Is it John's view or the Farm Bureau's? I see more support for the big meat packers and less for rural business and agricultural producers.

John sided with the rumors that cattlemen, farmers, livestock market operators, cattle buyers and above all, our so-called trading partners Canada and Mexico, do not like Country of Origin Labeling. So what if they don't like it? For those who import — take precautions.

I don't like imports; they have almost cost our country everything. Be it manufacturing, steel, textiles or technology, we have almost given it all up. To me, importers now have competition from the American producers who are going to promote a product which we are proud of.

Mr. Schlageck is wrong and he, like others, has been working to destroy a marketing opportunity with Country of Origin Labeling, both for producers and to improve food safety for our consumers. It is time to label and market our own product with a U.S.A. label.

John fails to tell the whole story, in that imported product has been sold under the guise of the U.S. Department of Agriculture label as being U.S. produced. He fails to share that the Beef Checkoff money stockmen pay cannot be used for advertising American beef in the United States.

He is evidently unaware that the National Cattlemen's Beef Association membership



Free Press Letter Drop

● Our readers sound off

voted to support our position with the use of those checkoff dollars to promote our beef here. They didn't fall for the World Trade Organization threats of a possible violation.

John fails to share what damage North American Free Trade Agreement has done against Canada, Mexico and the United States, that the free-trade agenda hasn't worked when we reduced our tariffs in order to get access to "exports." These countries are still charging us tariffs which greatly exceed ours.

As the Country of Origin Committee chairman for the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA) and a founding member of the Kansas Cattlemen's Association, I know for a fact that our agendas and messages have not changed. We still strive to return profits, and we work for fair, open, competitive markets.

The R-CALF team participated and gave direction in the Kansas City meeting in August to reduce the burden on producers. Working to acquire workable country of origin labeling, we wanted to label U.S.A meat by default. This was the cheapest, most effective method,

but the packers' supporters voted it down.

We worked for — and passed — a plan for visual inspections for those carrying foreign marks of origin. This means that without a visible brand or mark, they are considered U.S. origin. This does not slow down commerce at the slaughterhouse or feed yard, nor does it cost. Many sale barns are using an optional yearly affidavit of origin.

The Food Marketing Institute has fully accepted the rules and is working to comply. We have letters from most major packers stating that they will use a specific U.S.A. label. We trust that they will.

We just had a meeting with Canadian and Mexican producers and organizations in Billings, Mont. They, too, see the damage the packing industry and free trade have done.

Country of origin labeling is centered around food safety, but it is a marketing opportunity to promote a product of the U.S.A. Imports of beef and live cattle are up from a year ago — and look at our prices and losses.

To sum up the importance of food safety, note the origins of the clenbuterol feed additive that killed 21 Mexico citizens, and the tuberculosis increase in the United States. Check out the "mad cow disease" issues in Canada. Imports may be cheaper, but I would certainly question the quality.

To close, I have to ask: "Who is right, and who is working for the United States?" With Mr. Schlageck's article, anyone who belongs to Farm Bureau should be asking the same.

Mike Schultz, Brewster

Mallard Fillmore

● Bruce Tinsley

