

Other Viewpoints

Identify voters; keep them voting

Leaving aside Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach's exaggerated talk of fraudulent voting, it is worth having a discussion about how to do elections better.

Voter ID isn't a bad idea, and neither is requiring proof of citizenship for registration. But these can be accomplished in a way that doesn't hurt citizen participation in our democracy.

A Kansas House committee last week heard testimony on Kobach's Secure and Fair Elections Act. Action was delayed at least until today. The bill would require voters to show photo identification. It also would require people who register in Kansas for the first time to provide proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or passport. And it increases the penalties for election crimes and allows the secretary of state to prosecute election-fraud cases.

The problem is that while Kobach seeks to make a name for himself by trying to give Kansas the toughest laws against voter fraud in the nation, he might also succeed in giving Kansas the lowest voter participation in the country.

It is important to establish, first, that election fraud is not a big problem in Kansas. Kobach has documented just 59 reports of alleged irregularities among votes cast since 1997.

That said, there are ways to vote more than once in Kansas. The system is hardly fool-proof.

There must be ways to verify citizenship and voter authenticity without being too onerous or scaring off legitimate voters. Instead of requiring someone to dig up a birth certificate or produce a passport when registering to vote, why not just provide a Social Security number — something most everyone knows — along with one or more other pieces of personal information and let the election officer verify citizenship?

And in lieu of a driver's license or some other ID that not everyone might have, how about allowing voters to use their county-issued voter registration card at the polls?

The point is that Kobach's bill puts the burden on the voter to prove he is a citizen and may be allowed to vote, when the burden should be on the government to prove otherwise and not to infringe on American citizens' fundamental right to vote.

In his zeal to make sure not a single illegal immigrant ever goes near a voting booth, Kobach seems willing to impair the rights of our legal citizens....

— *The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press*

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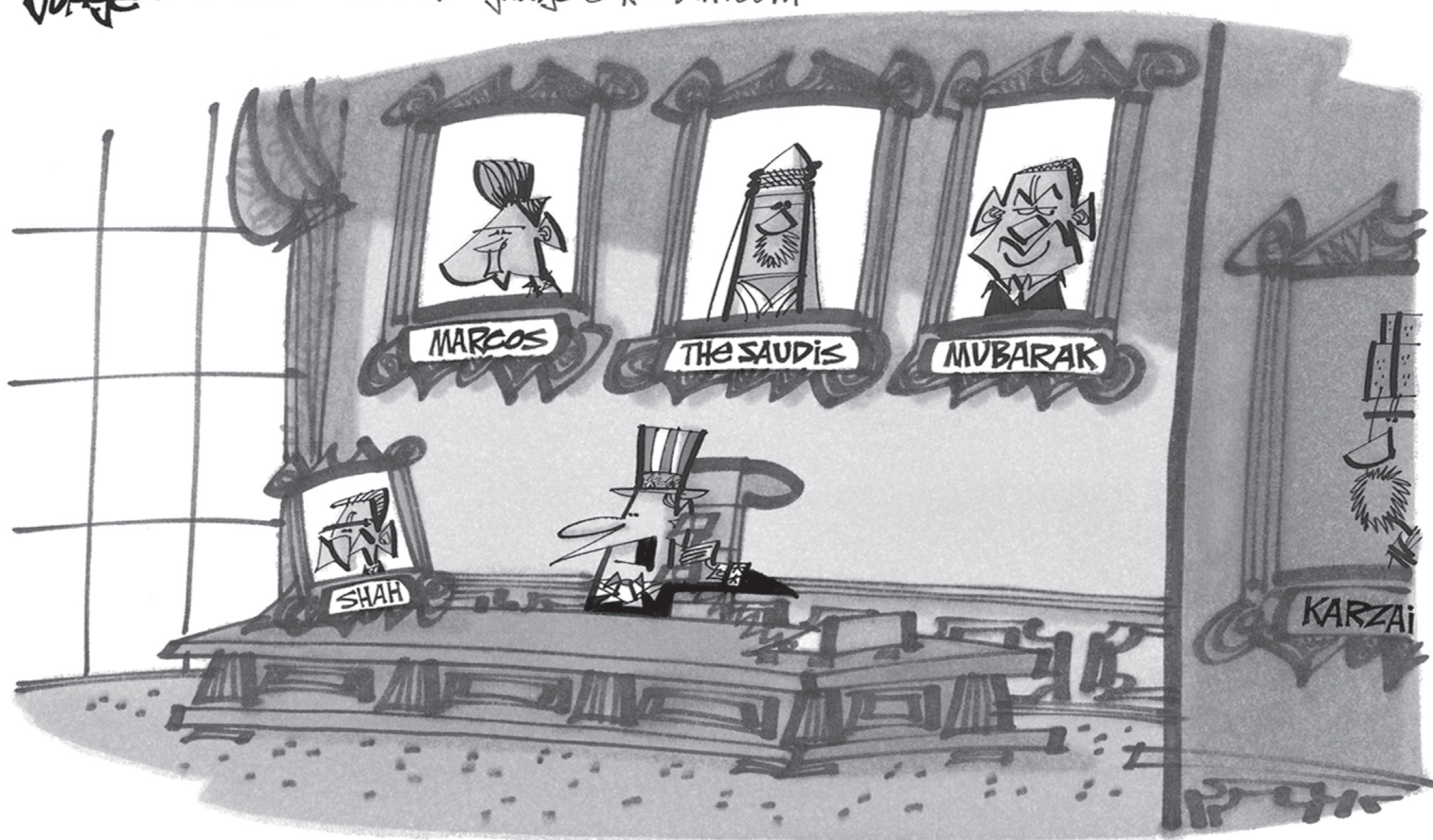
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"WELL OF COURSE WE BELIEVE IN DEMOCRACY... JUST ASK OUR FRIENDS."

Good friends stick around in bad times

Good friends are not to be taken for granted.

When I say good friends, I don't mean the people who like your company once in a while, or the folks who jump on your bandwagon because for whatever reason you've become the newest flavor of the week. These people can be fun to be around, but it would be naive to expect much from them. They may genuinely like you, but they will not hesitate to use you as a stepping stone if the opportunity presents itself.

Bob Dylan's lament of fair-weather friends in his song "Positively 4th Street" perfectly symbolizes the anger people feel towards disingenuous people who are only your friend when it works to their advantage.

In the song, an angry Dylan sings: "You've got a lot of nerve saying you're my friend / When I was down, you just stood their grinning."

You got a lot of nerve to say you've got a helping hand to lend, / You just want to be on the side that's winning."

No, when I say good friends, I mean the people who stick with you through good times and bad. They don't care whether your rich or poor, a chief executive of a multinational company or an unemployed father still smarting from an ugly divorce, a restless socialite or a habitual loner, a Nobel Peace Prize winner or a recovering drug addict. This is the type of friend who will come pick you up when you have car trouble no matter where they are or how much fun they are having.

Friends like this are priceless because so



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

many of our interactions with people are influenced by whether we are useful to them or not. And in much of the business world, things like empathy and love are forced to take a back seat to this utilitarian view. In many businesses, becoming a tool of production is just the nature of the beast, no matter how nice a guy your boss is.

Your boss may like you, but if you are bad at your job you are probably going to get fired no matter how hard you try, because your performance is hurting the bottom line. And even if your boss considers you a nice guy and a good worker, he or she will still not hesitate to lay you off if they feel they need to cut costs.

Even in high-paying occupations like professional sports or acting, things can be just as soul crushing and impersonal. In both lines of work, you can be drooled over one day and reviled the next. One night, you are the next big thing; the next, you're a walking punch line for late-night talk-show hosts.

The impersonal nature that dominates much of our lives is what makes true friends so important. Because good friends give us the one thing that everybody needs — unconditional love. Unconditional love makes life tolerable. It's what we all seek.

Television advertisements try to convince

us that the key to happiness lies in buying the newest shoes, iPod, car or some other gizmo, but that's nonsense. Happiness lies in the personal relationships we have with the people we love.

And even in the age of cell phones, Facebook and Twitter, I would like to think face-to-face communication is still more important than the latest technological innovation. Don't get me wrong — grassroots movements should continue to use social networking to highlight their plight and encourage solidarity from the global community. All I'm saying is today's technology doesn't have to replace the simple joys of visiting a neighbor or meeting up with old friends.

I've been lucky enough to have a few people I consider good friends. Some come from inside my family and others come from outside. I don't know what I would do without them. Everyone deserves to have at least a couple good friends, and if you know someone who doesn't have this luxury, you could be the person to change this.

There is a lyric in the song "Kryptonite" by the band Three Doors Down that ponders the loyalty of a friend or lover.

"If I go crazy, then will you still call me Superman"

If I'm alive and well, will you still be there holding my hand."

I hope someday everyone will have somebody who would answer "Yes" to that question.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Wintering livestock takes special care

Nestled in the hills of the Saline River Valley, the Berndt family cowherd has weathered the below-zero temperatures and the bitter-cold north winds during the first half of February.

The 115-head herd came off summer pastures in great shape and headed into the winter fat and sassy. Grazing on milo stalks throughout the fall also contributed to this healthy condition.

The weather cooperated during January. Two minor snows, little wind and seasonal temperatures helped the herd stay in tip-top shape. Another bonus was fall rains that provided lush growth of the Berndt pastureland and abundant grazing for the herd until the first flurries in January.

Two "mini-blizzards" during the first half of February dumped a total of nearly a foot and a half of snow. Terrible winds and temperatures that fell to nearly 20 below zero accompanied the storms.

Throughout this recent cold snap, though, the Berndt cattle did remarkably well.

"We fed them a little extra silage and big round bales to keep their heat generation up," Leslie Berndt says. "Those gals are looking for more food when it gets bitter cold like that. Grain in the silage provides much-needed protein."

Fortunately, the cows did not begin calving until the second week of February. When the first cow delivered twins, the Berndts rounded up the newborn calves, along with their momma, and took them to a shed to keep warm.

During the calving season, the Berndts spend long hours day and night checking their herd.



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

While the cows are acclimated to the cold, below-zero wind chills are hard on the stock.

Not only are the Berndt cattle nestled in the hills, the pasture is heavily wooded and provides complete protection from the wind. The herd has another invaluable asset — a natural spring that stays open and provides water year around. This spring flows out of the hillside and runs into a pool in the ground.

And while they haven't had to doctor any livestock yet this winter, should such an occasion arise, the Berndts are prepared. Cattle needing medical attention are loaded up and taken to a nearby veterinarian.

"The cattle are doing really well," Berndt reports. "They're healthy, cattle prices are unheard of and we're happy."

Still, below freezing temperatures remain cause for a vigilant watch over the cowherd. There's still plenty of winter left, and another snow accompanied by strong winds and sub-freezing temperatures could be just around the corner.

Berndt looks forward to continuation of the recent warm up. He looks forward to more 60-degree days and knows that each day of no snow and rising temperatures brings the herd

one more day closer to spring.

With most of the snow melted, grass is beginning to perk up and his cattle are looking to eat it as they rummage around the pasture. With all of the snow, this region of the rural Kansas landscape has turned into a sloppy, muddy mess.

"That's part of it," Berndt says with a smile. "We can live with that."

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

