

Other Viewpoints

Census data shows Kansas is changing

Many Kansans like change about as much as they like property taxes, federal mandates, steak tartare and Mizzou. But like it or not, the first 2010 U.S. Census numbers confirm that Kansas is getting more diverse ethnically and more urban and suburban, in the course of having grown 6 percent since 2000. The key for Kansas will be whether its leaders respond to the population trends creatively, punitively or at all.

The big news in the numbers:

- Of 105 counties in Kansas, 77 shrank in population during the past decade, 23 by more than 10 percent.
- Hispanics are now the state's largest minority, seeing their numbers grow by 59 percent to about 10.5 percent of the population. There also were significant gains among Asians and those who identify themselves as multiracial.
- While Wichita remains by far the state's largest city (up by 38,000, or 11 percent), Sedgwick County at last has been eclipsed by Johnson County, which grew by 93,000 residents, or 21 percent (to Sedgwick County's 10 percent).

Lawmakers will have to account for the new population shifts in redistricting. Kansas won't lose another congressional seat — this time — but the "Big First" may get even bigger, and western Kansas is sure to lose more legislative clout to northeast Kansas.

Beyond redistricting, Gov. Sam Brownback deserves credit for getting state lawmakers started on a debate about how to counter rural counties' declining population and get Kansas really growing again.

One thing that might help is his Senate-passed proposal to waive state income tax for five years for out-of-staters who relocate to 50 of the most population-challenged counties. Unlike some of his conservative Republican brethren, Brownback also recognizes that the state is in a contest for jobs that cannot be won with lower taxes and less regulation alone. His proposal for a "deal closer" fund, perhaps as large as \$100 million in five years, reflects the need to be flexible and, when necessary, generous in responding to businesses seeking reasons to come to Kansas.

Brownback also will be key in preventing any legislative overreactions to illegal immigration or other actions that could be interpreted by potential businesses and workers as an unwelcome mat. Kansas does not need to clone Arizona's costly, controversial law requiring police officers to check the citizenship status of people they stop and suspect of being illegal immigrants. Nor should it repeal the 2004 law allowing eligible children of illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition at the state's colleges and universities.

As they handle the budget crisis, Brownback and the Legislature's GOP leaders also must take pains not to permanently damage the powerful recruiting tools of public education and quality of life. What the state lacks in dramatic topography and big-city excitement it must try to make up for in excellent schools and unique cultural outlets and attractions. And much of Kansas' fight to keep and attract the best and brightest will be waged at its three research universities, which also must be well-supported.

Some recent news bodes well for Wichita and Kansas in the next round of census taking, including Boeing's air-tanker contract and the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility planned for Manhattan. But the latest numbers hold some hard truths and challenges for Kansas, if only it will accept them.

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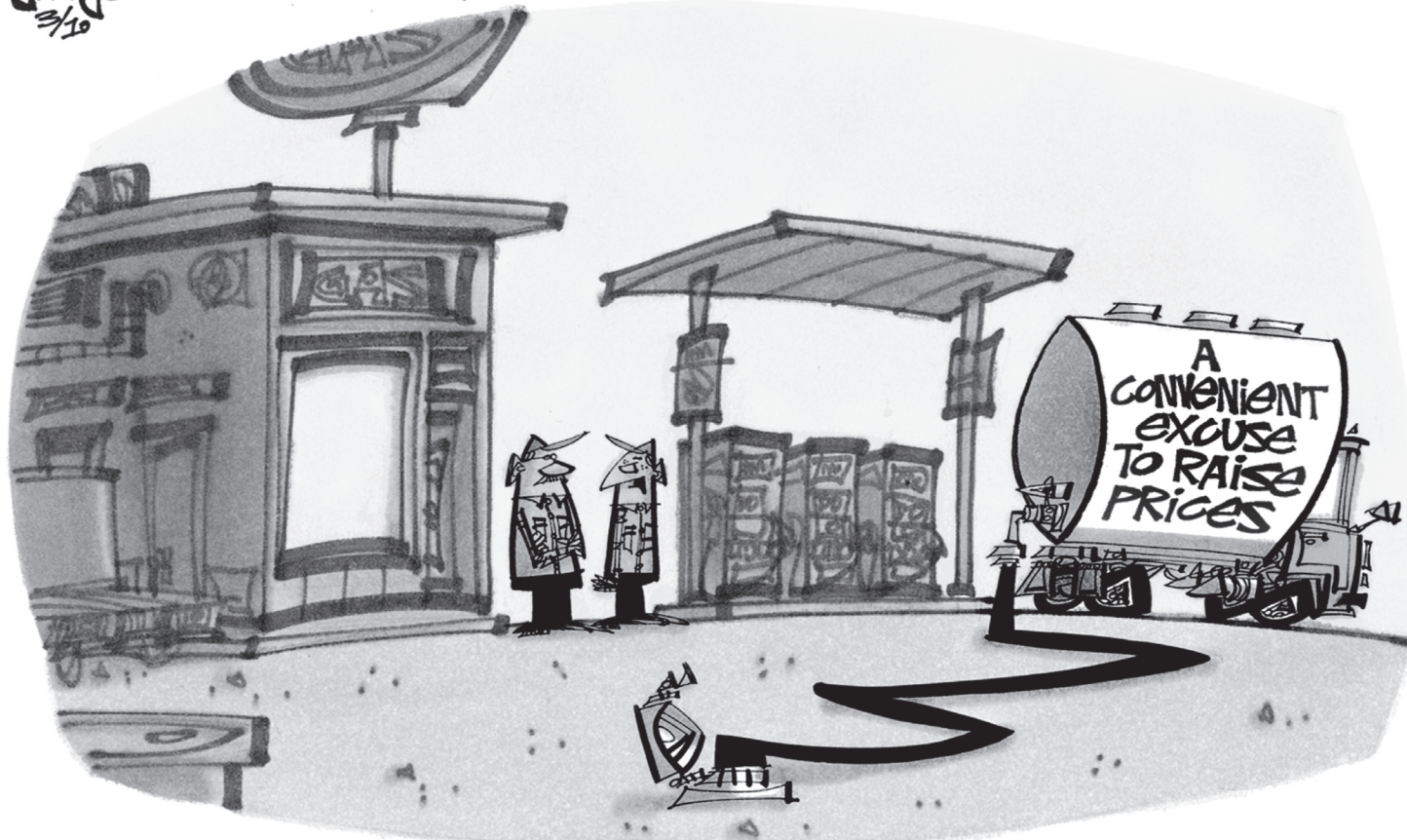
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"WELL, IF THEY DON'T ACTUALLY SUPPLY US WITH THAT MUCH OIL, WHAT DOES LIBYA GIVE US?"

Blame the snow for that missed turn

Steve will tell you that I'm directionally challenged.

To put it more bluntly, I get lost swimming across a pool. North and south have little or no meaning for me, and I can only distinguish left and right because I have a writing callous on my right hand.

Our children sent us a Garmin global positioning device for Christmas a few years ago after I got lost trying to get to Leoville. I wasn't really lost, just took the wrong road, a dirt road after a rain storm. I made it off the road, but just barely, and the car and I took a lot of road with us to the wash.

But how lost can you get driving from Colby to Oberlin? You only have two turns once you leave. You drive to the Nine-Mile corner, turn left, drive by Rexford and through Selden to the junction, and turn left again.

Sounds easy, doesn't it? So how come I found myself rolling into Hoxie?

Steve was working at the paper and I was at the pharmacy at Dillon's, and we decided that, since we didn't get off until 7 p.m., we would just stop at the Southwind Steakhouse in Selden for supper.

Since I had to be at work at 9 a.m. and he



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

didn't come in until later, we had separate cars, but I went to the office after getting off, so we left at pretty much the same time.

I had a book on tape I had been listening to, and so was riding along with a western mystery in my ears.

I left the *Colby Free Press* and headed east in light snow. (I do have a compass in my car, but Steve has the Garmin.)

The good guy was after the bad guys and the story was exciting. I drove along watching for deer or other road hazards but not paying too much attention to the signs. After all, I had done this trip hundreds of times.

I passed some lights on my right and vaguely figured that had been Rexford but wasn't really paying much attention.

Soon, I could see the lights of Selden ahead.

But something wasn't quite right. The town was wrong. What happened to the Co-op station that's supposed to be on my left? And what were these buildings? What had they done to Selden since 8 a.m. this morning?

I was almost to the junction when I realized that this was the west edge of Hoxie. Snow was getting heavier.

I had completely missed the left-hand turn at the Nine-Mile and kept going. Straight on to Hoxie.

I was definitely going to be late for supper.

Dang, I'd have to call Steve and admit my mistake. There was no covering this one up.

The good guys got the bad guys as I headed north along K-23, doing no better than 45 in the snow, and I was able to get to supper just 30 minutes late. Steve had warmed the kitchen and was waiting for me with a grin and a beer as I pulled in.

Oh well. At least the road was paved.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkanssas.com

Sneaky earmarks should stand alone

"Pork barrel" projects — recently renamed "earmarks" — have been a part of the legislative agenda since the very beginning of our nation. Our congressmen have been doing their job of representing their own electorate. Isn't that the idea of the United States? To do for the people what they cannot do, efficiently, for themselves?

By combining the resources of the nation, we can provide services that local areas cannot handle.

We depend upon our representatives in congress to assess the requests for national assistance to accomplish local projects. If those requests are legitimate needs, then they should be met. Are the needs of those in a slum neighborhood in New York City any less a concern for me than the needs of impoverished areas or communities in Kansas? Are the agricultural needs in New Hampshire any less a national concern than the needs of Kansas farmers? The welfare of agriculture and rural communities is vitally important to the welfare of society in general.

The problem is that many times those requests — pork barrel or earmark — are tacked onto another bill. Astute congressmen know that if they can slide a questionable request in on another bigger bill, it will have a better chance of passing without thorough scrutiny from the body. Leverage is applied to gain votes for the bigger issues. Amendments get attached to major bills without the public having a chance to vet the issue. An amendment that is not germane to the original bill should not be attached. They should stand on their own. An amendment that makes someone else pay for our local and selfish wants that are not beneficial to the welfare of the nation is not ethical.

Can the use of national resources for local projects benefit the entire nation? Is it beneficial to society for a region of the nation to be undereducated because of local financial problems? Is it beneficial to the nation that roads are designed and funded through areas that may not have local demand or resources



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

to build?

Is it beneficial to the nation to bring projects to areas that have the facilities and expertise to insure success? If our legislators do not promote the available ability and resources, have we failed to support the welfare of the nation? Is it beneficial to the nation that Wichita, with its aeronautical experience, should be considered when contracting for the new refueling aircraft? Is it beneficial for the nation that Kansas State University faculty and facilities should be considered when locating new, expanded research on animal health and public safety?

If our elected government representatives have not promoted our ability to provide unique services for national benefit, they have not done their job. If our elected personnel have not requested national assistance to provide needed resources through funding for local or regional needs, they have not done their job.

We have a recently-elected Senator, who has done an apparent about face on earmarks. When he served us in the House of Representatives he sought national funding and support for programs (earmarks?) Kansas could provide that would benefit the entire nation. He promoted programs and projects that would provide jobs for Kansans and would protect our environment and resources. I didn't always agree with him on all issues, but I certainly did appreciate his ability to represent our congressional district and the state of Kansas and to secure funding and support for those programs that weren't only good for Kansas but good for the nation as well.

Now, he has declared that such actions

should not be allowed. What? Why the change? Could it be he's pandering to a group who are simply promoting the welfare of the fittest and ignoring the welfare of all?

We have a political group, the fundamental ultra-conservative right, that wants to shrink government and cut off all funding for anything that doesn't directly benefit themselves. Their main agenda is maintaining and enhancing their own economic advantages. That group has, within their ranks, some who want to enlarge government to allow enforcement of their own theological position on personal or individual rights and obligations. Funding from general tax revenues for school vouchers and itemizing of charitable contributions, both religious and secular, are closely related to earmarks.

Sooner or later, the conflict between individual rights, states rights, federal rights and religious freedom will put him in a position that makes him eat his words concerning those issues defined as earmarks.

The best solution to the problem is to disallow any amendments that aren't germane to the main motion or bill.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

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