



Other Viewpoints

Expand work visas for trained talent

Each year, Washington awards visas to immigrants who bring skills and qualifications prized by high-tech companies. This is an eminently sensible policy, since highly trained immigrants add greatly to the nation's stock of human capital and as a group, they have a high propensity to start companies of their own. That creates more jobs for Americans.

There's one problem. The number of these special visas, called H1-Bs, is too low – only 65,000, with 20,000 more awarded each year to foreign students with master's degrees or higher from a U.S. university.

Those numbers don't begin to meet demand from tech firms hungry for new talent. In 2009, the annual quota was filled in less than a week. The year before, all the H1-Bs were snatched up in a single day.

This means that our world-class university system, supported to a great extent by tax dollars, is training thousands of smart foreign students, who then take those talents back home and start companies that compete with U.S. enterprises.

You can thank Congress for this, because Congress caps the number of H1-Bs. But Kansas Sen. Jerry Moran, a Republican, and Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, a Democrat, have drafted a bill aimed at easing this bottleneck.

Their bill, called the Startup Act, would make it easier for new companies to raise financial capital by rolling back certain taxes, but its most significant provisions would greatly expand the number of visas available to foreign-born talent. It would authorize a new visa category for 50,000 foreign students who earn a master's degree or higher in a technical field – science, technology, engineering or math. A total of 75,000 additional visas would go to foreign-born entrepreneurs who register a new firm or raise \$100,000 in capital while in the United States on another category of visa.

Moran says most of his colleagues probably agree that something needs to be done about the misguided bar on foreign-born talent. But sadly, immigration in general remains politically radioactive. The bill has only one other Senate co-sponsor: Missouri Republican Sen. Roy Blunt.

That's a shame. Immigration may be a divisive subject, but it is one of those topics in which the politics is lagging the facts.

Much of the concern about immigration, legal and illegal, is focused on Mexico. But our southern neighbor is changing rapidly.

It's growing much faster than the United States, creating opportunity for Mexicans who might otherwise be tempted to emigrate. Over the last four decades, its birth rate has plummeted from nearly seven per woman to around 2. Arrests at the border have fallen off radically.

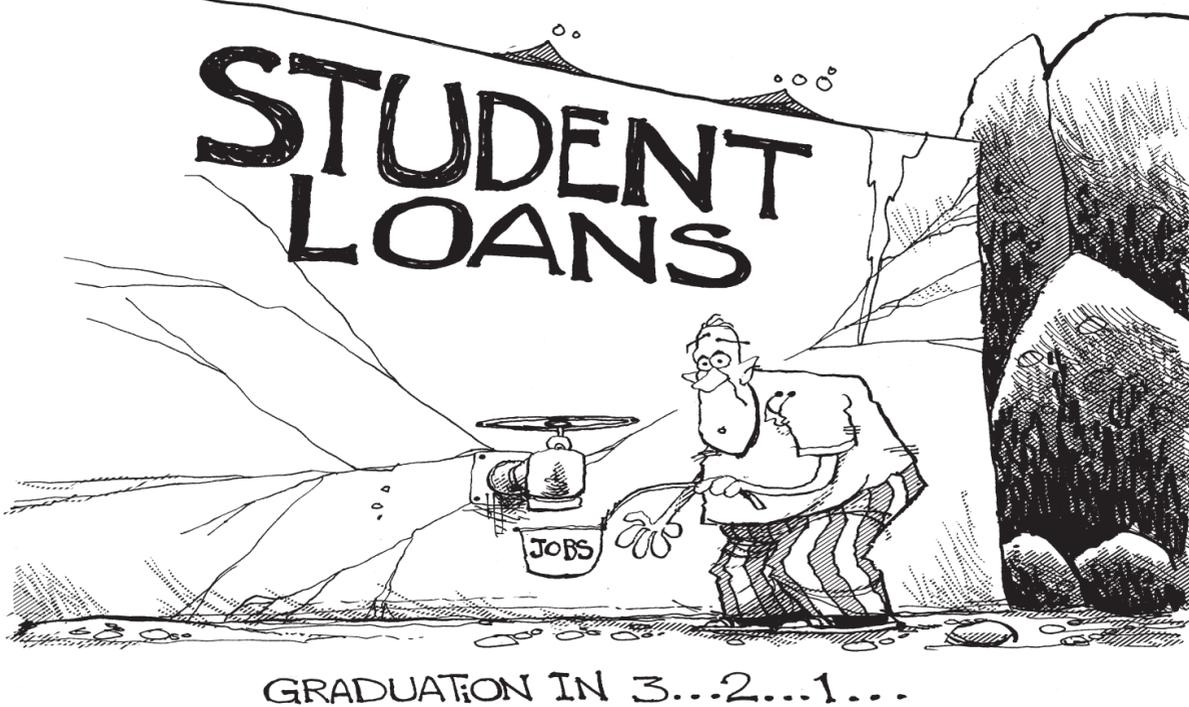
Some experts believe net immigration from Mexico has reached inconsequential levels, counting people who have returned to Mexico because of the sluggish U.S. economy. Douglas Massey of Princeton, founder of the Mexican Migration Project, told *The Christian Science Monitor* last month that his calculations suggest migration is now at "net zero."

That suggests immigration will someday fade as a hot-button dispute. For the present, however, it's still a touchy topic for any politician – which is why Moran and Warner deserve credit.

What's a mystery is why more of their colleagues aren't willing to sign onto a bill that will bring more technical and entrepreneurial talent to our country.

– *The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press*

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A year later, another move is hard to do

It hardly seems like we have been in Kansas for over a year. We moved here from Sweetwater, Texas, and it was quite an adjustment for us. I mean, you don't get brisket and beans at every event here.

It was hard work finding a place to live, and moving was a monumental task – even with movers.

Just when I think things are settling down, my husband and I get a notice that tells us that we have 30 days to move. The owners are selling the house. As our readers know, or maybe don't, it's really tough to find a place to live in this market. There are just more renters than homes available. So now the hunt has begun.

I have asked as many folks as possible if they know of any rentals and the usual answer is, "nope." Not the answer I was hoping for.

Having our sweet Noah adds an extra layer to the problem of finding a place to lease. He is such a baby, and we do admit to spoiling him just a tad. He is a good citizen, however, and I am proud of that. He has never been one of those dogs that chew up the house or scratch down the doors. He did have a penchant for snacking on channel changers, but I guess he needed a hobby.

Visitors to our home are amused at the scrounging old recliner in the living room, but it is "his" recliner and he really doesn't like changes in his little domain. I tried to keep a blanket on it to make it more presentable, but when I tried to fold it differently, Noah wouldn't even get in it. I gave up since he



Sharon Friedlander

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looked heartbroken that someone had dared to re-fold his blanket. Guess he must have had it really comfy.

I'm a pack rat, so moving will be another adventure. I do admit to being a creature of comfort, and that means I have almost every kitchen gadget available. I really love having enough counter space so I can have them all out and useable.

I also have all those nifty gadgets you only use once every five years. These need adequate drawer space – so they are handy and actually get used. To find a kitchen like this is probably like the search for the Holy Grail, but I am an eternal optimist.

My husband seems to think we need a garage. I once told him I could not find a garage with a house attached, but he didn't find that funny. Imagine that.

I seem to have more tools of my own than most men, so I guess the garage is a good idea. I used to joke that I didn't get flowers but anything Snap-On or MAC would do just fine.

The thought of loading and unloading all our tools is a major yikes.

So you see the dilemma I am faced with now. First find a house that needs a family and then move all the stuff. Makes me tired just to even think about it.

Luckily, moving across town is much easier than moving state to state. Less packing is required, and that is a blessing. You can just load the groceries in the same bags they came home in and off you go.

The real gift in moving is that you discover all the stuff you had forgotten all about. Sometimes this leads to one of those interesting questions of, "Now, why did I need that?"

Being a pack rat, moving gives me the opportunity to get rid of some of the things I haven't used since the last move. I just wish I didn't have this emotional attachment to inanimate objects.

I have always thought that if a marriage could survive a move, it could survive anything. Moving requires a lot of activity, and when both of you are tired, it can make for some interesting moments. Laughter is still the best cure for the moving yucks, and fast food works wonders as a break from the action.

So if you see us looking all over town, you now know why. You might just feel lucky that it isn't you doing the looking!

Sharon Friedlander, publisher of the Colby Free Press, enjoys reading, hot rods and critters. Contact her at friedlander@nwkansas.com.

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Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by NorWest Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

Crop insurance tops farmers' priorities

As Congress writes the upcoming farm bill, Kansas farmers and their contemporaries across our country will tell you that maintaining an efficient, effective and affordable crop insurance system is their No. 1 priority.

You'll hear the same story throughout the Midwest and much of the country, where farmers believe federal crop insurance provides them with an effective risk management tool – especially when they are facing losses beyond their control.

Federal crop insurance reduces taxpayer risk, makes hedging possible to help relieve market volatility and provides lenders with greater certainty that loans made to producers will be repaid.

Farmer-stockman Keith Miller of Barton County recently attended a farm bill hearing in Dodge City held by U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp. More than 200 people gathered in southwestern Kansas, where Miller was one of 10 panelists who described what they would like to see in the next farm bill.

"Protection and enhancement of crop insurance programs ranks as the No. 1 priority for a long list of farm organizations in the 2012 farm bill process," Miller testified.

The longtime Kansas farmer said he believes agriculture is a highly erratic industry influenced by variables beyond the producer's



John Schlageck

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Kansas Farm Bureau

control. Farmers can use top-quality seed, fertilizer, chemicals and the best management practices and still not be able to control the weather and the markets. Profit margins make it critical that farmers have access to a strong, viable and flexible risk management program.

The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee recently approved its version of the 2012 farm bill. Sen. Pat Roberts helped spearhead the bipartisan effort that would strengthen and preserve the crop insurance program.

"I'm proud, because we've worked hard to produce not the best possible bill, but the best bill possible under difficult circumstances," Roberts says. "We've performed our duty to taxpayers by cutting deficit spending while at the same time strengthening and preserving the programs so important to agriculture and rural America."

The Senate plan would reduce this nation's debt by an estimated \$23 billion. Few if any

other committees in Washington have made the same kind of cuts during this difficult budget climate.

Even though the farm bill's commodity title receives the lion's share of news coverage, the conservation section is equally important to the future of this nation. Everyone must do his or her share to protect and preserve this country's natural resources or there will not be enough land to farm.

Conservation impacts everyone. We all eat, drink water and breathe air. With the ever-increasing world population, keeping our food engine operating at peak performance has never been more essential.

While most believe the next farm bill is most important to agriculture, it affects everyone in this country – rural and urban. There is a limited window of opportunity before the current farm bill expires.

It's key for work on this vital piece of legislation to continue. Each and every organization with a vested interest must continue to work to accomplish its priorities and move this 2012 farm bill forward.

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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