



Other Viewpoints

Immigration needs changes in position

U.S. lawmakers need to seize the opportunity to reform our nation’s dysfunctional immigration system. Meanwhile, Kansas lawmakers need to resist efforts by Secretary of State Kris Kobach to push our state in the wrong direction on immigration.

The 2012 presidential election has caused many Republicans to rethink their hard-line stance on immigration. The Latino vote was key to President Obama’s re-election, and Mitt Romney’s support of the “self-deportation” of illegal immigrants (a policy championed by Kobach) helped drive Hispanics to the Democratic Party in record numbers.

As a result, a number of GOP lawmakers, including House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, are supporting comprehensive immigration reform. Even firebrand conservative talk-show host Sean Hannity said he has “evolved” on the immigration issue and now supports a pathway to citizenship.

House Republicans plan to vote this week on legislation that would expand visas for foreign students in science and technology. Some GOP senators are proposing a variation of the DREAM Act aimed at children of illegal immigrants. Those could be positive changes, but lawmakers also need to take bigger reform steps.

For example, former President Bush proposed a good reform plan in 2006 that would provide a path to citizenship for the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants already living in the United States and create a temporary worker program, as well as increase border security and workplace enforcement. Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., proposed a similar reform in 2010.

It’s been clear for many years that our nation’s immigration system needs overhaul, but many lawmakers have refused to consider measures other than increasing border security and making life as miserable as possible for illegal immigrants. The new openness of GOP leaders to comprehensive reform is an opportunity that Congress must not squander.

But while national leaders are moving constructively forward, Kobach wants Kansas to move backward.

Kobach has tried in the past to get Kansas to repeal its law allowing the qualifying children of illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition rates at Kansas public universities. He thinks he may now have the votes needed to revoke the law.

Kansas so far hasn’t passed aggressive law enforcement measures similar to those that Kobach helped author for Arizona and Alabama. Such legislation also might now be in play for Kansas.

The key to keeping the state from sliding backward is Gov. Sam Brownback. When he was in the U.S. Senate, Brownback supported comprehensive immigration reform and the humane treatment of immigrants before backing away from the issue when he ran for president.

Since becoming governor, Brownback hasn’t said much about immigration, other than that he thinks it is primarily a federal issue. Brownback needs to show more leadership and make it clear that Kobach’s policies aren’t right for Kansas or America.

– The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press

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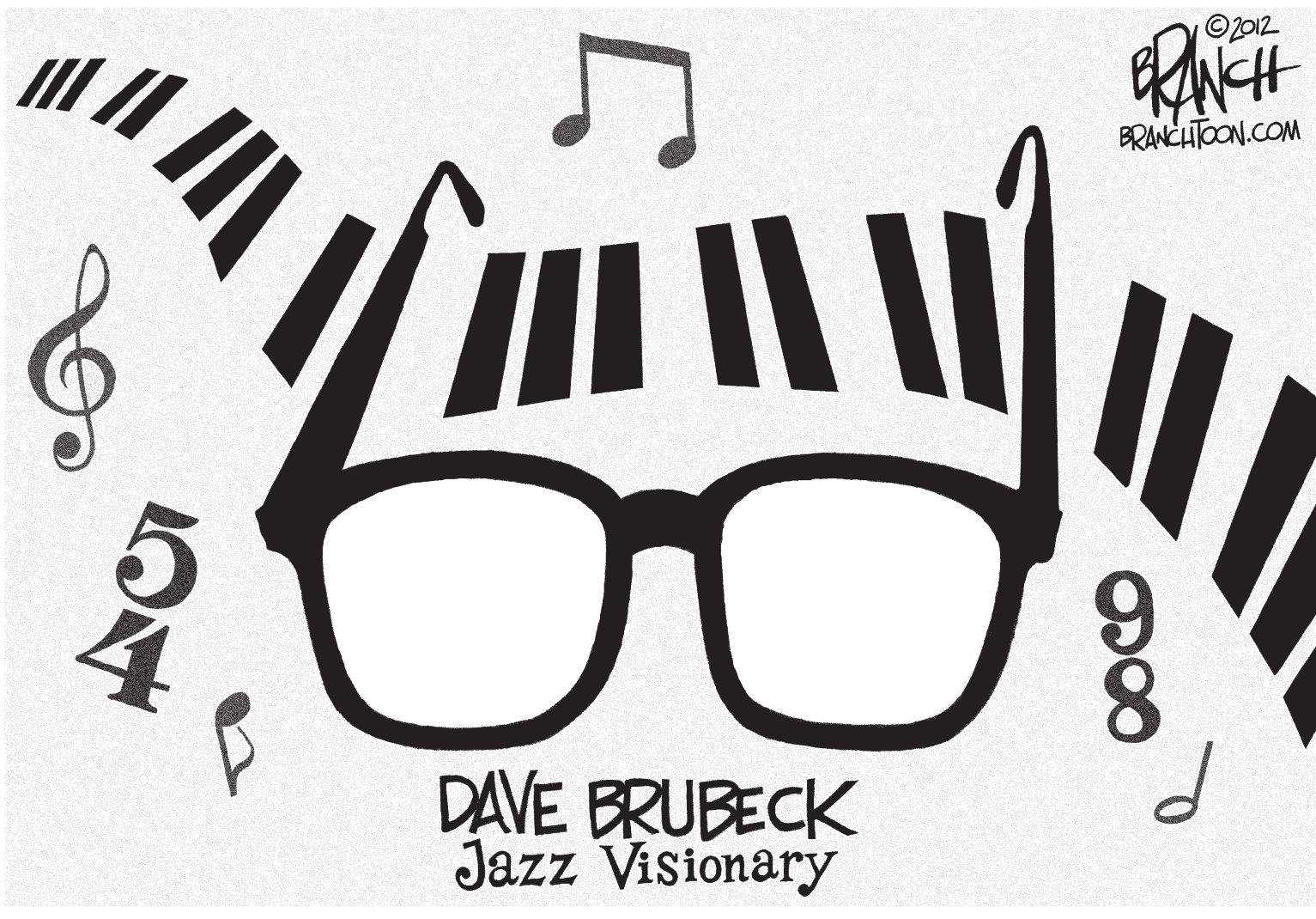
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Spring storm of '31 just started bad years

*This is the third column containing excerpts from the book, "My Life on the Kansas Plains," by Leslie Linville. The book was published by Prairie Printers of Colby. Permission to use this information was given by Harold Linville before his death Nov. 11 at 81. Harold was one of Leslie's eight children.*

In March 1931, after Leslie Linville moved his family to the Stone farm near Winona, they were having some wet weather in northwest Kansas. On March 26, Leslie had decided to keep his cattle in the barn that day so he could butcher a hog.

"I had the hog killed and scalded when suddenly the wind began blowing a gale," he wrote. "The bottom fell out of the thermometer and the hair on that hog set as solid as though it had never been scalded."

He quickly skinned the hog and hung it up and headed for the house. The snow was blowing so bad by that time that he could hardly see the house. It continued for three days. When it stopped, there were drifts almost as high as Leslie's barn.

The Linville house had two rooms on the ground floor. The north room was the living room where they had a coal heating stove, and the wind was whistling in from the north. In the south room, they had a Coleman three-burner gasoline range. Since most of their coal was buried under the snow, they had to shut off the north room and live for three days beside that gasoline cook stove.

"With three small children, that was a job," Leslie recalled.

In that same blizzard, a busload of children got lost near Tribune and some of them froze to death. Several other deaths were reported.

Since Leslie's cattle were inside, he didn't lose any, however.

"Cattle that had not been protected were lying dead everywhere," he wrote. "I saw a herd of about 100 head of fat steers that belonged to the Spencer Ranch. One could have walked from one to another without ever stepping on the ground. We had gone through one of the worst blizzards in the history of the country."

The following spring, Ab Kroth and Leslie



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

planted a short half section of corn together.

"We didn't get much of a crop," he wrote, "and that was the last crop I raised for 10 long years. Every year, I would get a government seed loan and put out a crop, but I could not raise a thing."

Leslie and Bertha's son Harold was born Sept. 3, 1931, in the hospital in Hays. Then Louise was born at Leslie's mother's house in Monument on Sept. 12, 1932. The children went to school in Page City.

In the spring of 1932, Leslie recalled, he had been having a lot of trouble with his back due to his old injuries and it was painful for him to ride a tractor. Then he managed to trade for an Allis-Chalmers Model U tractor. At that time, Allis-Chalmers was pioneering the use of rubber tires on farm tractors and so Leslie decided to order a set for his new tractor. It was the first rubber-tired tractor in northwest Kansas – or anywhere close.

A lot of his neighbors thought he was crazy, that the tires would not hold up and would be too expensive.

"It didn't take me long to prove them wrong," he wrote. "I also had less jarring on my back."

Before long, everyone was putting rubber tires on their tractors.

When writing about the "Dirty '30s," Leslie said it started with a drought that began in Texas, Oklahoma and southwest Kansas before it hit northwest Kansas.

"The first black day that I remember came one afternoon," he wrote. "The wind had been blowing from the southwest all day, and I was out north of the house in the field trying to stop a field that was beginning to kick up. I was on my tractor pulling a lister and when it suddenly got so dusty that I could not see. I ran

into a road ditch at the end of the field. I left the tractor set and walked to the house. By the time I got there, it was almost completely dark. The dust was mostly red and I knew it came in from Texas or Oklahoma, as our soil was black."

Later came black dirt storms where they could hardly see or breathe.

"Bertha kept a table cloth over the food on the table to try to protect it," he wrote. "We would take it off so we could eat, and by the time we were through eating, the underneath table cloth would be black. It was impossible to keep the dirt out of the houses. It settled on beds, clothes, food and everything."

Sometimes they would see a storm rolling in from the northwest for an hour or so before it hit. Leslie reported that they were great high clouds that looked almost black and extended from horizon to horizon, east to west.

Once when Leslie and his family were caught out in one of those storms in their car, he said, the only way he could see to drive was to hold the car door open a little ways and look down directly at the road where there was an old rut that he was able to follow back to the house. He unloaded the family in the house and went to put the car in the shed.

"That dirt could take the paint right off of cars," he said. "I had to try three times before I could get in the shed door even with my lights on."

He added that most farmers were good about trying to keep their fields from blowing, but with the poor machinery and slow tractors of the day, it was hard to cover many acres. Some people from other areas who had land in the area could care less if their fields were bothering their neighbors. Many times, the dirt would get into engines and flood them out.

Leslie said these storms lasted from 1932 to 1938, when they left the Stone farm and moved to Thomas County, and even after that, there were bad days. I'll tell more about this in my next column.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Conservative leaders face revenue drop

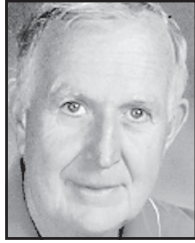
Monday, we met at the Capitol to elect leadership for the Kansas Legislature.

Ray Merrick of Johnson County was chosen as speaker of the House. Susan Wagle of Wichita was selected as the president of the Senate, the first woman to hold that position.

Both are very conservative and have years of experience. The first tasks they have is to assign us all to committees, assign rooms and make the legislative calendar for the upcoming session. I won't know what committees I will have for a few more weeks.

The state revenue estimators predicted a \$705 million drop in revenues for the upcoming fiscal year, which starts July 1. The effect of this year's budget, which created a roughly \$500 million surplus, helps reduce the depth of the financial hole facing the state right away. The fall-off in state revenues will leave us at about \$473 million short, and it will mean that we will need to either have increased revenues, spending cuts or some combination of the two to come up with \$332 million to achieve the constitutionally required budget balance.

A big part of the deficit could be made up



Ward Cassidy

• This week in Topeka

by extending the penny sales tax due to expire July 1. It is worth about \$262 million to the state General Fund. My guess is that the Legislature will not want to renew the tax unless the governor sees too tough of a budget problem and can convince legislators to do it.

The governor receives the financial figures for his 2014 budget from a group of state fiscal experts, the budget director and university economists. The group is referred to as the Consensus Revenue Estimating Group. It amazes me on how accurate they can be with their predictions.

The group estimates Kansans will pay \$60.8 million less in taxes in the current year than originally predicted, partly because of lower

rates for individual income taxpayers. The new tax law takes effect Jan. 1.

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