



Free Press
Viewpoint

Those turned away
deserve to be heard

Our valiant secretary of state makes all kinds of excuses, but the fact remains, 838 Kansans were turned away at the polls last month simply because they did not have a current photo ID – or forgot to bring it.

Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who invented the “need” for voters to have identification with the fiction of possible voter fraud, sighs and points out that is something like .07 of 1 percent of the total vote.

So, it’s no big deal, right?

Unless you are one of the 838 people, whom we guess are mostly citizens who forgot their wallet or purse. No one has any evidence of anything else.

No one is claiming these were illegal aliens or other unqualified voters. The number represents far too small a percentage to indicate any kind of problem with fraud or improper voting.

That threat is something Mr. Kobach, who apparently has no conscience, invented so he would be elected. It was practically his entire platform. Yet, neither the secretary nor anyone else has shown that any problem exists.

Kobach is a prime example of what’s wrong with the Republican party today. His entire existence is founded on fear of illegal immigration, an issue that’s all but over. Pity the state if the Legislature ever gives him police powers.

And while the flow of immigrants has stopped, our country’s immigration system still needs to be fixed, Mr. Kobach has no proposals. He’s still fighting the problems of the last decade.

But the Republican party cannot move forward with a base grounded in fear, catering only to a small and ever-shrinking xenophobic minority.

21st century America is different. The Republicans will have to face facts and display their principles to all Americans if the party is to survive.

Secretary Kobach, whom we’re sure believes he is doing the right thing, is not the guy to lead us into this new century. He’s about 100 years out of date.

Republican principles – smaller government, less spending, more freedom – mean as much as they always have. The party needs to reject leaders, like Mr. Kobach, who want more, and more intrusive, government, no matter their cause, and get back to basics.

Fear and uncertainty do not make a platform. Principles and answers to real needs do. And Republican principles appeal to all groups.

And those 838 Kansans who were refused their right to vote for no good or sufficient cause, other than not having a big-government ID card on their person?

Who will stand up for them – both the inconvenienced 306 who later showed up at the courthouse with their ID, and the 532 who didn’t bother? What about their right to vote?

We are headed fast to a Kobach-induced police state where people can be stopped on Kansas roads for no particular reason and subject to search, even arrest, because they have no “papers,” just like in the communist societies of the last century.

That is not America, and that is not freedom. Wake up, Kansans, before it’s too late.

– Steve Haynes

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
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.

Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kayla Cornett - Sports Reporter
colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

Christina Beringer - Society Reporter
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard @ nwkansas.com

Janene Woodall - Advertising Representative
jwoodall @ nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter @ nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
medmondson @ nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support @ nwkansas.com

NOR’WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
Gary Stewart, Foreman

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Pressmen

Kris McCool, Judy McKnight, Tracy Traxel,
Sheri Arroyo, Mailing

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 Nor’West 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

©2012
MRC.org/CMF
Dist. by King Features



ALTHOUGH THE MAYANS GET ALL THE ATTENTION, IT’S THE INCAS WHO HAVE THE ANSWER TO THE FISCAL-CLIFF PROBLEM

Mom was right: fill up the gas tank

My mother always told me that it’s as easy to drive on the top of the gas tank as the bottom. She always stopped and filled her car when it got near the half-empty mark.

My husband is more of a, “It’s still half full and I’ve got better things to do than stand around a gas station, anyway,” kind of person.

I remember driving with my mother to Texas after Daddy died. We would go down in her car and I would fly back each fall. She had a routine and seldom varied from it. When she got older, Steve said that if I wanted to go with her, I’d do the driving. She’d get quite upset when the gauge went below half a tank and I didn’t stop to fill it up.

I thought she was just being silly.

Now, however, I realize, I should have listened to my mother.

Twice within the last six months, I’ve been in danger of running out of gas while on a fairly long trip.

The first was in Colorado. We were going to fill up in Monte Vista after having lunch at one our favorite Mexican restaurants, which is about two miles out on the highway. But after lunch, we remembered that they were working on the streets in town, so we just decided to go on to Alamosa, about 25 miles away.

The fancy gauge on the truck said we could



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

drive 30 miles before we ran out of gas. We were golden.

That is when we learned two important lessons:

1. It’s a lot farther than 25 miles from the restaurant to Alamosa by the back roads than by the main highway through town.
2. That gauge lies.

Watching the gauge numbers drop like a stone while checking the roadway markers for how far we had to go was nerve wracking, and I was driving.

We coasted for about two miles into town and rolled into the gas station on 0. I expected the engine to cough and die at any time, but we made it.

Then, a couple of weeks ago, we went to Lawrence, each in our own vehicle. I was to return to Oberlin in Steve’s truck with the dog while he went to an Associated Press meeting

in Kansas City with my car.

I got to Topeka and realized that he hadn’t filled up the truck when I filled my car in Emporia. I started looking for a gas station but, by that time I was pretty much through town and headed west toward Junction City. No way I could get there with the gas I had.

I called him. Where is there a gas station out here? He wasn’t sure. There might be one at the little towns off Interstate 70, but going to one of those would use up all the gas I had, and I wasn’t sure I could make it back to Topeka. I finally just turned around and drove the 15 miles back to town, getting to the station with about 2 miles left on the gauge.

Well, that blew half an hour, but I was good to go. I got back to my turning point and two miles down the road was a big truck stop. Who would have known?

Next time, maybe I’ll remember to listen to my mother.

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 @ nwkansas.com.

All we want for Christmas is a farm bill

Though critical to farmers, ranchers and consumers, the Farm Bill has not been at the top of the list of issues on Capitol Hill. Instead, lawmakers are debating how to avoid what’s known as the fiscal cliff. In case you haven’t heard, this fiscal cliff is a series of tax increases and spending cuts set to take effect Jan. 1.

Many farmers are hoping lawmakers will see passage of a five-year farm bill – with its \$20 billion-plus in savings – as one way to keep from going over the economic precipice.

In any case, agriculture will be looking at a one-year extension of the farm bill, according to Mary Kay Thatcher, American Farm Bureau Federation senior director of congressional relations.

“We have 38 programs in the 2008 farm bill that expired in October,” Thatcher says. “There is no funding and no plan for continuation at this stage.”

And while disaster assistance for livestock producers may be one of the biggest concerns for Kansas farmers, every one of these 38 programs has proponents clamoring to make sure their interests will be in the extension – and the next Farm Bill.

The other key issue yet to be resolved is how to pay for what farmers want. Livestock disaster assistance alone is estimated to cost between \$600 and \$700 million. That money doesn’t fall out of the sky.

Where do we find it?

Do we take it from direct payments, the Conservation Reserve Program, food stamps, nutrition – where does it come from?

In spite of the dwindling money available for agriculture, Thatcher believes Congress is well aware of the crisis affecting livestock producers. She hopes this will translate into some form of livestock disaster assistance.

And while most people in farm country are betting there will be a one-year extension, hammering out the details may be even more difficult because of the polarized Congress. An example of this is the struggle on how much to



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

cut from the food stamp program.

Participation in the program has increased nearly 70 percent since 2008. Republicans would like to cut this program by nearly \$16 billion while the Democrats don’t want to cut a nickel from the \$770 billion total.

Only one in three children pays for his or her school lunch, Thatcher says. And only one in 16 pays for his or her school breakfast.

Now that direct payments have been cut dramatically during the last couple of years, crop insurance is the next farm program to be targeted.

“Crop insurance already has a big bull’s eye on it,” Thatcher notes. “It’s the same idea behind why people rob banks. It’s where the money is – it’s easy pickings.”

Farmers must continue to voice their opinions to members of Congress about the importance of crop insurance. Thatcher says the number of producers who contacted their congressional delegation on farming issues dropped off during the past summer. She says this is a trend that must be reversed.

“While your Kansas congressional delegation is well aware of the stakes involved in the next farm bill, your own neighbors, friends and those people in your urban and suburban areas are not up to speed,” she said. “Take time to tell them what’s happening in agriculture.”

Some of these Kansans could be the guy who sits behind you in the pew at church. They may be from rural America, but that doesn’t mean they understand 78 percent of the farm bill goes for nutritional programs.

“We’ve got to start (telling our story) some-

where,” Thatcher says. “Five years ago, less than one half of farmers or ranchers knew that less than a fraction of 1 percent of the (Humane Society of the United States) money goes to animal shelters.”

Others believe if some farmers are doing well, all farmers are prosperous, Thatcher continued, but that’s not necessarily the case.

Kansans all know livestock producers are paying dearly for feed for their stock. The drought has caused ponds to dry up and pastures haven’t provided adequate grass for three years in some parts of the state.

There’s a story to tell about agriculture and no one tells it better than engaged, knowledgeable farmers and ranchers, Thatcher says. Today, everyone must step up and speak out.

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.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774
roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

Mallard
Fillmore

• Bruce
Tinsley

