



Other Viewpoints

Ideas look good, undermine farms

Two proposals with their origins in the governor's office are designed to work hand-in-hand to undermine a Kansas way of life and simultaneously cede the state's natural resources to corporate agricultural interests.

One proposal from the Department of Agriculture would up-end an 80-year-old Kansas law that keeps corporate farming interests out of the state – designed and supported by Republicans at the time of its passage to preserve the Kansas family farm.

The change would allow corporate or foreign agribusiness to enter the state and dominate land and production markets in a way that likely would render the family farmer obsolete, lead to rural depopulation and further erode the state's tax base.

To sweeten the pot for huge corporate farm operations, the governor's office is pushing yet more in a long line of corporate tax breaks. A Senate bill would authorize more than \$10 million in sales tax exemptions and corporate tax credits to large agriculture companies that move or invest in Kansas under the High Performance Incentive Program – a move that at once would provide corporate welfare to large commercial interests and reduce revenue for cities, counties and local schools.

The High Performance Incentive Program traditionally has given tax breaks for companies that provide above average wages in the state, with a requirement that companies document their planned investments before qualifying under the program. The breaks include a 10-percent income tax credit for capital investment, a training tax credit and a sales tax exemption for capital investment costs.

Under the new proposal, the tax relief would be retroactive to the 2012 tax year and would be extended to chicken egg production, sheep and goat farming, cattle feedlots, dairy cattle and milk production, and hog farming.

Inconceivably, the Kansas Farm Bureau, the Kansas Pork Association and the Kansas Livestock Association have supported both the incentive program expansion and the move to lift Kansas' restrictions on corporate farming – two measures certain to hurt those organizations' members and, eventually, their own ability to help shape farm policy.

Such measures, and their aggressive support by the governor, show that Kansas now is governed under a corporate-political complex in which state policy is a joint venture between politicians who literally give away the farm to large multinational corporations, who, in exchange, help finance those politicians' continued success at election time.

While this symbiotic relationship between governance and business might be good for both host and parasite, it is bad for everyone else who calls Kansas home.

– The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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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.

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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 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.

ITEM: APPLYING FOR OBAMECARE "AS DAUNTING AS DOING YOUR TAXES"



KIRK
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Liability needed to enforce responsibility

Big government, little government or no government? Liberal, conservative, Christian, non-Christian, agnostic or atheist?

No matter your position in society's structure, you have responsibility. Whether it be family, friendship, community activity or whatever, you must do your share in making it equitable and fair for all who are involved. Individual responsibility is paramount in maintaining civilization. Rules and regulations are of no value without individuals accepting responsibility.

Federal and state involvement in health care is an issue today. Tort reform seems to be directed toward limiting liability.

Without liability there is no responsibility. As an independent farmer for some 50 years, I've hired and fired a few people. Honest mistakes and admitting those mistakes allowed some employees to remain on the job. If the employee admitted their mistake and made an honest effort to correct their mistakes they got another chance, if not they found themselves looking for other employment. In my case, I



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

was the judge, jury and executioner.

Negligence and carelessness is inexcusable in health care. Health care is not comparable to my farm. No single individual can unilaterally determine the seriousness of offense, fault and liability. Insurance companies have a conflict of interest that prevents them from being unbiased.

If the individuals directly involved cannot agree on fault and just compensation, we should rely on the court system and (I prefer) the jury system to determine fault and penalty in health care cases. The integrity of lawyers, judges and jurors has to be in place for the system to be just and fair to all litigants.

We need regulation and oversight from some entity outside of patient, caregiver or pharmaceutical company. The government serves that role. But, if government prevents challenge by any individuals involved, whether it be by regulation or performance, those regulations or guidelines become moot.

Insurance companies being more profitable with "tort reform," as we see it now, is evidence that people are being denied justice. Why can't the insurance companies penalize those creating liabilities, like they do on automobile or individual health insurance?

If the doctor or care provider makes a mistake, their premium should go up. Mistakes are being made in the health care system, and the industry must be held accountable.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired 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 rwinc@cheerful.com.

Are you ready for spill prevention?

Kansas farmers, ranchers and landowners, the deadline to file a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan looms just around the corner. As of Friday, May 10, any farmer, rancher or landowner who has petroleum products of 1,320 gallons or more, in above-ground tanks 55 gallons or greater, must have a spill prevention and countermeasures plan in place as required by the Environmental Protection Agency.

A plan is not required if storage is less than 1,320 gallons.

Petroleum-based products include typical farm and ranch fuels and lubricants including gasoline, off- and on-road diesel fuel, hydraulic and crop oil. This does not include fertilizers, herbicides or insecticides.

Farmers and ranchers who do not implement these Environmental Protection Agency containment requirements and have no plan if a spill occurs would be in violation of the law, says Steve Swaffar, Kansas Farm Bureau Natural Resources director.

"Such action could lead to violations and the potential for financial penalties," Swaffar notes. "Fines could amount to \$10,000 per day, per violation."

The rule for containment of petroleum spills dates back to the Clean Water Act of 1973.

"Today we're looking at the requirement of a spill plan as well, and that's the newest part of the rule," Swaffar says.

The intent is to ensure petroleum products



John Schlageck

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do not reach surface water, wells or other water resources. Spills could also impact a farm or ranch's profit margin.

There is no specific blueprint for the ideal containment system. Some farmers, ranchers and landowners enlist the help of engineering firms to help them implement a plan for their individual operation.

"What you typically see in rural areas are earthen berms made of compacted soil with some sort of crushed rock or shavings on top of the compacted soil," Swaffar says.

Other products used for containment include concrete or metal.

"It simply has to hold the petroleum in should you encounter a natural disaster or an accidental spill," Swaffar notes.

Should a farmer or rancher experience a petroleum spill and have it contained, what is their responsibility for removal of the product?

In the case of such spills, it is up to the farmer or rancher to dispose of the product properly, Swaffar explains. Local authorities must be notified and the petroleum product along

with any contaminated soil must be removed.

The deadline to file a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan is fast approaching. The Environmental Protection Agency can come out to farms and ranches in Kansas, and across the country, to conduct inspections.

"You have to ask yourself, 'Do I want to be that farm that's inspected and not in compliance?'" Swaffar says. "Do I want to deal with the civil penalties and the publicity associated with not being in compliance?"

Attempts have been made to exempt agriculture from the rule without success. The deadline has been extended three times.

The reality is that the containment aspect of the rule has been in place for almost 25 years, Swaffar says. As producers look at future petroleum storage projects, they should factor in compliance with spill prevention control and countermeasures.

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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