

## Other Viewpoints

### Underage drinking takes a sober focus

A check of local businesses offering alcohol for sale ended on a sour note. The sting operation conducted by Garden City police in cooperation with the Kansas Division of Alcohol Beverage Control saw people at 18 local restaurants, stores and other places cited for allegedly furnishing alcohol to minors.

The number of citations surprised even law enforcement officials, and provided a sobering look at how easy it could be for local minors to buy booze.

Underage drinking has been a problem for some time in Finney County. So, it was encouraging a few years back when the county landed a nearly \$1 million federal grant designed to see law enforcement, educators, parents, churches, substance abuse prevention agencies and others work together on the problem.

The Finney County Community Health Coalition set out on a plan to bolster existing efforts and create new ways to teach life skills and discourage youngsters from using alcohol.

Research shows youngsters who consume alcohol before the age of 15 are far more likely to have alcohol-related problems throughout life. Immediate issues could range from poor performance in school to more serious outcomes in traffic crashes, teen pregnancies, sexually-transmitted diseases, crime and suicides.

One local strategy to discourage underage consumption involved enlisting Garden City High School students to help educate elementary school-age children. Putting the power of peer groups and positive role models to use in preventing dangerous behavior made sense, and allowed teens to develop leadership skills as they mentored youngsters.

Recent feedback suggested such ventures have made a difference.

Annual Kansas Communities That Care surveys showed the number of local students who reported alcohol use in the previous 30 days declining in the past few years. The same positive trend materialized in regard to students who said they had engaged in binge drinking.

While it's good to see progress, the recent check of places that sell alcohol proved there's always more to do in educating people of all ages.

And, why it's necessary to be vigilant in devoting resources to a problem that, if overlooked, only promises to exact a more costly toll down the line.

— The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press

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### Surveillance leaks reveal mindset of media

The massive leaks that spilled the details of the National Security Agency's classified surveillance programs have done more than just inform Americans about our government's massive spying apparatus.

It also has provided a window into the mindset of the mainstream media. While establishment journalists profess to be — and may genuinely believe they are — fiercely independent, it's troubling to see how quickly so many of them ally themselves with the powerful when the scruples of mainstream institutions (Pentagon, intelligence agencies, the National Security Agency, the presidency) have been called into question.

The Edward Snowden saga is a case in point.

Snowden, the leaker who disclosed the details of the size and scope of the NSA's surveillance programs while working as a government contractor for Booz Allen Hamilton in Hawaii, certainly deserves scrutiny for his decision to break the law for what he seems to think were noble reasons. That Snowden freely admitted that he took the job at Booz Allen to get access to classified documents that proved widespread surveillance does somewhat undermine Snowden's image as an honest whistleblower.

Snowden's questionable tactics notwithstanding, his leaks have provided the impetus for a much-needed debate about what limits should be placed on government surveillance.

I, for one, think the public should have been privy to the fact that the NSA had compiled the logs of nearly all telephone calls in the United



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

States. Not only should the people have known about the program, they also should have had a say about whether our government's ubiquitous surveillance should be further restricted or reformed in a way that intrudes less on people's privacy.

What has been so disappointing about the Snowden affair is the arrogant and unserious way he's been treated by the mandarins of the news business. After news of the NSA leaks broke, it didn't take long for the protectors of the status quo to mock the 30-year-old computer whiz in a manner that carried with it more than a hint of snobbery.

Washington Post columnist Roger Cohen called Snowden a "cross-dressing Little Red Riding Hood," while the New Yorker's Jeffrey Toobin wrote that "Snowden is a grandiose narcissist who deserves to be in prison." In addition, Politico's Roger Simon snidely referred to Snowden as the "the slacker who came in from the cold" with "all the qualifications to become a grocery bagger."

The outrage of the mainstream media is influenced by a thinly-concealed belief that

certain government policies — no matter how much those policies affect us or intrude on our privacy — should be left to the political cognoscenti who are allowed to act with little accountability. The idea that a regular citizen — and a high school dropout no less — would question the wisdom of our political elites seems to greatly irritate them.

The problem with this mindset is that it allows political issues to be shaped by the views of the powerful — high-ranking military officials, the Pentagon, the CIA, FBI, NSA, etc. — because the arguments of the less powerful (victims of drone attacks, government whistleblowers, peace advocates, civil libertarians) are dismissed as naïve or unserious.

While the powerful deserve the same opportunity to express their viewpoints as the rest of us, when their views are left unchallenged by the omission of alternative opinions, the public is left with a version of reality that's been shaped in a way that benefits the most elite and powerful forces in our society.

This is great for the elites, but it may not be great for the country as a whole.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at [www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision](http://www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision), or find him at [twitter.com/heintz23](http://twitter.com/heintz23).

### Immigration reform needed in Kansas

The immigration debate has begun in Washington, and not a moment too soon. It is past time our failed immigration and guest-worker program was fixed.

Too often, "immigration" is used as a bad word. The truth of the matter is, a reliable guest-worker program makes sense for Kansas farmers and ranchers, our communities and our food system.

Farmers and ranchers face a shortage of workers who are willing and able to work on farms and in fields. Most U.S. residents don't find these jobs attractive; yet for many prospective workers from other countries, these jobs present real economic opportunities.

Immigration is directly responsible for about 8 percent of the Kansas economy. Every job held by an immigrant, on average, equates to nearly one additional job created in the state. Furthermore, Kansans should not fear losing work to immigrants. If every unemployed non-immigrant in our state were to be immediately employed, there would still be roughly 50,000 jobs available.

This state has a long history of utilizing workers from other countries, even other states. Folks from Missouri and Arkansas have helped harvest Kansas wheat since before World War II. A handful of Aussies from "Down Under" have also been known to show up as harvest help.

Workers from Mexico showed up in southwestern Kansas in the '50s to help with the fledgling irrigation crops. Shortly after, they became heavily involved in the feedlot and packing industries in this region of our state.

This same minority came to northwestern Kansas where I grew up at the start of the '60s. In Sherman and Sheridan counties they hoed weeds in the sugar beet fields.



John Schlageck

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

Today, some workers from South Africa are working the fields of northwestern Kansas and plenty of people from south of the border still provide a needed labor force for the Sunflower State.

It's past time for this country to figure out a workable immigration policy. One that will benefit our country and those willing to come to these United States and provide valuable labor.

The U.S. Senate is now debating an immigration bill that deals responsibly with our existing workforce, gives farmers and ranchers access to a usable, legal, stable supply of workers and addresses border security and employer enforcement.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office recently released a report stating the Senate's immigration bill could save our nation up to \$197 billion during the next 10 years and an additional \$700 billion in the decade to follow. The report also said the legislation would increase real U.S. gross domestic product by 3.3 percent through 2023 due to the influx of new workers.

If Congress can't fix our broken immigration system, we'll be forced to import more food and agricultural products from foreign countries. More U.S. and Kansas farmers and ranchers will go out of business, crippling the rural communities that are the backbone of our

nation. As we struggle to pull ourselves out of the Great Recession, can we Americans afford to ignore the economic and social benefits that will come with immigration reform?

Immigration reform is right for the economy, for the business community, and for immigrants who follow us in their hopes for a better life.

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

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[roberts.senate.gov/public/](http://roberts.senate.gov/public/)

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966.  
[moran.senate.gov/public/](http://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](http://huelskamp.house.gov)

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### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

