



Other Viewpoints

Business needs immigration labor

Kansas municipal leaders want to legitimize immigrants who are in the state illegally at present. Even the Kansas Chamber of Commerce, with its ultra-right-wing politics, wants a new business-friendly immigration policy. That means a way for industries that rely on immigrant labor not to have their workforce deported wholesale.

It is time for the politicians to listen to local and business leaders and quit pandering to Kris Kobach – Kansas secretary of state and leading crusader against illegal immigration – and the bigoted ideologues.

The League of Kansas Municipalities issued a statement Oct. 14 at its annual meeting urging Congress to enact immigration reform that includes what the organization calls a “reasonable” path to citizenship for immigrants now in the U.S. illegally. Hutchinson City Manager John Dearnoff was elected president of the league at the same meeting.

The statement follows a letter to the state’s congressional delegation in August signed by more than 30 Kansas mayors, urging support for immigration reform.

“We support a federal solution to immigration reform that allows reasonable access to citizenship while assuring adequate border security and protecting our economy and workforce,” the League’s position on immigration reform stated.

“Any immigration legislation generated by Congress cannot burden local governments with extra law enforcement or administrative burdens. This federal problem needs a federal solution paid for with federal resources.”

Area mayors signing the letter included leaders from Buhler, Coldwater, Mount Hope, Stafford, Moundridge, Russell, Syracuse and Leoti. Mayors of Wichita and Topeka also were signers.

Sadly, Sens. Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts of Kansas lack the self-confidence to stray from the talking points of the tea-party forces. They both voted against sensible immigration reform that passed the Senate 68-32 in June. The four members of the House who represent Kansas aren’t likely to be any more courageous or sensible.

Border security already has been beefed up, and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, focusing on removal of people with felony records and other repeat problems, deported a record nearly 410,000 people last year.

The reality is that too many immigrants are here illegally simply to deport them all. And most of them are good, law-abiding, hard-working people who are working jobs that would go unfilled were the radicals to be successful in their ethnic-cleansing campaign.

It is good to see leaders of Kansas cities get behind good, realistic immigration policy and try to talk some sense into the politicians in Washington.

– The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

Write us

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

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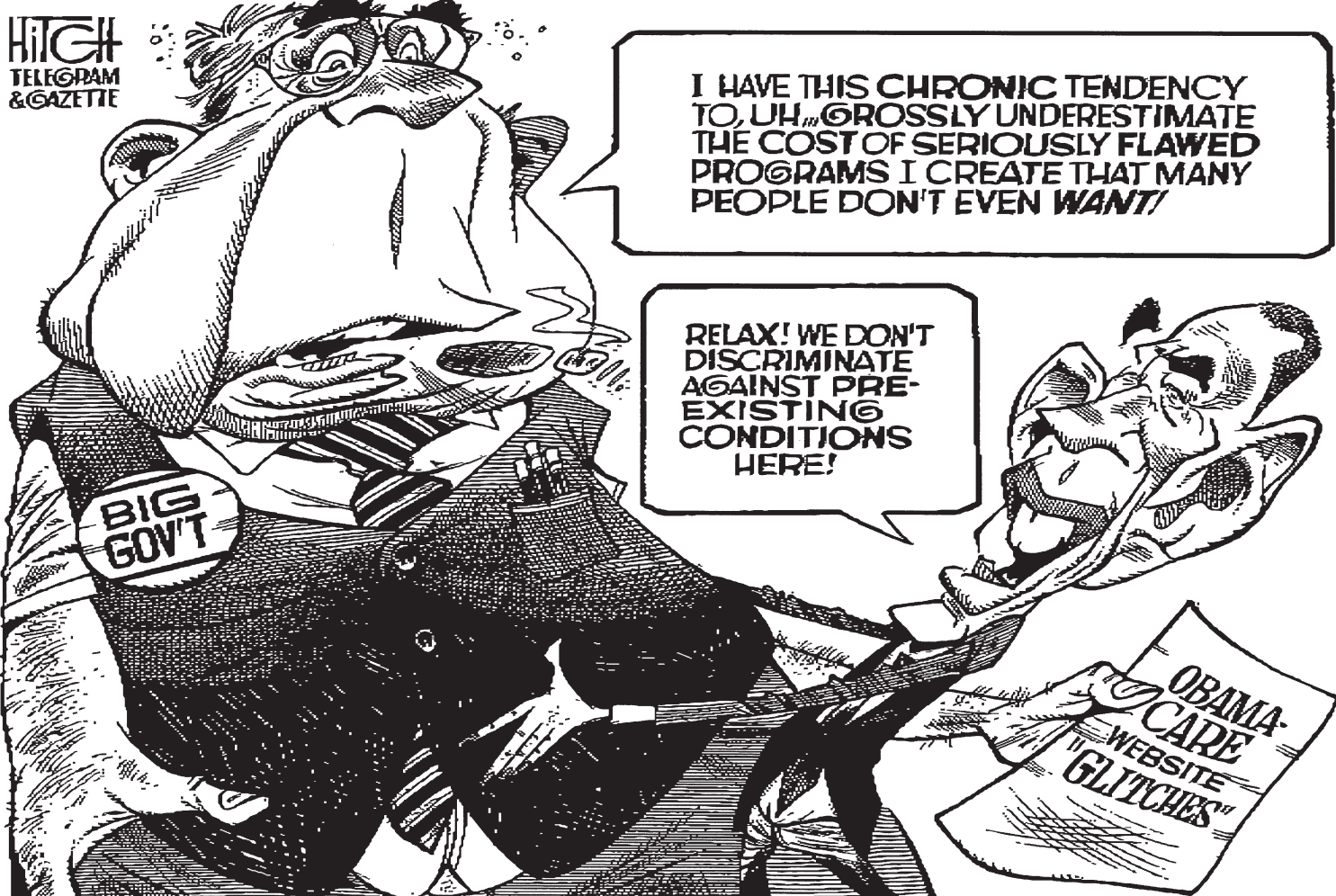
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Staying in touch was never so easy

When my children were growing up, I never imagined that we would share so many things across the miles that separate us.

On one Saturday night, the Florida State Seminoles played the Clemson Tigers at Death Valley. I thought that stadium name was a hoot until I saw all the traditions that the Tigers observe before the game.

First, they load all the players in full uniform, helmets included, onto three enormous buses. The buses make their way to the stadium with fans all along the way cheering and chanting. When the buses arrive, the players get off and run a gauntlet, led by their coach, to the ramp that leads down to the field. At the top of the ramp is a rock they all touch for luck.

The band is playing, the fans cheering and jumping up and down and then the canon announces the team. The place goes wild.

As this was all happening, the visiting team, the Seminoles, quietly made their way onto the field. What a way to start a game!

Both my son and daughter were texting with me as the game started. Miles separate us, but our allegiances are still strong. We all kept in



Sharon Friedlander

• Musings

touch during a game. My son went off the grid during the fourth quarter. My daughter and I kept up the banter until the game ended with the Seminoles annihilating the Tigers.

My son texted me the next morning that he had gone to sleep during the fourth quarter since he had to work the next day. Guess I will have to forgive him, since he gives me credit for giving him a good work ethic.

I love the fact that we can all stay in touch during events or just because. It makes it easier to bear being so far apart. Texted hugs are not the real thing, but they help make those miles disappear.

My grandson is in Marine boot camp at Parris Island, S.C., and he can only keep in touch

with letters. We have exchanged letters several times, and that seems to take forever. First you write, and then you wait and wait. I liked it better when we could text any time and it happens now.

We have come a long way in communicating over long distances. Whether it is one mile or a thousand, the conversation happens so quickly that you don't notice the miles. E-mails and texting have replaced the old-fashioned mail. There is still something special about getting a letter in the mail, though.

In the end, it only matters that you remain close. Text, snail, e-mail, it really doesn't matter what way you keep in touch, only that you do stay in touch. I appreciate any method that lets me know that the ones I love are doing OK.

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Countryside is changing in China

“One Kansas farmer feeds 128 people and you,” reads a common Kansas road sign. In China, that sign would read: “One Chinese peasant feeds you,” because the rural population constitutes nearly half of China. However, that proportion was much higher a half century ago, and the numbers of farmers is plummeting each year.

As I traveled the superhighway from the Xi'an airport to Northwest Agricultural and Forestry University for the seventh time since 2001, the countryside alongside the highway has changed. It was a patchwork of small family plots 12 years ago. Today most of those plots are gone. Graders have removed the pathway ridges between plots. Now, monocultures allow larger tractors and combines to run some distance. Where three generations used to work side-by-side after school, now no student-age children can be seen. They come home from school and are sent inside to study the rest of the day. Escape from the peasant life via hard study, passing the gao kao test, and going to university is their one-way route off of the farm.

Intensive farming of small plots has shifted to the older generation who will someday retire and small plot farming will disappear. China could command an instant move to industrialized farming tomorrow, but that would leave many folks out of work. China is moving at about the pace that the rural population is retiring and human dignity can be preserved.

But sometimes faster. I stood on the second story balcony of a brand new vacation-hotel-restaurant complex not yet open to the public. About a quarter mile away was an old village.

“That village will be gone next year,” my host explained.

“What will happen to the people living there?” I asked.

“The young couples all left for the city long ago,” he explained. “All that are left are old farmers. They would make about 2,000 yuan a year, so the government will give them that as a pension and they will live at the new housing you saw down the road, simple but modern.”

“What happens to their land?” I asked.



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

“The government owns it. When we built these hotels and restaurant, we pay rent,” was his reply.

“That is a lot more than what the farmer was producing. That is how the government here is financed.”

This is the American concept of “eminent domain” with Chinese characteristics.

And that is what makes this system work. It is an irony that in a country founded on a peasant revolt against landlords and indentured servitude, the government is now the big landlord. It pays the retired farmers and then generates far more land tax revenue.

Stanford professor Paul Ehrlich advocated constraining all building within current cities and suburbs, and I grieve to see so much rich Kansas farmland turned into housing. Our zoning laws are a farce. China is far better at “building up, not out.” They constrain their housing development – usually. I was standing on one such development that occupied good soil. But usually, good effort is being made to save the rich farmland.

“So this is how county and state governments are funded across China?” I asked.

“No,” was the answer. “Only where the agricultural soil is good. Many regions have to find other sources. And sometimes the government officials at local level do not run this program fairly and that causes trouble.”

I am careful when I speak the Chinese words for “countryside” (nengchuan) or “farmer” (nengmin). Some uses can be an insult. “Nengmin” translates as “peasant” and in this word you begin to sense the derogatory nature of the term, like “hillbilly” or “hick.” And sadly, some countryside folks believe they are inferior because they have little education and

lack city manners. It is not without basis. Several weeks ago as I was waiting at a bus stop, a rural man urinated on a lamp post about six feet away. China is a spectrum, from 1930s Depression-era Appalachia without electricity or plumbing, to the most modern cities in the world, where this would never have been tolerated.

Back in the college classroom, a student from the countryside told her story. Her rural parents left the farm to work hard in the city so that she could go to a better city school. In her case, a Chinese high school teacher detected her country accent and railed at her that she did not deserve a city school and belonged back in the countryside. This made the student very angry and resentful and she committed herself to studying even harder. “And I am here at the university. I showed her!” she triumphantly tells her classmates, with tears in her eyes.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

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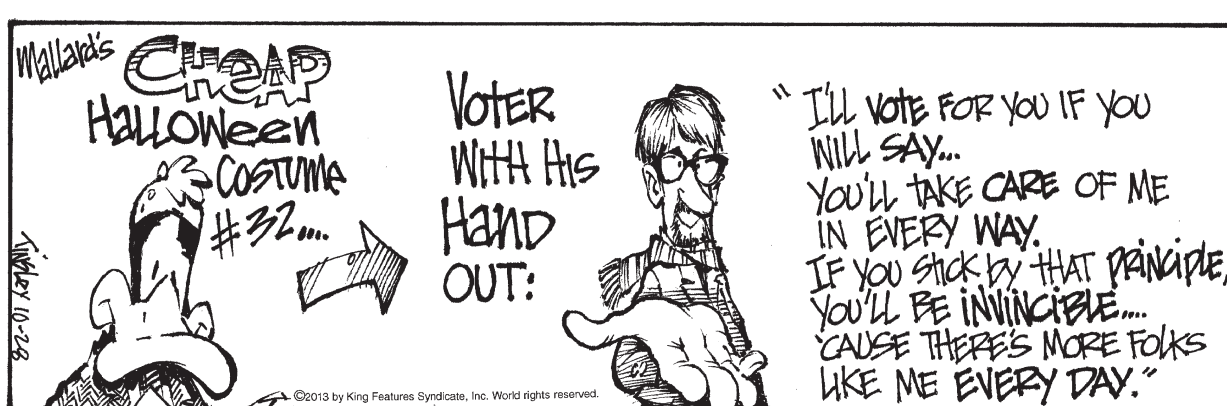
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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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