

Other Viewpoints

Progress visible in costly border war

Missouri State Sen. Ryan Silvey has offered a straightforward plan that could be a strong start toward reducing the costly economic development border war between Kansas and Missouri.

Silvey's bill would prevent Missouri from giving public subsidies to companies for any existing jobs they would poach from the Kansas-side counties of Johnson, Wyandotte, Miami and Douglas.

The bill would be contingent on Kansas not using its incentives to lure companies and their current jobs from Jackson, Clay, Cass and Platte counties in Missouri.

The laws now in effect are pure folly.

In recent years, several large businesses have left Kansas City for Johnson County – and vice versa – and lowered their tax responsibilities in doing so, while simply moving existing jobs across the state line. As a result, these companies aren't paying their fair share of taxes. That puts pressure on others that don't get the tax breaks to come up with enough money to continue providing essential public services.

The bottom line: The incentives have diverted hundreds of millions of public dollars to private companies for few net new jobs in the region.

In an interview last Friday, Silvey made it clear that companies creating new jobs when they move from one state to the other could still be eligible for state incentives under his bill. The key should be to consider rewarding new economic activity with taxpayer subsidies, although both states also could be a lot stricter on even those giveaways in the future.

Silvey's bill should be a high priority for the Missouri General Assembly to act on when it begins meeting in January. It also should get the support of Gov. Jay Nixon.

In the Kansas City area, the measure has been embraced by leaders of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, who properly have criticized the current situation because it favors the chosen few companies that scoot across the state line.

Bill Hall, president of the Hall Family Foundation, an influential proponent of ending the border war because of the financial havoc it causes, called Silvey's bill a "tremendous step forward."

In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback appears ready to provide much-needed leadership in working toward meeting the reasonable restrictions laid out in Silvey's bill.

That's a positive change from a few years when Brownback and others – including the mayors of some large Johnson County cities – downplayed the concerns about "competition" between the states, ignoring the fiscal damages both were suffering.

Today, because of excessive tax cuts in Kansas, the state needs all the revenue it can get to provide basic services. Kansas especially shouldn't be giving away precious tax dollars through overly aggressive incentive programs.

Brownback is in a perfect position to tell the mayors and others that Kansas can, indeed, compete with Missouri and other states when it comes to luring jobs.

But keeping the status quo is unacceptable because it ratchets up corporate welfare in both states.

– *The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press*

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FROM OUT OF NOWHERE,
LIKE A CHILL IN THE NIGHT,
HE LEAKED SECRETS LONG HELD,
BY LIPS CLOSED SO TIGHT.

HE CRIED OUT: "FLASH DRIVES,
FLASH DRIVES FOR ALL!
THEY KNOW WHEN YOU SURF
THEY KNOW WHEN YOU CALL!"

BUT SOON HE WAS GONE,
DECLARING HE'D "WON."
HE RETURNED TO THE SNOW,
HIS WORK HERE WAS "DONE."

SOME CALLED HIM A TRAITOR,
OTHERS SAID HE'D DONE WELL.
SECURITY OR PRIVACY?
ONLY HISTORY WILL TELL.



Facts aside, solstice just starts winter

It started when I got to wondering what day the winter solstice fell on this year.

Being, in the modern way, too lazy to get up and look at a calendar, I just Googled it. What I found included some interesting facts, a bunch of misinformation and a lot of really sloppy writing.

First, some of the facts. The solstice, the time when Earth's northern hemisphere is as far away from the sun as it gets all year, came at 11:11 a.m. Saturday. The solstice, which scientists describe as a "singular event," just happens; the sun appears to be moving farther south and lower in the sky each day until it stops and starts, ever so slowly, to go the other way.

This happens because the Earth's rotational axis is tilted about 23 degrees. In the summer, the northern hemisphere is tilted toward the sun, in the winter, away. The equinoxes are the instants when the relative movement reverses.

One article I found (names are being omitted to protect the guilty) calls the equinox "the official beginning of winter." That's bull, as a couple of others point out. Firstly, winter does not recognize any "official" status; it comes when it will.

And meteorologists generally define winter, in terms of weather, as roughly Dec. 1 to March 1. Dec. 21 (or sometimes, Dec. 22) may be the shortest day of the year, but it's seldom the coldest. That happens, the National Weather Service says, because even though days



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

start to get longer, the Earth is losing more heat than it gains for some weeks before things start to warm up. The "middle" of winter still comes some time in January.

Writers seem to have a lot of trouble accurately describing what happens. Saturday, a couple of articles report, we had about 9 hours, 32 minutes of daylight in the "continental U.S." Of course, the actual time varies from south to north. Go far enough north in Alaska, and there was no sunrise at all. Closer to the equator, the length of days is more constant.

Oh, and in this area, the calculated times Saturday were 8 a.m. and 5:20 p.m., 9 hours and 40 minutes of daylight.

Several describe the sun as "moving south" or "turning around in the sky" until it is "straight overhead," but of course, we know the sun is not moving relative to earth. Galileo figured that out a few centuries ago. It's the Earth that moves relative to the sun. From here, it just looks like the sun "moves."

That's because, as the Earth revolves in its orbit around the sun, the axis continues to

point the same direction, exposing the northern or southern hemispheres to more or less light and heat in each season. If the axis stayed constant in relation to the sun, one half might have winter all year and the other a long, hot summer.

As it is, we get variety in our weather in the temperate zones, everything north and south of the tropics. It's a nice thing, though I personally could use a little more summer and a little less winter. With global warming, that may be coming, and it might not be so nice, but I'm willing to give it a try.

Oh, and one more little fact. While the days may be getting longer, the sun won't start coming up any earlier for a while. Sunrise will continue to be later for a month while sunsets come later still. That will change in early January, but sunrise won't get back before 8 a.m. until Jan. 21, a full month later, at least out here.

Me, I'm just glad the days will be a little longer for the next six months. I can't wait for the spring equinox, when day and night finally are equal and spring officially begins. OK, that's not true; spring weather usually starts about March 1 – if you remember that March is a spring month as November is a fall month.

Still, I'll be ready by then.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Christmas gems still shine with wisdom

Some people forget about the true meaning of Christmas – celebrating the birth of Christ, love, friendship and spending time with the family.

From holidays of my youth, I have fond memories of Mom inside fixing turkey and dressing while my brothers and I would be playing outside, throwing snowballs, playing "fox and geese" and just being kids.

One thing I'll never forget about this period are some of my dad and his friend's favorite sayings. It seems like we always visited more during the holiday season, and as children, we had the opportunity to hear some of these words of wisdom more often during this time of year.

These sayings came from neighbors, brothers and cousins – folks he'd lived with for years, some as many as 70 years. A few were rare buddies, with special nicknames like, Cactus, Drawers, Baldy, Short Legs, Fuzzy – you get the picture.

Here are just a few – the gems – the ones I'll remember always:

- Your friends are the measure of your real worth.
- The outside of a horse is good for the inside of a man.
- Why do you think the good Lord gave you two ears and one mouth? So you could listen twice as much as you talk.



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

- Wait until you get a little older; then you'll understand.
- If you're going to train your dog, you have to be smarter than the dog.
- Never be too quick to criticize yourself. It ain't fair to your friends and relatives who are itching to do it for you.
- If all of your friends climbed up the elevator and jumped off, would you have to, too?
- If you haven't been bucked off a horse, then you've never ridden one.
- You can't listen too much when a friend needs someone to talk to.
- Some things aren't funny, even to your best friend.
- If we have to love our enemies, we have to treat our friends even better.
- A friend is someone who dislikes the same people you do.
- The only way to have a friend is to be one.
- The best three friends a man can have are his wife, an old dog and ready money.

• A real pal will at least pretend to believe your lies.

• At the end of your life, if you have two or three true friends, you've lived a good life.

• A true friend is someone who knows that when you've made a fool of yourself, it generally isn't permanent.

• When a friend drops by about dinnertime and you ask, "What brings you by here at this time?" you still have to ask him to stay for a bite to eat.

• Good friends are hard to find and harder to lose.

Most of us have a few good friends. Be thankful for them. Remember them during this magical time of year. If you can't stop by to see them, call them on the phone or drop them an e-mail message.

Remember during this holiday season that joy springs from the heart of those dedicated to caring and helping others. The Christmas spirit dwells inside each of us.

Merry Christmas.

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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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

