

from our viewpoint...

Country of origin a good idea for meat

We're not much on expanding government regulation, but let's make an exception for the pending law that requires meat to be labeled with its country of origin.

Big packing houses, big ag companies and big livestock concerns are against it. Farmers and stockmen, especially the little guys, tend to be for it.

The measure is law, but opponents succeeded in getting a House vote to prohibit the U.S. Department of Agriculture from implementing the law tacked on to a spending bill.

Farm-state senators says that provision will pass the upper house over their dead bodies, and they include influential Democrats and Republicans. We'll see, but our money says the Senate won't pass the rider.

Why should it?

We've required country of origin labeling on most products for years. Meat, by its nature, defied labeling in days gone by. Today, though, meat is labeled for everything from food safety to scabable price. Adding the country of origin should be a piece of cake.

Opponents claim the law will drive prices up, but we think not. Given a little time, big ag firms and small packers alike should be able to comply with little cost.

Today, the government says, around 11 percent of the beef we eat, 7 percent of the pork and a third of the lamb is imported. There is nothing wrong with that. We all buy imports now and then. Who hasn't bought a Danish ham or eaten a hamburger made with Argentinean beef?

OK, so you didn't know where the hamburger came from. That's the point. If you did know, you could make a choice: cheaper foreign beef or supporting American farmers and ranchers.

If computers and gizmos and cars and combines have to be labeled, what's wrong with letting us know where our spare ribs and steaks come from?

Having the labels alone won't increase sales of American beef. Ranchers are going to have to convince us that there are benefits to buying their product over beef from Brazil or Australia.

But some growers have been successful in convincing people to eat natural beef or black angus cuts, so selling American products might not be that hard. If the foreign meat is much cheaper, however, expect a lot of people to buy it anyway. Even loyalty has its price.

It's hard to see why anyone here in cattle country wouldn't back this law, though some respectable livestock groups have come out against it. We assume they have their reasons.

But it's hard for us to see how the law can do anything but benefit our stockmen and ranchers. — *Steve Haynes*

where to write

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

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 1519 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 225-2715

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building Rm. 174-W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676

State Sen. Stan Clark, State Capitol Building Rm. 449-N, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7399

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star-news@nwkansan.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Managing Editor

Pat Schiefen, Copy Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Shannon Marie Davidson, Reporter

Bill Wagoner, **Phyllis Hadley**, Advertising Sales

Sheila Smith, Office Manager



Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl

Ron VanLoenen

Judy McKnight

Betty Morris

Mary Jo Tapparo

Lana Westfahl

nwkansan.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(nbetz@nwkansan.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansan.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735. Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735. TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansan.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansan.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad. SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$20; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

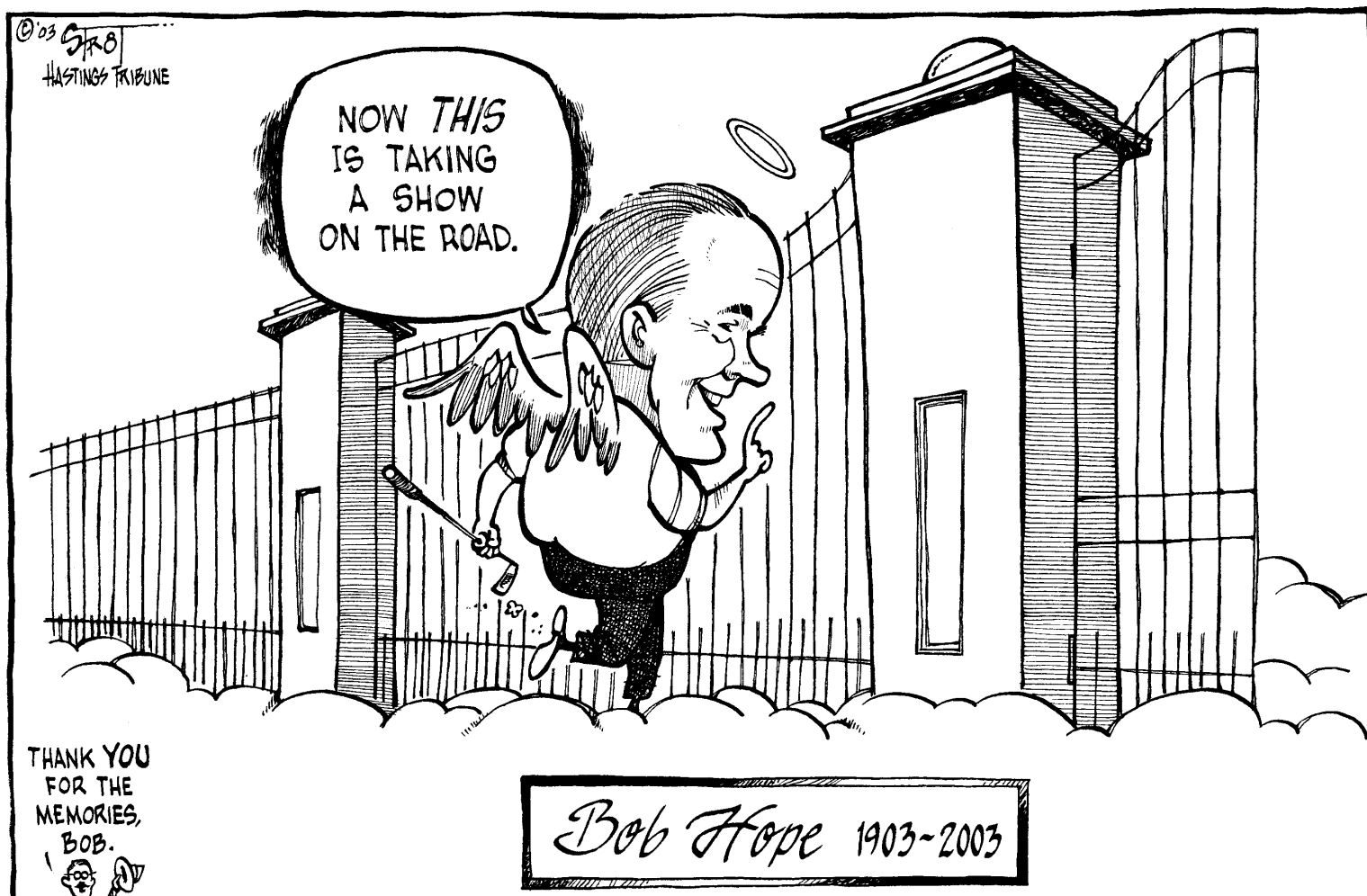
Founded by Thomas McCants
1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY
STAR

Founded by Eric and
Roxie Yonkey
1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



Seems to be school time again, so soon

I don't know about you, but I've been seeing a lot of school supplies in the stores lately.

Here it is the first week of August, and school is about to start.

It's probably just my age, but it seems like school begins earlier every year. (Maybe everyone gets more eager for football season to start.) I'm just getting settled down into the slower pace of summer, and football isn't even on my yearly schedule.

I have fond memories of my school years. I think I liked all my teachers, except my third grade one. I was scared of her. We didn't call it racial profiling then, but she seemed to pick on the only boy in the class who had a Spanish surname. Looking back, I realize she was prejudiced and also mean.

Today it seems like public schools are more a matter of survival — both for teachers and students. Not just because of things like the Columbine tragedy, but just ordinary, everyday discipline issues, the noise levels in the



**lorna
gt**

• commentary

schools, and the lack of respect for teachers and other students.

I marvel that any learning takes place at all — what with all the absenteeism for sporting events, teachers' in-services, extra-curricular clubs and activities, etc.

So far we still have a lot of kids making their way through the educational maze, although I'm not sure they're as book-smart as they should be.

Have you read a test for eighth-grade graduation back about 1930?

So what advice can we give the kids going back to school?

"Keep on keeping on"?

How about "strive for excellence" in everything you do?

Maybe I'd better look to others: "Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do ... Where there's love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong" (Ella Fitzgerald).

"The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is, that one often comes from a strong will, and the other from a strong won't" (Henry Ward Beecher).

"Never, never, never, never give up" (Winston Churchill). — House of Quotes, www.houseofquotes.com.

Or how about a little home-spun advice: "Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground" (Unknown).

Good luck and best wishes to all those — whatever their ages — who are again beginning to navigate the matriculational waters.

Those of us who are now just observers will applaud all your best efforts and try to keep our "when I was in school" lectures to a minimum.

Give new sales tax provisions time to work

To the Editor:

Following several years of intensive work by legislators, local officials, tax administrators, and business representatives, the Kansas Legislature enacted HB 2005, bringing Kansas into a multi-state Streamlined Sales Tax Compact as of July 1.

Long supported by the League of Kansas Municipalities, the Kansas Association of Counties, and various other groups, the Streamlined Sales Tax project is a way to level the playing field of taxation on purchases at the counter, through catalogues, or over the Internet, among our Main Street merchants and Internet retailers.

In a nutshell, this is an issue concerning fairness for all Kansans and all main street Kansas businesses. For many years, we in Kansas and elsewhere have been unable to collect sales tax on remote (meaning out of state) catalog sales.

In recent years, because of the growth of Internet commerce, the State of Kansas and local governments have been losing out on literally hundreds of millions of dollars in annual sales tax revenue where Internet sales were made by out of state retailers to customers in Kansas.

The net effect of this uneven playing field is twofold. First, it is grossly unfair to Kansas retailers as they are required to collect both state and local sales tax on their sales. Second, governments in Kansas are losing out on huge amounts of sales tax revenue, forcing either reductions in public services, increases in property taxes, or both. If this is allowed to continue, there will undoubtedly be increases in property taxes across the board to make up for the tremendous loss of revenue to state and local governments in Kansas.

The most significant change since July 1, has been implementation of a new "sourcing" rule, i.e. the method by which a sales tax is determined based upon how a transaction is "sourced" or assigned to a specific jurisdiction



from our
readers

• to the editor

for purposes of computing the applicable tax.

Prior to July 1, Kansas' state and local sales taxes were "sourced" to the point of sale. To comply with the new multi-state sales tax agreement of which Kansas is a part, it was necessary to adopt a uniform sourcing rule that the sales tax be based on the destination of the purchase.

Why is the change from "point of sale" sourcing, to "destination" sourcing important to the success of Streamlined Sales Tax reforms? There is one very compelling reason. Without destination sourcing of sales/use taxes, large Internet/catalog retailers would quickly move their bases of operations to states without any state sales taxes (e.g. Oregon) to gain a competitive advantage.

As such, without moving to destination sourcing, states like Kansas would not gain on the problem of leveling the playing field for all businesses and all customers. The change in the sourcing rule has caused some consternation among retailers in Kansas and has clearly made the collection of sales taxes more complex for some. The Kansas Department of Revenue has pledged to assist retailers who have difficulty with the new process during this transition period.

The second change involves the collection of a local compensating use tax. This component of the recently enacted legislation is necessary to assure a level playing field for main street Kansas businesses as well as to ensure that cities and counties in Kansas receive the appropriate revenue from retail sales made to Kansans. Without both of these components, local businesses in Kansas will continue to fight an uphill battle against Internet sales. In

addition, state and local tax revenues will be adversely impacted, leading to property tax increases at the local level and perhaps other tax increases at the state level.

For those who would urge the Legislature to amend or repeal these sections of the new law, we can only say such action would be analogous to cutting off our collective nose to spite our face. Repeal of the legislation would be a very short-sighted approach to a huge issue which must be solved to level the retail taxation playing field in Kansas and to assure that adequate tax revenues are collected to help control property taxes.

Change is always difficult, but as Kansans, we must be willing to move into the 21st Century and change as needed. As a state trying to adapt a very old and complicated sales tax system to modern-day commercial methods, we need to work through any problems that arise.

Over time, as Kansans feel the impact of additional revenue which has been escaping us for many years, we will more fully understand the value of these changes.

Don Moler
Executive Director
League of Kansas Municipalities

Randall Allen
Executive Director
Kansas Association of Counties

Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: star-news@nwkansan.com.

garfield

