

from our viewpoint...

Immigration mess needs ‘worker visas’

Sen. Pat Roberts is right when he says the U.S. needs to do something about the mess we call an immigration policy, and soon.

The senator, at a stop in Topeka, called for “guest workers” visas for the estimated 11 million illegal aliens now living and working in this country. He wants Congress to act by summer.

The biggest problem, Sen. Roberts said, is that with so many illegals in the country, it’s impossible to control our borders and keep an eye out for terrorists.

Immigration foes call for stronger laws and tougher border enforcement, but that is not working. More law and more border guards will only increase the expense of patrolling a border that can’t be sealed.

Work is the key.

These workers would not be coming here if there weren’t jobs for them. Our economy depends on foreign workers. Europe is in the same position, and has the same doubts. We both are so prosperous, we need foreign workers to keep our economies rolling.

As in Europe, there is opposition to foreign workers here. Much of it is based on fear and prejudice. But all of us descend from someone who came here as an immigrant. Even the so-called Native Americans came from Asia.

Assuming that we could round up all the illegals and ship them home, the result would be a disaster.

Our economy would grind to a halt. Work would not get done. Roads would not be built. Crops could not be harvested.

We need a work visa program, and we need to offer people a chance to earn a place in this country. That’s part of what America is all about.

Just letting workers in won’t solve the problem, because many people come here not just to work for a few years, but for a new life.

Their desire is so strong they risk their lives sneaking into the country. A few more guards won’t stop them.

People who want to live here that badly will make good Americans — if they have jobs, homes and a chance to pay taxes.

We need to share our dream with them. As Sen. Roberts puts it, we cannot ignore or extinguish the flame on the Statue of Liberty. If the words on its base are anything but a hollow sentiment, we need to welcome this new wave of immigration.

As all the ones before, it will make us stronger, better and happier in the end.

There will be a fight.

But it’s important to make some sense out of this mess. We’ll all be better off if immigrants among us are legal, with drivers’ licenses, insurance and tax forms, not hiding in some invisible empire.

We’ll all be better off if the government can keep track of aliens and screen the flow for terrorists, criminals and drug dealers.

And we’ll all be better off if we welcome our guests instead of scorning them. — *Steve Haynes*

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Glad I survived the ice storm of 2005

I don’t know about you, but I survived the ice storm of 2005.

It has been a long, cold, icy, uncomfortable 10 days. But there is much for which to be thankful. It could have been much worse.

Of course I’m speaking from the perspective of being out of electricity for only 15 hours — as opposed to those who were out almost the whole time.

The storm has given me time to slow down, to meditate, to count my blessings. How grateful I’ve been for a warm house, a job that required a minimum of travel on icy roads, for friends who called to see if I was all right and came by to help with yard cleanup.

I had time to appreciate the wonder and power of God.

The trees were absolutely beautiful, especially when the sun peaked out and shone through them.

I had to hurry and appreciate that wonder though; the sun wasn’t out very often or very long at a time.

I spent about a half hour one afternoon



lorna g t
• commentary

watching the birds. The radio reminded me that birds were having trouble finding available food during the ice storm, so I threw a loaf of bread out on my patio for them.

Once they discovered the treat, they weren’t long in getting away with every crumb.

I had to laugh at how much like people they behaved.

In every crowd there is at least one bully. One larger (probably the most well-fed) bird was determined to save the food for himself. He sat right on top the loaf and ran off all the other birds.

Then he would pick off a few bites, while the birds gathered their forces and devised a strategy.

They would approach the bread from all

angles, making it difficult for the bully to protect his booty. Eventually some would get in a few bites when he was attacking others. This routine went on over and over again.

I never could understand why, but often — at some unknown signal — all the birds would suddenly desert their meal and fly off to safety in the frozen trees. They would watch the situation awhile and then suddenly fly back down to resume the ritual.

For the first time in my life, I understood the fun that birdwatching groups enjoy.

But today the sun is shining, and I’m sure the surliness that I’ve seen developing in people (as in the birds) will probably subside somewhat.

It is still bitterly cold, but it’s not cloudy. How people in Alaska bear months and months without true sunshine is beyond my understanding. A couple of weeks seem to be the limit for most Kansans.

Today the sun is shining. I feel energized already. I’ve had plenty of time the past couple of weeks, but today I’m really going to get something done!

First week of session busy with school issue

The legislative session began at 1 p.m. Monday, Jan. 10. Representatives, including 27 freshmen legislators, were sworn in by Kansas Supreme Court Justice Robert Davis.

Speaker Doug Mays (R-Topeka) and Speaker Pro-tem Ray Merrick (R-Stilwell) took their constitutional oaths of office. Rep. Clay Aurand (R-Courtland), Rep. Joe McLeland (R-Wichita), Rep. Steve Brunk (R-Wichita) and Rep. Willa DeCastro (R-Wichita) were introduced as the majority leader, assistant majority leader, majority whip and caucus chairperson respectively.

That evening, Gov. Sebelius gave her State of the State address. In a deviation from past years, she did not provide a copy of her proposed budget to the Legislature before her remarks. Mostly staying away from specific amounts and numbers, she concentrated on general themes of a “Healthy Kansas” and feel good issues. However, she did mention that her proposed budget would “...reduce the General Fund expenditures by \$9.3 million from the figure approved by the Legislature.”

The session promises to be one of many issues. Speaker Mays noted in his remarks to the House on opening day that school funding, gay marriage, the death penalty, annexation and taxes could all be hot buttons.



jim morrison
• capitol review

consists mostly of veterans to the funding debate. The Senate Education Committee has a somewhat different look, as it includes five new members and a new chair, Sen. Jean Schodorf (R-Wichita).

Budget Overview

Last Tuesday, the governor’s office provided copies of the proposed budget to the Legislature and media. On closer examination, the budget began to look somewhat different than a plan that would “...reduce General Fund expenditures by \$9.3 million.” Using numbers provided by the Kansas Legislative Research Department, some “highlights” of the Governor’s proposed budget include:

- Expenditures that exceed estimated receipts by \$73.6 million.
- The governor’s budget for the state General Fund is an increase of \$160.3 million or 3.4 percent.
- The governor’s budget for all funds recommendation is an increase of \$454.6 million or 4.2 percent.
- The governor’s budget for the General Fund is an increase of \$22 million or 0.5 percent above the amount approved by the 2004 Legislature.
- The governor’s budget for all funds is an increase of \$514.9 million or 5.0 percent above the amount approved by the 2004 Legislature.
- No increase in the base state aid per pupil of \$3,863, same level since the 2002-03 school year.
- To finance the 27th payroll check for state employees in the budget, the governor is recommending borrowing the money and paying

it back over the next decade. This would set a precedent of borrowing funds to meet regular operating costs.

The budget does not include any provision for increased health care spending. Her office stated that as related legislation rolled out during the session, it would be added to the budget. Increased health care spending, coupled with an increase in school funding, could swell the budget further.

I chair the Health and Human Services Committee and serve as a member of the Utilities Committee. The rest of my time is taken completely by preparing the legislature for full deployment of technology which will allow citizen access to the same information we legislators have when making decisions, ability to watch and hear all committee hearings and even instant message legislators and participate in committee meetings without having to be present in the statehouse in person to deliver your testimony.

I can be contacted at my office phone 785-296-7676, email at jmorrison@ink.org or mail to Rep. Jim Morrison 300 SW 10th St, State Capitol Building, Room 171-W, Topeka, Kan. To receive my daily e-mail updates, send a request to my e-mail address.

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