

from our viewpoint...

Spurts, sputters mark economic progress

When the city commission voted Thursday to send a 30-day notice to Aircraft Seal and Gasket Corp., there likely were some heads nodding in the "I told you so" mode.

It would be a great boon to Goodland if the California company was able to produce the type of development that its leaders talked about when they first approached the city over 18 months ago.

It appears, though, there is very little chance the company will be able to meet the terms of its lease with the city, which calls for 15 people to be employed, or to be able to show that it is ready to bring more machinery into production.

This was a decision the city had to face, and after the last series of promises in December, including one that there would be at least nine people hired by March, it was time to ring the bell and end the round.

The advantage the city has is that the Wolak building, remodeled at taxpayers' expense, is in wonderful shape and can easily handle a change of occupation. The design used to rebuild the building make it ideal to handle any change, and the facility is a great asset.

When Aircraft Seal approached the city, officials committed time and resources to renovate the old Mosbarger IGA to handle the firm's needs. City workers, contractors and students from the Northwest Kansas Technical College transformed the empty, fire-damaged shell to a modern industrial plant.

Over the past months, people have questioned Aircraft Seal and Gasket's progress. The firm made assurances, but the fact remains that it has two fewer employees now than it did at the time of its grand opening last February.

There may be another company waiting in the wings that could make use of the building, and move more quickly. Whether that company ends up in the Wolak building or Aircraft Seal and Gasket makes some miraculous recovery, whatever happens will be good for the city.

Having a building available makes opportunities possible, and many times it is ability and timing that make economic development work.

Commissioner John Garcia, as the chairman of the Sherman County Economic Development Council, has been dealing with the new company. That prompted the city to ask Aircraft Seal and Gasket to live up to its lease, or find a smaller place where is two employees can continue to produce the gasket parts they have been making since November.

There are other things that will come up in the next 30 days, but it was the city investing in the building that have made these opportunities possible. Even if the current company moves out and a new one moves in, it may not be the final answer.

That is one of the risks with economic development, but it is better to be able to make choices on who will occupy the building than to have it stand empty. — *Tom Betz*

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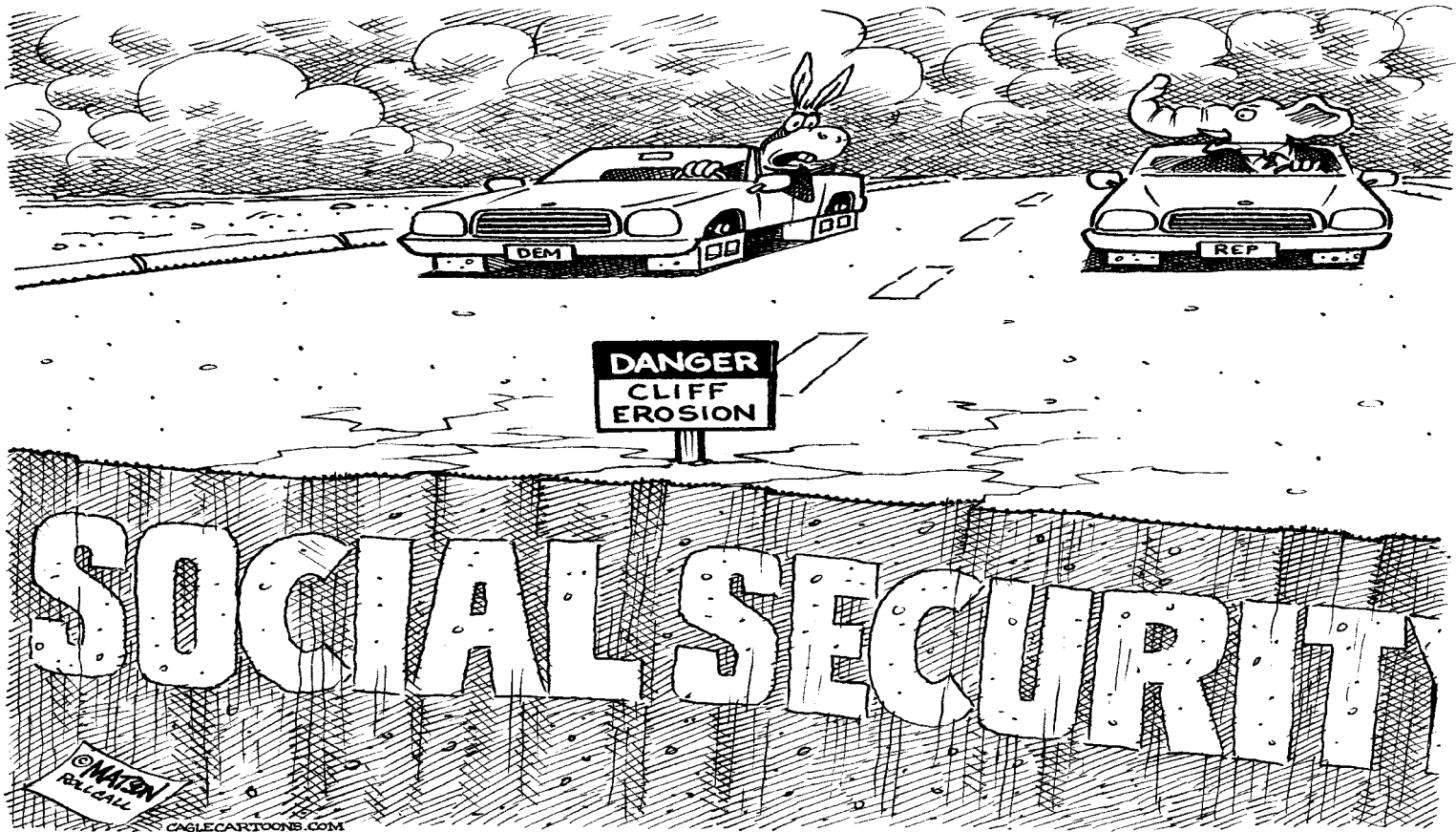
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" FIRST ONE TO JUMP OUT WITH LEGISLATION LOSES!"

Moran visits every hospital in the district

Last Friday, I joined Tom Bell, president of the Kansas Hospital Association, and Doyle Johnson, administrator of Moundridge Mercy Hospital, for a visit to the hospital and adjoining physicians' clinic in Moundridge.

My visit to Mercy completes my efforts to have a discussion about health care at every hospital in the 1st District. There are more hospitals — 75 — than any congressional district in the country.

Mercy Hospital is owned by the Church of God and Christ Mennonite, headquartered in Moundridge. It is an acute care facility, and the staff is able to provide lab, X-ray and emergency room services.

During my time in Congress, I have chaired the Rural Health Care Coalition. This group of 180 members advocates improvements in our health care system. Our most recent success occurred late last year with the passage of H.R. 4453, reauthorizing the J-1 Visa waiver program, which gives foreign medical graduates the opportunity to stay in the United States if they agree to practice in a medically underserved area for at least three years.

Keeping Manufacturing Jobs in Kansas

On Friday, I joined David Cox, chief executive of the Bradbury Co. in Moundridge. Bradbury provides roll forming, cut to length and leveling of metal to suit any scale. The company employees over 250 people and occupies over 172,000 square feet of space.

Cox and I discussed product liability con-

This brings us up to date following the recent round of appearances across the district.

The Capitol has become noticeably busier as we approach the halfway point of the legislative session. Committee meetings are busy with hearings and debate to push bills out before the turnaround deadline on Saturday.

Important issues like human trafficking, the school finance formula and worker's compensation will soon reach the House floor.

Worker's Compensation

House Bill 2141, the first in an expected series of bills dealing with worker's compensation issues, was heard on the floor and passed to final action by a vote of 78-37 on Feb. 17.

The bill deals with worker's compensation claims in cases where controlled substance use may have played a role in a worker's injury, reducing restrictions on admission of drug test results in a worker's compensation hearing.

If it is discovered during the course of treatment that the injured worker was under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and the employer can prove the impairment contributed to the accident, the worker is not eligible for worker's compensation benefits.

Currently, employers are unable to introduce results of a positive drug or alcohol test taken in the course of a routine post-accident exam.

This bill allows for a positive drug test to be allowed into evidence if an employer had a written policy of testing in place prior to the date of the accident. Test results are also admissible if the testing was done in the normal course of medical treatment for the accident, the injured worker had given written consent for a test prior to an accident but then refused



**jerry
moran**

• in congress

cerns and correction of the uneven playing field between American manufacturers and their foreign competitors under the U.S. tax code. These issues are important to our Kansas businesses and their employees, and we must look at ways to ensure America remains competitive in the manufacturing sector.

Meeting with Youth at Larned Juvenile Correctional Facility

On Thursday, I met with Superintendent Robert Rivenburg of the Juvenile Correctional Facility in Larned, which is administered by the Kansas Juvenile Justice Authority for a tour of the facility. When I was a state senator, I was involved in the creation of the authority. The Larned facility has been especially successful at leveraging its resources by partnering with the state's correctional facility and mental health facility to offer programs to offenders.

I was able to meet with staff and discuss the issues and challenges of the juvenile justice system. The facility has 88 residents, with an average age of 17, who are being treated in the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program. This program is available in part through the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Preven-

Bills move through committee process

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**jim
morrison**

• capitol review

testing after an accident, or the testing was done has a result of federal or state law.

Contrary to some reports, this bill upholds the doctrine of "innocent until proven guilty." It allows for the protection of employers and the fellow workers of an employee who chooses to work while impaired.

Human Trafficking

President Bush met with a group of state legislators last year regarding human trafficking and he urged them to stiffen the penalties for crimes of exploitation.

House Bill 2004 creates crimes of first- and second-degree trafficking in cases of forced labor or prostitution. The House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee heard testimony from proponents, including Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline and a State Department representative.

School Finance

Last week, the Select Committee on School Finance introduced House Bill 2474, which will help to make up a comprehensive K-12 education funding plan.

The plan will add \$63 million in new money to the education base, distributed among bilingual weighting, at-risk weighting, special education and capital outlay. The plan also seeks to add \$244 to the base state aid per pupil by shifting money from the deleted correlation weighting.

tion program at the U.S. Department of Justice. **Discussing Issues with Students in Great Bend**

On Thursday, I visited Lincoln Elementary School in Great Bend. I spoke to Leslie Perkins' fourth grade class about how a bill becomes a law and about the three branches of government. Her class had been studying government and the students had good questions.

Joining the Salina Lions Club Meeting and Welcoming Sir Richard Branson

On Wednesday, I joined the Salina Lions Club for their weekly lunch at the Bicentennial Center. I attended the lunch as a guest and was able to speak with members about the projects the group is involved in and the issues facing Salina. Thank you to club president Rick Weber for the invitation and the chance to get feedback from club members.

On Sunday afternoon, I welcomed Sir Richard Branson, owner of Virgin Atlantic Airways, and a number of international reporters to Salina for the launch of GlobalFlyer.

Contact Me

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The bill calls for the creation of an advisory Education Council based on the model of the Judicial Council. The Council will have the ability to gather input from committees of its making.

The plan also allows for more local control of raising revenue through local option budgets. The proposed legislation allows school districts a 5 percent increase in local option budget authority and a 5 percent cost-of-living allowance for qualified districts.

While details are still emerging, we know that additional money will be added to the base (\$4,107.00 final figure as of last Friday). The House Education Committee will hear testimony on the bill this week.

Health

HB 2337 on importation of drugs will be heard. This would make it illegal to import drugs from Canada or any other foreign country. Unfortunately, this is likely to become a political issue and divide along party lines rather than a discussion of the merits of importation.

HB 2417 regarding formation of a Council on Obesity Prevention and Management will also be heard. Many other legislative issues (including school food vending machines) would be germane to this bill and could be added on the floor as amendments. For that reason, I doubt it will leave the Health committee.

Previous bills that have been heard may be worked on Monday and Tuesday. Tuesday is the last day we have to get bills out of the Health Committee this year.

Weekend meetings

Last Saturday, Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and I visited Goodland, Colby, Hoxie and Plainville to hear concerns from people in the district.

garfield

