

from our viewpoint...

# Colorado's weather causes problems

A policy aimed at easing the plight of motorists stranded in Colorado storms is causing problems for people who live in — and need to get to — places in western Kansas.

When roads are closed in Colorado, officials there ask Kansas authorities to block traffic where there are hotel rooms to handle them. That makes sense, properly applied.

When they close the roads, though, they close them. And that means wherever there are motel rooms left, that's as far west as you can go.

I-70 has been closed as far east as Hays or Colby when there were no road problems in Kansas. Mail, newspaper deliveries, merchandise and services for those of us farther west were stopped along with through traffic.

People who live in far western towns couldn't go home. People with business out here couldn't get through.

Not because of the weather. Not because of the danger. But because the guys manning the barricades, state troopers and state highway workers, didn't want to separate the local traffic from the Denver bound.

This is too high a price to pay for solving Colorado's problem. It's good that Kansas can cooperate. No one wants to see hundreds of people stranded in Burlington or Limon or other places where there are no beds or shelter.

But Kansas towns and Kansas people shouldn't have to pay the price.

State highway officials say it isn't supposed to work this way. Local traffic is supposed to go through. In practice, though, troopers and highway crewmen manning barricades in Colby and Goodland just block the road. They don't ask where people are going.

On lesser routes, they just put a sign up and go home. Gates are locked at some entrances to the freeway. And a locked gate won't allow anyone on, local traffic or no.

Now Sherman County commissioners and others are questioning this policy. They wonder why they are helping to keep people off their roads when it's safe and reasonable to travel west in this state. They don't close county roads when it snows here, so why block them when it snows in Colorado?

It's about time somebody spoke up against this poorly implemented policy.

If we can't separate local traffic from through traffic, and allow people with business in Kansas through, then Kansas roads ought to stay open.

It'd be better to let the through traffic pile up in Colorado than to stall commerce on this side of the border when it's not necessary.

We'd like to think the state can work out a sensible compromise, allowing local traffic to move where it needs to move. If that can't happen, then let's keep our roads open.

If the weather here gets bad enough, we can close the roads. But when the problem is in Colorado, then why keep Kansans behind the barricades? — *Steve Haynes*

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Dear Senate Judiciary Committee,  
You are the best committee ever-  
deserving of great respect?  
Thank you for giving me a  
Here are the answers  
That should have been sent  
Before the first deadline  
Came and went. Sorry!  
Hope They're Sufficient  
second opportunity to fill out your  
Judicial Questionnaire!!  
You are SO RIGHT, my first  
answers really were "inadequate,"  
"insufficient," and "insulting."  
Even the President thought so -  
and he's the smartest man I know!  
Sincerely yours,  
Harriet Miers

# Patience wearing thin on Japan imports

After testifying in front of the House Ways and Means Committee on the importance of Japan reopening its border to U.S. beef, I am continuing to draw attention to this issue in Washington. This week, I gave a speech to the U.S. House of Representatives about the economic harm U.S. farmers and ranchers are experiencing as a result of the Japanese embargo on American beef.

Though my efforts and that of my fellow members of Congress are paying off, the process is still too slow. The patience of Kansans has worn thin. If no firm date is set by the Japanese Prion Committee reviewing this issue, I will push for a vote on my resolution calling for economic sanctions against Japan if it fails to abide by its October 2004 agreement to reopen its market to U.S. beef.

**Discussed Health Information Technology with Former Speaker Gingrich**

Last Wednesday, I visited with former House Speaker Newt Gingrich about the need to transform today's health care into a 21st century, intelligent health system. Speaker Gingrich was at the Capitol speaking to members about the need to implement health information technology, such as electronic health records and computer equipment to share these records between doctors and hospitals. This technology will allow health care professionals to more efficiently and accurately document and



**jerry moran**  
• in congress

treat patients' conditions. Health care costs continue to rise, and advances like health information technology hold promise for improving efficiency and lowering costs.

While we work to drive down the costs of health care, we must ensure that programs already in place continue their coverage. The House is working on reforming Medicaid. Some of the reform proposals are detrimental to smaller, rural pharmacies. I sent a letter to my colleagues in the House, urging them to support reforms in Medicaid payments to pharmacies that will save money without adversely affecting rural pharmacies. I believe there are better ways to achieve savings, and I am encouraging my colleagues to examine and support alternatives such as providing incentives to increase electronic prescribing and generic drug use.

**Recognizing Kansas Efforts in Fighting Domestic Violence**

In recognition of October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I recognized Kansas' efforts in a speech to the House last week. The tragedy of domestic violence

is close to home. In the speech, I recognized the life of Patty Kruse-Hicks from my hometown of Plainville, who died a victim of domestic violence. I highlighted the work of Studio 2B, a Girl Scout troop in Emporia, for their yearlong project focusing on issues surrounding domestic violence and the legal system.

I commend those who work every day to help victims of domestic violence, especially those who work in the nine service centers in the 1st District — Dodge City, Emporia, Garden City, Hays, Hutchinson, Liberal, Salina and Ulysses. Through education, funding and support, we will continue working together to break the cycle of domestic violence and bring hope to victims affected by these terrible acts.

**House Works to Protect Kansas Gun Dealers from Lawsuits**

This week I supported House passage of the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which protects the makers and sellers of firearms and ammunition from frivolous lawsuits. The Senate passed this legislation on July 29, so it now goes to the President to be signed.

I do not believe lawful firearms manufacturers and dealers should be held responsible for the criminal actions of those who misuse their products. Predatory lawsuits against the firearms industry have threatened to bankrupt companies and deny Americans their right to bear arms.

The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act limits lawsuit liability for the gun industry in cases where third parties commit criminal or unlawful acts. While still permitting legitimate legal action against the firearms industry, this legislation will help limit irresponsible lawsuits.



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