

from our viewpoint...

Road vote margin shows knowledge

Special elections are a nervous time until the votes are in and counted. Tuesday was one of those days as city and county officials waited for the polls to close and the counting to be done.

The overwhelming margin of support for the joint city-county road program was great. The margins were better than 3-1 in all parts of the county showing the message was well received both in the city and out in the county.

All those who voted — yes or no — should feel satisfaction in having had a say in the future direction of the county. Having a 36 percent turnout for a single-issue vote is testament to the importance and support for the program.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said he wanted to thank everyone who voted for the project.

The whole process was remarkable. From the first joint meeting of the city and county commissions to passage of the sales tax took only about 10 months. The biggest surprise was the speedy action in the state Legislature and out here that got the program approved in time to begin collecting the sales tax in July.

The renewed feeling that the future holds bright things for our county impressed the folks back east. They understood that we are taking the future into our own hands and making things happen.

That future will not come overnight, and there will be some bumps ahead, but the decisions are our own to make.

Working together, the city and county forged a powerful partnership, and we are sure there will be more opportunities in the future for the two boards to join hands.

We want to add our thanks to all those who voted in favor of the road program, and all those who spent time talking to people to explain the features of the plan. A special thanks to Glenn Burk, that conservative farmer, who eloquently stated the reason for supporting the whole project even if there was a small piece that might not be his favorite. It was good to see him at the courthouse Tuesday waiting to hear the results. When people take ownership of a project, it adds to the positive results.

The bottom line is we are going to rebuild a bunch of streets and roads in the next two to three years.

The city may get the first crack at the money, as they have some of the design engineering done on the Caldwell Avenue part of the project, including the intersection at Eighth and Caldwell. Some of the projects, like 17th Street, will take longer because there are more complicated parts, including drainage.

The county will probably begin with a section of its main highway, Old U.S. 24, but maybe not until next spring.

For businesses that combine the sales tax into their prices, like *The Goodland Star-News* and Sherman Theatre, the new sales tax will be something we swallow for a time until we have more pressure to increase rates. However, people should know there are some unseen sources to help pay for the streets and roads.

The construction season has begun, and there will be lots of "cone zones" over the next couple of years.

When completed, the new roads will be another reason to be proud of the combined effort that gave us this success.

— Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

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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@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.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, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

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The Goodland Daily News

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The Sherman
County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

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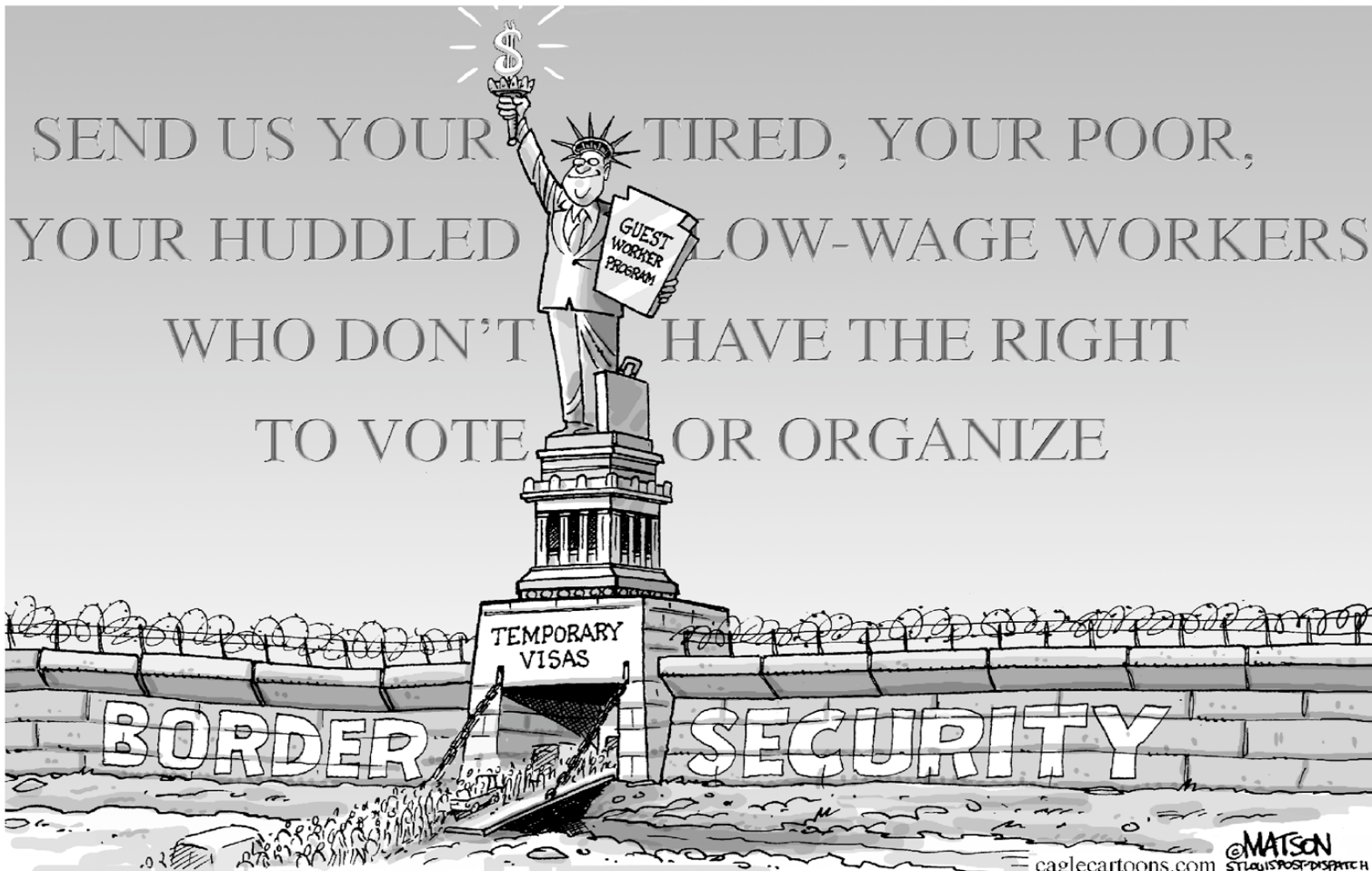
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1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



People need to make noise to limit taxes

We may hear about whether Kansas needs something called TABOR this year, but it's unlikely that we'll get one unless people raise a clamor.

TABOR stands for the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, a constitutional amendment that limits government spending and tax rates and requires government — state, city, county and school — to rebate excess taxes back to the people who paid them.

So far, Colorado is the only state that has TABOR. Kansas is among the states where it's been proposed, but it's wildly unpopular with government officials and many legislators, who would rather spend money than save it.

The only way Colorado got its law was for voters to pass a ballot initiative, which is next to impossible in Kansas. The Legislature there would never have put such strict limits on its spending power.

It's likely that Kansas legislators won't do it either, unless we make them.

Do we need TABOR here?

Here's an example.

Cynthia and I have a house in Kansas. It's



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valued at \$75,000, and the property taxes on it — state, county, city and school — are \$1,400 a year.

We also own a house in Colorado, valued at \$175,000. The taxes on it are about \$700 per year.

State sales and income taxes in both states are comparable.

You decide which tax system is best.

You will hear that Colorado's system was "strangling government" and "hasn't worked." That's a lie.

Colorado voters decided this fall to let the state keep some of the "windfall" surplus revenue that is coming in to build things like highways, schools and prisons. They did not approve any tax increase, just to let the state and local governments keep some of the surplus produced

by good times and a growing population.

Otherwise, that money would have been related to taxpayers. People decided the state had a good use for it.

That didn't mean TABOR had failed, just that it needed some adjustment, and voters agreed to do it.

Kansas backers say the changes they have proposed would avoid the problems Colorado got into.

Government officials, almost to a man, have been against strong tax limits. That should make us suspicious right there.

Of course, those who spend tax money don't want limits. Neither do the more liberal legislators in both parties.

Nothing is likely to happen unless we demand action.

The question is not, do we need TABOR?

The question is, do we want higher and higher taxes every year, or do we want to limit government growth?

If we want less government and lower taxes, TABOR — or something like it — is the way to go.

Bay Buchanan at the border

Angela "Bay" Buchanan, pundit Pat Buchanan's younger sister, is getting more face time these days as a conservative television analyst and chairman of Team America, a political action group founded by Colorado Republican Rep. Tom Tancredo that is "dedicated to securing America's borders."

She is crisscrossing the country on Team America's "Secure American Now" tour, trying to exhort voters to pressure their senators to support a tough immigration bill that would deny amnesty to illegals and build a fence on the U.S.-Mexico border. I talked to her recently by telephone from her offices in Washington:

Q: What's the sound-bite version of why illegal immigration is the most critical issue facing the country today?

A: It adversely affects millions and millions of Americans. It undermines our security. It's increased our crime rates. It has affected our budgets. We have no control over our own border.

Q: It's pretty clear the current government-run immigration system is broken — or not implemented very well.

A: It is not broken. There is no willingness on the part of our government to implement the immigration laws of our country or to enforce them in any way. There are few things the federal government is given the authority to do through the Constitution; this is one of them.

Q: What is your or Team America's solution to the problem of illegal immigration?

A: There are two things that need to be done immediately. We need to secure our border and there are a number of ways you can do that. One is in the bill that was passed by the House in December — it calls for a fence. You can put up a fence, increase the number of border agents, and bring in the advanced technology, which we don't have there. Give them the proper tools to secure the border. It can be done, and it is not enormously expensive. No. 2 is to require employers to verify their employees. It's called "mandatory verification by employ-



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ers." It's the system that's in place today.

Q: What would you do with the 12 million to 15 million illegal immigrants already here?

A: Not one nationally known group is for rounding up illegal immigrants. That's just something that's used against us: "You guys want to round them up."

America's not for rounding them up; neither are we for rounding them up. ... Right now, approximately 350,000 illegal immigrants go home on their own — they just go home. If we secure our border, and then if we did nothing else, 350,000 illegals a year would go home.

If you then have mandatory verification, which this House bill passed in December says you must, you would start checking those who are now working for you two years from now. Illegal immigrants would see that in two years they would lose their jobs, so they would start making plans to leave. So instead of 350,000 you might have 450,000 a year who would voluntarily go home.

In 10 years, five years, eight years from now, I don't know when, we'll have 2 million or 3 million illegals. You're never going to get completely rid of them.

Q: Is there no other way to design and enforce an immigration system that would let more legal immigrants come here or set up a temporary visa system that would allow them to come and work as easily as Mick Jagger can?

A: (Laughs) On the first point: We have the most generous legal immigration policy in the world, bar-none, no close call. I believe it's 1.3 million who are legally coming in every year.

As for these so-called "temporary" guest-worker programs, there has never been a guest-

worker program in the history of just not the United States but of the world that has ever been anything but amnesty. It's all amnesty.

It is the intent of our Senate to pass a bill that gives amnesty to 15 million illegals.

They will call it a "guest-worker program."

They will say it is really about securing the border and enforcing our laws, but what it is truly about is giving amnesty to 15 million

so the corporations can continue to hire people at rates far below what Americans have passed laws requiring employers to hire people at.

Q: Will you be using your famous organizational and money-raising skills on another presidential run for your brother Pat?

A: I talk to him often. Every one of the issues he raised in the 1992 and 1996 campaigns and again in 2000 are more alive today than they even were then. You never say never, but I do not believe he will run for president again.

Q: So who would you like to see run for president in 2008?

A: I'd like to see Tom Tancredo (of Colorado) run. He's a populist. He understands the issues that are facing the working men and women of this country unlike any other. It'd be ideal to find one of these establishment Republicans to happen to have a populist bone left in their body, but I don't see it. I see people in the Republican Party as I do in the Democratic Party — the leadership of both sides are so tied with corporate America that they've forgotten what is in the best interest of Middle America. We need people to express those views, so America doesn't give up on the Republican Party entirely and that we have a way to take the party back from the elite. I don't see how we can do it unless we can get somebody who truly and passionately will represent the people in this country — and that is Tom Tancredo. He's the best person I can find today.

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