

from our viewpoint...

## Schools win fight, get more money

It looks like there will be a lot more money for Kansas schools next year, though not as much as some people wanted.

It also looks like the state will be pretty much broke by the time \$466 million-a-year increase phases in three years from now — assuming the Legislature keeps its promises and sticks to the schedule.

That’s not something the Kansas Legislature is known for in these things, sometimes with good reason.

No one has a crystal ball good enough to see what the state’s income will be three years from now. The country could be in the midst of a wild boom inspired by Bush tax cuts — or another recession inspired by his wild spending — by that time.

It’s really anyone’s guess.

What will be no surprise is that many state programs shoved aside in the hysteria over the school finance “crisis” will be starving for cash. That includes highway, higher education and general services of all kinds.

In a state where spending in real dollars has more than quadrupled in 40 years, that may not be all bad, but there should be some balance.

Maybe the constitutional process will kick back in and the Legislature will have to do its job of allocating the resources as it believes voters want.

That has not happened the last couple of years. Under the gun of a Supreme Court order, the legislators have been trying to hit an artificial target for school spending while robbing every other fund.

If you do not believe this, send a child to college or drive some of our increasingly bumpy roads.

The facts are these:

Schools in this state do an admirable job with the money they have. There is no crisis in school funding, except the one created by a lawsuit filed by certain schools which felt they lost out in the legislative process.

Other programs are important to the people of this state, especially roads and universities.

The Legislature is supposed to decide how much we are taxed and where the money goes. The courts are not.

Yet increasingly in the last decade, across the country, aggrieved school districts have turned to the courts to get more money. And, as in Kansas, courts have been only too happy to seize power and move the money around.

Fifty years ago, it would not have happened.

Lack of backbone in our legislatures may be one reason our taxes are so high today. It certainly is one reason tuition is so high.

No one wants our schools to suffer, but they are not the only state program.

It’s time to get back to reality. Sadly, that’s not likely to happen.

Some school districts will be unhappy with the results of this year’s battle, and guess what?

They’ll sue. — *Steve Haynes*

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e-mail: [star-news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansas.com)

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**nwkansas.com**

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

([ntbetz@nwkansas.com](mailto:ntbetz@nwkansas.com))

*Evan Barnum*, Systems Admin.([support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com))

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## What to do about silver hair strands?

I’ve started noticing a few silver strands among the gold as I do my hair each morning.

I’ve read that white, gray or silver is what happens when hair ‘forgets’ what color it’s supposed to be — a sort of follicular Alzheimer’s.

At 58, my hair has started to suffer some memory lapses, which isn’t too bad.

My husband’s hair started losing its memory before he was 27. His entire head of hair had lost its mind by the time he was 35. Our children barely remember a time when their father had salt-and-pepper hair.

My hair, on the other hand, is a gift from my father. When Buford Desilet died at 69, he had less gray hair than my husband, who was in his 30s.

Our children have never thought much about their parents’ hair color — at least not until our



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

oldest daughter noticed that at 24, she was starting to turn gray. Since she has beautiful dark red-brown hair, the white showed up against the dark. Now at 31, she dyes her hair regularly.

The two younger children have red-blonde hair, and gray will not show up as much, but as the second daughter starts the countdown to 30, she’s starting to pray that she inherited my hair instead of her father’s.

Steve never worried when his hair started to

turn, and I’ve decided to follow his lead. With my new, shorter haircut, though, the forgetful strands are starting to be more noticeable.

We spent Easter in Lawrence with our two younger children, and after church, I mentioned that I was noticing the silver strands amongst my bangs.

My helpful son told me that the crown of my head was being renamed the Commodore in honor of one of the largest silver mines in southern Colorado, where my children grew up.

Thanks a bunch, kid. I really wanted to know that!

I may need to rethink this allowing nature to take its course. I don’t mind a few silver threads. I’m just not so sure I want a whole silver mine full of forgetful follicles on the top of my head.

## Fair and equitable

By John Schlageck

*Kansas Farm Bureau*

When it comes to paying their fare share, Kansas farmers have always ponied up.

When fuel prices go up, farmers and ranchers — who consume a huge amount of diesel, gasoline and propane in their operations — open up their wallets. When taxes increase, as they do every year, producers write their checks. Whatever is needed to ensure stability and growth in their communities, schools, state and federal government, farmers and ranchers are willing participants.

And now there’s another crucial issue brewing in our nation’s capital that will impact agriculture and the rest of our country. That issue involves securing our borders while stepping up workplace enforcement against illegal immigrants. However, workplace enforcement is only part of the solution.

Illegal immigration has nearly doubled since 1997 — the last time Congress passed a bill (like the one the House passed in December) that focuses exclusively on enforcement. From 1953-64, when agriculture had a viable guest worker program, illegal immigration declined to an all-time low, according to a former government official.

Enforcement alone has not worked. Never has. Never will.

Kansas Sen. Sam Brownback understands this. That’s why he supports a comprehensive approach to immigration. The Kansas senator is looking for a real and lasting solution to a serious and ever-growing problem. He recently teamed up with Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Saxby Chambliss (Ga.) to support an amendment to the immigration bill that would prevent agriculture from paying a higher wage rate than every other industry.

In the current Senate bill, there is a higher minimum wage for agriculture than for every other industry. There’s no justification for that. If it’s high enough for everyone else, it should be high enough for agriculture.

The proposed guest worker program for agriculture has about a \$10 minimum wage while for other industries it’s only about \$6.50. This is significant. A recent American Farm Bureau



from other pens

• commentary

Federation study shows that a one-dollar increase in the wage that agriculture would have to pay would be devastating on the order of billions of dollars.

That’s just the beginning. The bill then indexes agriculture’s wage so that it would rise annually with inflation, up to 4 percent a year. Agriculture would become the only industry with an indexed minimum wage rate.

Finding farm labor is one of the biggest issues facing Kansas agriculture — the state’s most important industry. As American businesses and jobs continue to move overseas, it is critical for Congress to do everything it can to prevent the outsourcing of U.S. agriculture.

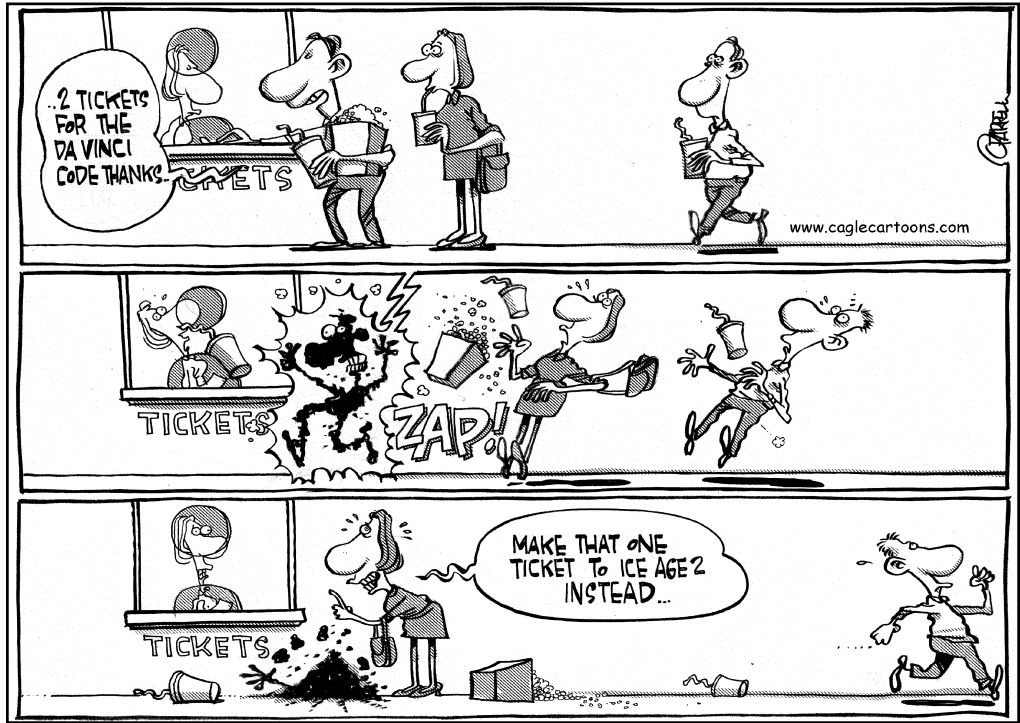
According to a study by the American Farm Bureau Federation, \$5 billion worth of U.S. production would be at risk to foreign competition if agriculture had to raise its average

wage by a dollar an hour. But Kansas’ farmers and ranchers are being asked to shoulder at least double that.

This means this country could one day be importing its meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables and other crops and livestock. Would America be more secure if we handed billions of dollars of U.S. production to other countries?

A sensible guest worker program is crucial to ensure that the ag industry is able to survive in the increasingly competitive global marketplace. As Congress debates immigration and border security legislation, it is vital that any reform measures contain an affordable and workable agriculture guest worker program. Taking an alternative approach could devastate agriculture, harm Kansas’s economy and lead to the possibility of U.S. consumers becoming dependent on imported food.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of “Kansas Living,” a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.*



### garfield

