

Congress needs to fix our immigration mess

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, Mr. 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.

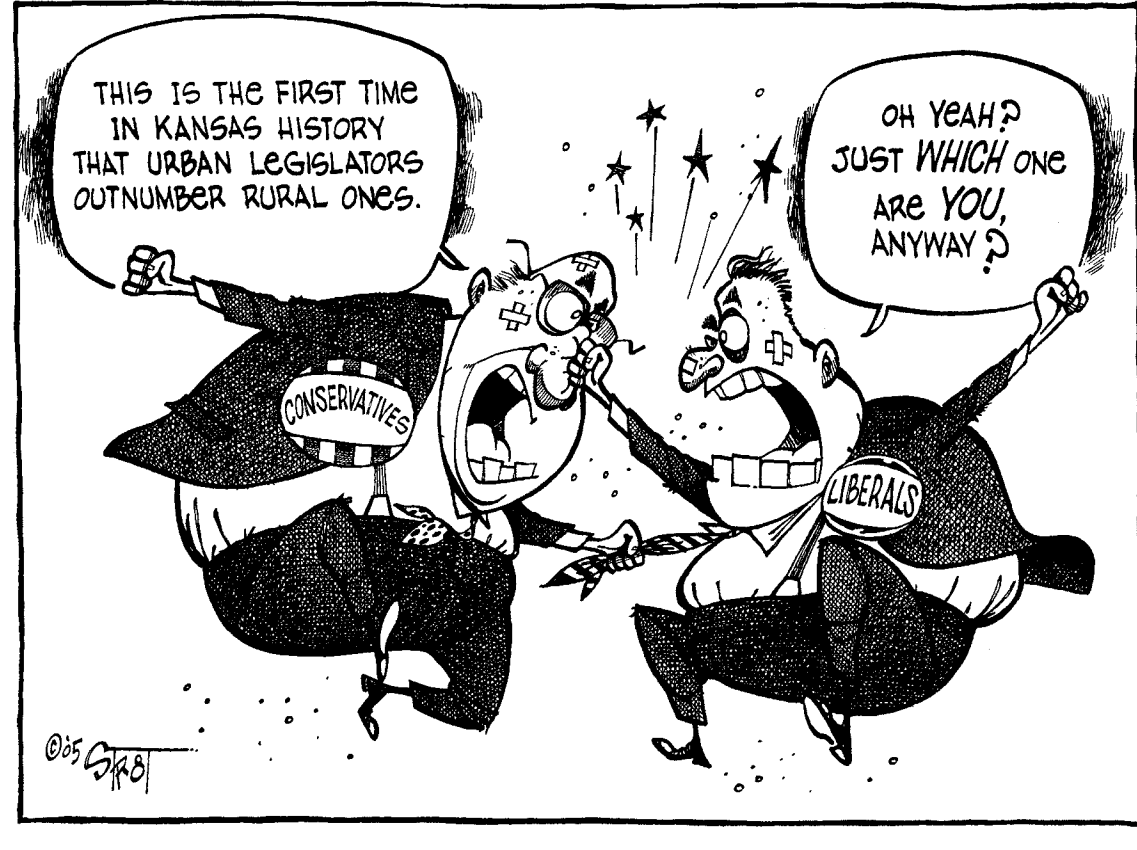
As all the ones before, it will make us stronger, better and happier in the end.

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



Christmas letters grow in value



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes schaynes@nwkansas.com

When I was young and foolish, I used to think that Christmas letters were a kind of corny sentimentality where people went on and on about their dull, boring lives.

Now that I am old and foolish, I've begun to value them more each year. They give me a connection to the friends we've collected over the years, but seldom see anymore.

Maybe I'm less judgmental than I used to be. Maybe I have grown more sentimental.

I've begun to realize, too, that others like these letters. After years of not writing a Christmas letter, we've been doing one for more than a decade.

Apparently, some of our readers have gotten used to them. When Cynthia ran short this year, she didn't bother to make more copies for the "local" list. We got a couple of complaints.

I find the letters fascinating, even when they come from high school chums and distant cousins whose kids I hardly know, if at all. If you read the letters, you can follow each family from childhood through college, work and weddings to grandchildren and, eventually, to the grave.

I organize my reading into little piles, and I seldom just read what comes in today's mail. Christmas cards, I read and take note of the signatures. They go on display on the mantle.

The letters form a little pile on a side table until the day, usually over the holidays, but sometimes well after Martin Luther King Jr. Day, when I find time. Then I read them, one after one.

Sandy and John write that everyone is well and happy in Kansas City, and the grandkids are growing up so fast. They've made allowance,

I guess, for the adult daughter they lost.

The Eimon, Paul and Pan, write that they are leaving Amarillo for her home state of Tennessee. They've traveled the world in his career as a mining geologist.

Mary Braden writes from Hays that she is still working, but Randall has retired (again) and spends time with his new Harley Hog. Guess he's flying lower these days.

Evan includes a photo collage of his family's year, including a report on the family cats. (You thought Cynthia was the only one, huh?)

Kids take first place in most letters, though increasingly, grandkids crowd them out. Diane writes that her Cathy is in her fourth year of medical school. She says the rains this year produced a bumper crop of tumbleweeds in west Texas, where she is one of the world's top experts on buffalo.

Bill and Tammy have their picture with their dog, now that their daughter is off to Colorado State. "Hope things are going well in Kansas," she writes.

Some friends seem to live in a different world. Mary Lyn says her boys were getting used to living in Colorado after a year in London. The 1989 au pair came to visit from Grenoble, and the family toured Provence and Bordeaux.

Gary and Charlene have settled in southern Colorado, so we have to

stop and see them next year.

Lea had trouble getting her college-age girls together for a picture, says it's harder all the time. We all notice that, Lea. She's in her 13th year of teaching, and her daughter Lauren, a leggy blonde, is big on the drag racing circuit.

Teri skipped her letter last year and has some catching up to do. Life hasn't been all roses, but she doesn't mention the thorns. Good for her.

Jeanne has quit her job and found another. After 25 years in the Air Force, she's becoming more independent, I think.

I still remember the day she abandoned her plans to be a teacher and signed up for Officer Candidate School. The military was not that popular in the early '70s.

Then Ray writes from Austin that he's free of parole, and in Texas, he can vote again despite his drug conviction.

A brilliant reporter and editor, he did seven years in federal stir after falling in with a biker meth gang. Now he's finally graduating from college and thinking about a masters.

Bev, who had all these kids, now has all these grandkids, with more on the way, and she takes a word or two to tell you about each one.

Fascinating. I wouldn't trade the stack of them for a good novel, but I'm still going to try to keep mine shorter next year.

Daughter picky about her dates

Youngest daughter is an infamous heartbreaker.

At 27, she has dated and discarded more beaux than Elizabeth Taylor. It's not that she's mean. She's just picky.

She's willing to date a guy who seems nice, or interesting, but if, after a week or a month, it isn't working out, she dumps them.

I know of at least two young men who have followed her back to Lawrence after summer break only to find themselves with an education, but no girl.

Last year, she decided it was time to make a change in her life. She was still young and single, and after nine years in Lawrence, she decided to go somewhere new and fresh, so she enrolled in the University of South Carolina's graduate school.

It was only later that we found out there were a few ulterior motives for picking Columbia, S.C., as her new home.

We already knew that Columbia is only an hour's drive from Augusta, Ga., where her big sister Felicia and brother-in-law Nik live.

It's also the home of Bradley Harrison Blake, a young man who works for big sister at Morris Digital Works.

Mom and Dad got into big trouble for describing Brad as "some guy Lindsay's dating" in the annual Christmas letter.

Apparently, when youngest daughter went to Augusta to visit her sister last spring, there was a party at Nik and Felicia's. Lindsay and Brad were introduced, and the two hit it off.



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes schaynes@nwkansas.com

After all the other guests had left and Nik and Felicia gone to bed, Lindsay and Brad sat on the front porch and talked into the night.

I know this, because Nik and Felicia said they kept creeping to the window to see if they were still on the porch.

Aren't chaperones wonderful? All the rest of the school year and through the summer, Lindsay and Brad kept in touch and talked on the phone — for hours and hours.

Now that Lindsay has moved to Columbia, she and her beau call each other every night and they get together every weekend.

So during Christmas break, after getting into trouble over the Christmas letter, I figured I'd better find out more about this young man. Her father obviously wasn't doing his job of giving the kid the third degree.

Bradley is from Chicago, I learned. He graduated from the University of Missouri with a double major in journalism and computer science.

So far so good. He's 12 from the Midwest. He's a Big 12 graduate and he's got a journalism degree.

He's tall by our standards, 5 foot, 10 inches, and skinny. Why do short

women always pick the tall men? He has dark hair and eyes and a little goatee.

His parents have moved to Phoenix and he has a sister, Catherine, who is a senior in high school.

He likes cats but is allergic to them, and he won't eat his vegetables.

Lindsay's working on the vegetables and I got the cats.

No, mother, he's not Catholic.

This may be serious, but they haven't gotten to the take-each-other-home-to-meet the family stage yet, so we'll see.

Oldest daughter says he's a great guy. The only problem she sees is if the two decide to make this permanent, she'll have to move him to another department, and she doesn't want to lose one of her best Internet code writers.



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I said, "What's the matter? Don't you want to go, 'Ooh and aah,' like the girls?"

"Naw," he replied, "I just want the cake and ice cream."

At 10, I think Alex qualifies as an official pre-teen. I'm just glad her grandpa and I can sit back and enjoy the show from the sidelines.

From the Bible

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Hebrews 10:16, 17

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