

## Immigration laws may affect how we vote

Here's what's wrong with tough, new immigration laws adopted in several states, and with a new Kansas law designed to stop "voter fraud" by forcing people to show a photo ID at the polls.

On the  
Prairie Dog  
Steve Haynes



Both, by the way, are creations of our new secretary of state, Kris Kobach. He helped write both the pioneering Arizona immigration law and the Kansas voter ID law.

Mr. Kobach got elected on a platform of "stopping voter fraud," though neither he nor anyone else has been able to show the state ever had a problem. Many think it's Kobach who's the fraud.

The Arizona law directs police to determine if people they deal with are in the country illegally. That's tricky, at best, because American citizens are not required to carry identification, except for the law about having a driver's license on you when driving.

That means a police officer cannot legally ask to see your ID unless you are driving. It's simply not a requirement in this country, nor should it be in a free society, to carry "papers." That is what has separated us from many a dictatorship, even from many democracies.

So, when enforcing the anti-immigration law, how are police supposed to tell immigrants — who are required to carry documents — from the rest of us? By the color of their skin? It's touchy territory, with no simple answer to the question.

Why states should concern themselves with immigration is an open question. The federal government, which has the responsibility, has failed miserably. That is certain. But without federal backing, it's doubtful the states can do much better.

Meantime, we run the risk of slipping into a police-state mentality, driven by concerns for border security and keeping transportation safe from terrorists. Federal agents already skirt the law, intimidating people into showing ID when they could legally decline. The Border Patrol is active in searching buses, trains and planes within the U.S. and taking down people's names, which are then entered into a master federal database.

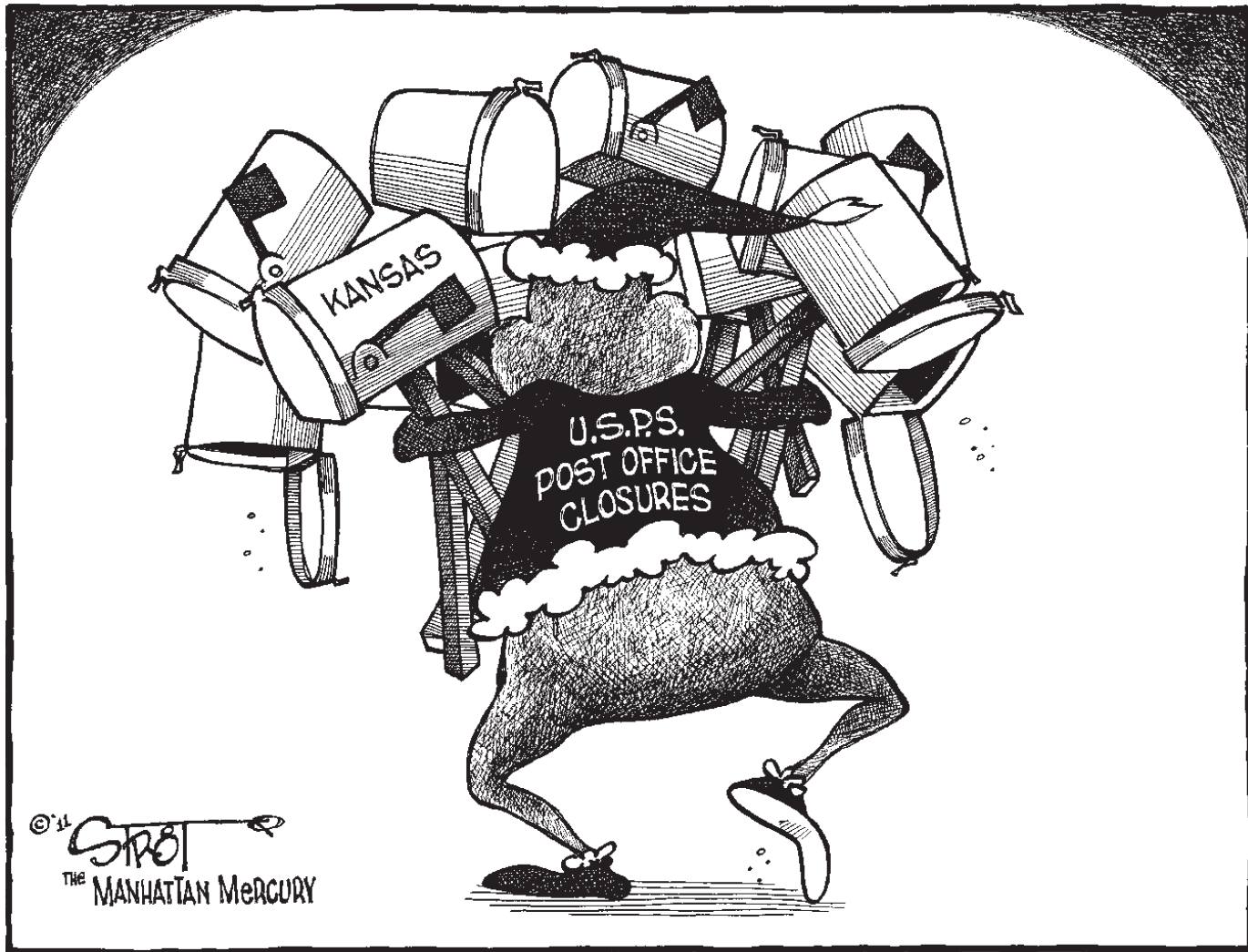
Most citizens do not know they can simply refuse these demands, and officers are good at making them feel they'll be in trouble if they do refuse. Many city and county law enforcement officers do the same thing when they want to search a car.

The question here is not whether we want to do something about illegal immigration. Everyone should agree that a functioning immigration system would be to our advantage.

The question is, rather, do we want to slip into a police state, where citizens have to account for their actions and movements at the demand of any officer? Or do we want to maintain the precious freedoms our ancestors — and lately, our friends and neighbors — fought so valiantly to win?

If American citizens and voters do not answer this question soon, it will be too late. The security apparatus wants ever to grow and increase its power at our expense.

What is your answer? — Steve Haynes



## Solid waste is a rapidly growing problem

Several years ago I heard it said that garbage is the ugly side of plenty. No matter what you choose to call it — solid waste, refuse or some other more politically correct phrase — garbage remains just that, garbage.

You know the stuff I'm talking about, too. That awful pungent collection we set on the curb each week. Torn tennis shoes, moldy grass clippings, empty food packages, food scraps — just about anything we don't want sitting around our houses. Most of it is originally packed in plastic and winds up on another trash bag or by the refuse control people.

Some regions of our country, especially the east and west coasts, are literally being covered with garbage and waste. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) figures show that in 2010, Americans generated about 250 million tons of trash and recycled and composted nearly 85 million tons of this material. On average, we recycled and composted 1.51 pounds out of our individual waste generation of 4.43 pounds per person per day.

In the State of Garbage In America report the estimated tons of municipal solid waste generated in the United States during 2002 was 369 million tons. That resulted in an average per capita generation of 1.31 tons/

Insight  
John Schlageck



person. Per capita rates calculated for individual states range from a low of 0.68 in South Dakota to a high of 1.73 tons in Kansas. And that was 10 years ago.

No matter how you haul it to the dump, this country has a rapidly growing waste problem. While some people know about this growing challenge, few have the ability, or care to exert the effort, or spend the money to do anything about solving this dilemma.

Few Americans or Kansans will feel down in the dumps about the problem as long as they can carry their bags of trash to the curb in the morning and find them gone when they arrive home from work at night.

And while picking away at the waste problem individually may not seem to matter it can and it will. One of the easiest things we can do to slow this growing trash problem is recycle.

Recycling does not begin with empty beverage containers and yesterday's

newspapers. It starts with shopping lists and the questions we must ask ourselves before taking an item to the checkout counter.

Do I need this product?  
Is the package recyclable or returnable?

Does a similar product come with less packaging?

Can I reuse this disposable product? Is there a non-disposable alternative?

How many times can I use this product before I throw it away?

How long will this product last?

Can this product be repaired rather than discarded?

If the product is something I seldom use, can I borrow or rent it?

Will disposal of this product be hazardous to the environment? If so, is there a safer alternative?

At the checkout counter, choose recyclable paper sacks rather than non-recyclable plastic ones.

Our garbage glut is the product of an American compulsion for convenience and our need to save precious time. That said, it's high time to rid ourselves of such backward thinking and look forward to a future of limiting our waste and the garbage we pile in already crowded dumping sites.

## ELECTED OFFICIALS:

- ★ **Governor Sam Brownback**, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-3232
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. roberts.senate.gov/public/ (202) 224-4774
- ★ **U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, Russell Senate Office Building Room C-4, Washington, D.C. 20002. moran.senate.gov/public/ (202) 224-6521
- ★ **State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Room 300 SW 10th St., Room 262-E.A., Topeka, Kan. 66612. ralph.ostmeyer@senate.ks.us (785) 296-7399
- ★ **Congressman Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. huelskamp.house.gov (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124
- ★ **State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka, Kan. 66612 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov (785) 296-7659
- ★ **State Rep. Ward Cassidy**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Topeka, Kan. 66612 ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov (785) 296-7696

## The joy and the stress of the holiday season

Living through the holidays has been our goal. And if we don't weaken before Saturday, we should make it.

Jim and I both think we can do it all. Those days, however, may be coming to an end. We tried to cram three major events into one: preparing for our Mexico mission trip, preparing for Christmas and preparing for the Christmas party for our Bible study group at prison. Each one, in and of itself, is a major undertaking. But roll them all into the same three-day period, and you have a meltdown in the making.

We've made it through two of the three and only have Mexico left. The party was a huge success, with 63 men sharing Christmas treats and singing carols. Christmas with our kids in Dallas was great. And now, on the cusp of crossing the border, we look forward to seeing a few old friends, making new ones and giving a poor family a much-needed home.

Jennifer's home in San Antonio is the staging area for Mexico. Now that all the Christmas presents have been delivered, we can rearrange the van with luggage, the bags and boxes of

Out Back  
Carolyn Plotts



clothing and shoes we take to the family and to the church where we stay in Mexico. San Antonio is only three hours from the border, so we will come back to Jennifer's on the day we leave Mexico.

As usual, I have orders for Mexican vanilla. And, as usual, I did not write down any names. I remember Ann and Deanna because they were the last to tell me they wanted several bottles. If you told me you wanted vanilla, be sure to remind me when you see me. I'm buying about four cases, so I will have plenty.

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Christmas with little kids is so much fun. Our 18-month old great-grandson, Kayden, would rather play in the box his present came in. But 5-year-old Ani loves everything she gets.

"It's my favoritest thing!" she declares.

Even if her gift was something practical, she would say, "I luf it!"

Her Aunt Halley sent her pink "fairy" wings, a pink feather boa, a rhinestone tiara, a dozen sparkly rings and a necklace and earrings, all of which Ani had to put on — at the same time. What a sight.

-ob-

This year is almost over. If I were to summarize it into a few words, it would have to be "The Year of Injuries."

The lead story at the Plotts' house would be Jim's close encounter with the table saw, almost losing his thumb, followed by a shard of metal in his eye. We could subtitle the year, "The Year of Doctors' Visits". We spent more time in hospitals and doctors' offices this year than all the other years of our marriage combined.

We look forward to next year, because anything that could go wrong already has. We should sail through 2012.

It's been fun to say, "See y' a next year." Well, "next year" is almost here. Happy New Year!

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