

New bill to fight hunger here at home

America’s farmers and ranchers work hard every day to put healthy food on our tables. Thanks to their incredible productivity, we have the capacity to produce enough food not only for every American family, but for much of the world.

In a nation with such an abundance of food resources, it is unthinkable and unacceptable that any American go hungry. Unfortunately, even as the economy recovers and more Americans get back to work, millions of hardworking folks still need help putting food on the table.

America’s food insecure families are just one group of Americans counting on Congress to finish the work of a comprehensive Food, Farm and Jobs Bill that adequately invests in America’s nutrition safety net.

To help families in need, the U.S. Department of Agriculture maintains a nutrition safety net through a wide range of programs. These include the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which helps ensure adequate stocks at food banks and food pantries; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that helps families put food on the table; and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children which is focused on mothers and their young families.

For example, right now, many food banks and emergency food centers are dealing with increased winter traffic and their resources are stretched thin. To help support these food banks and pantries, USDA this week was able to purchase an additional 155.6 million pounds of wholesome, high quality, domestically-grown fruits and vegetables to be donated through TEFAP. Last year, the program resulted in more than 640 million pounds of extra food in food banks across the nation and added \$498 million to the farm economy.

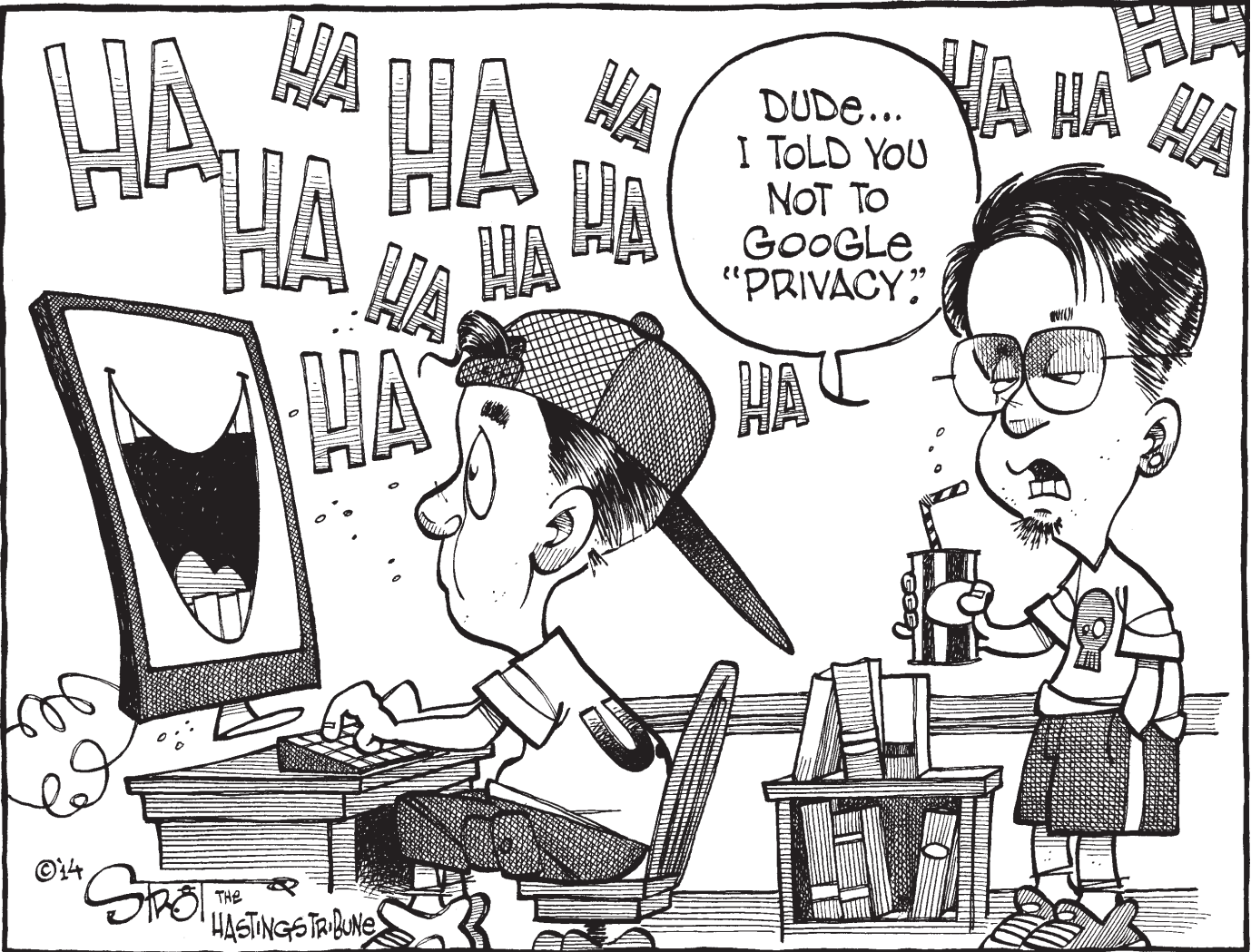
Meanwhile, USDA remains focused on delivering a reliable and modern assistance effort through SNAP. Our efforts to crack down on fraud and abuse while modernizing the SNAP program have led to one of the lowest error rates in history for the program, and a fraud rate of 1.3 percent.

And while we have worked hard to provide even healthier meals to the 31 million kids who eat school lunch and 13 million who eat school breakfast, USDA has established ambitious goals to expand the reach of summer nutrition programs that feed more than three million low-income children daily when school is out.

Many of these efforts to provide a strong, dependable safety net for American families rely on passage of a new Farm Bill that supports strong nutrition programs.

Although the holiday season and its focus on giving have passed, this is no time to forget that too many American children and families are still struggling to make ends meet, particularly in the wake of an automatic SNAP monthly benefit reduction that began late last year. Millions of folks count on the nutrition safety net as they strive to get back to work – and they’re counting on Congress to pass a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill to maintain this important effort.

– Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture



Beat it to fit or paint it to match

I always look at having company as a good excuse to do some deep cleaning. Just because we live here never seems like quite a good enough reason. I can always find more fun things to do. Whoa! This sounds like an issue for my therapist; if I had one.

Back to the issue at hand. It was time to have a board meeting for the non-profit organization we help with and I volunteered to host the meeting. That alone was enough to spur me into a cleaning frenzy. But why, oh why, did I think this would be a good time to take down the curtains on the bay window in the dining room? The meeting was scheduled for 6 p.m. Saturday and Friday morning I took down the dark amber sheers and fringed valances so they could be laundered. I was disgusted when the dust fairly billowed out. I couldn’t remember the last time the curtains had been washed, but I blamed the dust storm of a few days earlier. That fine-as-flour dust had sifted in and made me think of my mom and her tales of the Dirty Thirties.

The curtains went to the end of the laundry line and waited (in the washing machine) to be dried until we got home

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



Friday night. I wanted to be able to get them out of the dryer immediately, so they wouldn’t wrinkle. It was after 10 p.m. when I got started re-hanging them and I was already tired, but the thought of company coming the next day spurred me on.

In my haste, I had not noticed the different lengths of extender rods. Nor had I observed the different sizes of the curtain rods. It wasn’t until I was trying to hang the last curtain that this error would become evident. Then they all had to come down. I tried again. Different configuration – same results. They came down again. One more attempt with the same results brought me to the verge of tears. It was almost midnight and I determined that this would be a good job for the analytical mind of my husband. It was obviously too much

for me to figure out the proper arrangement of 12 little pieces of metal.

Saturday morning I used all my feminine wiles to prepare Jim for the question I hoped he would not say “No” to. Because we all know how much men love to hang curtains. I made him scrambled eggs and toast, served with a cup of coffee on a tray. I coyly asked, “Honey....would you mind helping me with a little project?”

He readily accepted and before I knew it were down to the last set of curtains. All the others were up and fit. After threading them on to the rod they were ready to be hung. Oh, no! They didn’t fit. The extender piece was too long. We would have to start over.

Think again. Jim did what any good carpenter/curtain hanger would do. He said, “Be right back,” and headed off to his shop – his thumb marking the spot where the excess started.

He quickly returned, inserted the shortened extender into the rod and finished his part of the job. A hacksaw had accomplished what neither one of us could. And that is why the motto of our construction company is, “Beat it to fit; paint it to match.”

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E-mail:
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ISSN 1063-701X
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

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A vision of the water situation in Kansas

You never miss the water till the well runs dry.

No truer words have been spoken about Kansas water needs. Mired in the midst of a four-year drought, the Ogallala Aquifer continues to decline. Reservoirs –critical water storage structures for much of the state – fill with sediment.

At the current pace throughout the next 50 years, the Ogallala Aquifer could be 70 percent depleted while Kansas reservoirs may be 40 percent filled with sediment.

What does this bode for the future of the Sunflower State? How do we sustain the lifestyle we enjoy? How do we grow the economy? How do we ensure life in Kansas will continue to be desirable?

These questions are relevant to all Kansans. And while the Ogallala Aquifer is often viewed through the nozzle of a center pivot system, this topic is far more than that.

Irrigation stimulates higher land values, greater crop production and increased production inputs that result in enhanced county, regional and state prosperity. It has supported the world’s largest animal industry whose feed yards and packing plants grow and sustain Kansas communities and the

Insight
John Schlageck



people who live there.

Water usage in Kansas is not just an irrigation issue. It affects citizens whether they live in western or eastern Kansas.

Nearly two thirds of this state’s population depends upon water stored in our reservoirs. Each and every day this water supply dwindles as sediment slowly creeps downstream settling in and diminishing valuable reservoir storage space.

To address these issues, Gov. Brownback recently called for the development of a 50-year vision for the future of water in Kansas. The Ogallala Aquifer and Kansas reservoirs will receive top priority in this plan.

Key players include the Kansas Water Office, Kansas Department of Agriculture and the Kansas Water Authority. Throughout a one-year period, this team will seek input from water users, compile data, conduct research and

chart a path for future water use.

All Kansans have a stake in this issue. Every citizen of our state will be impacted by the decline of the Ogallala Aquifer and sedimentation of our reservoirs.

It does not matter if you are rural or urban, young or old, a student or working, everyone needs water in their lives.

As farmers, ranchers and landowners of Farm Bureau in Kansas, each and every member will have an opportunity to provide grass roots’ input in creating this water plan for the Sunflower State. Through educational materials and district issue surfacing meetings, farmer and rancher members will have the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions on the future of water in Kansas.

Plan to attend these meetings and voice your opinions and concerns.

“This is a defining moment in our state’s history and with each member’s input, we intend to help establish a water legacy that is good for agriculture and generations to come,” says Steve Baccus, an Ottawa County farmer and Kansas Farm Bureau president. “We must engage in this process and help define the vision for these precious water supplies, or others will do so for us.”

THUMBS UP!

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

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Letters to the Editor