

Opinion



Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

Can't afford to sit on the fence

To The Free Press:

I am a fourth generation cattleman, farmer and community servant, and I would like to say thank you to those involved in the Kansas Drought Forum. I attended this forum in Goodland on Aug. 26. In observance of the testimony and responses from the government officials at this forum, it seemed that there may be some misconception of the government's responsibilities.

I will be the first to admit that the stories and statements that were given by the people in attendance needed to be brought to those officials' attention. However, it is my opinion that the drought disaster that we are currently in could be referred to as the straw that broke the camel's back.

Policies, regulations and administration of these are in my viewpoint what is currently holding us back from progress. The drought is only an obvious additional problem. Sometimes agricultural laws and regulations are written with the utmost research, nevertheless; we find our profession in situations that are not favorable to such laws. Consequently, we find ourselves with the repercussions of our own ignorance.

It is my experience that the government is not going to 'fix' our problems — we need to fix our problems ourselves, and if you think that they will then you are badly mistaken. We can turn to the government for help, but only for band-aid help.

If we want to truly progress and establish our future then local input, control and commitment is the answer. We as an agricultural community need to use this forum as a tool to educate ourselves. In order for this minority sector to succeed and prosper, we have got to get involved in our livelihood and be aggressive.

If we sit on the fence, then we as a group will never be more than a puppet.

Jon Starns

Kansas Association of Conservation Districts
Area 1 Director
Brewster
(Letter #117)

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The name of the game is 'security'

Michelle L. Hawkins

• Pursuit of a Richer Life



Last night's storm was sure a whopper. It seems like forever since we have seen a great deal of water come from the sky. A friend and I were out watching the storm, north of town, hoping a funnel would pop out of the sky. I know, I know, some of you right now are assuming I have lost my mind, but remember...I am a photographer. I am always looking for the perfect shot!

We were outside the vehicle watching the clouds, which were very low, and he told me that whenever I thought it was unsafe, to say the word and we would change locations. Since he has never seen a tornado, he really wasn't feeling a great deal of danger, just more adrenaline than anything. I was the one who started to get a little bit jittery when those low hanging clouds began to swirl directly overhead in a counter-clockwise manner.

At that point...I said the word. Don't get me wrong, I was really wanting to see a twister, but to have one pop down directly overhead really wasn't the photographic image I was dying to get!

Later, as I was sitting in my living room pondering my writings for today, I started to think about security or the lack of it for that matter.

When we are insecure, we reach the point where fear takes over our body and the brain says we are unsafe. Everyone, from the time we exit the womb, fights to find security in some capacity.

The newborn draws into its mother, the only security it has known for nine months. The same child crawls up in her lap when they are ill, and runs to dad, the pillar of family security, when they feel threatened.

When I was young and living in northwest Kansas, there were many times we did see tornadoes. I remember running to the basement with my mom and brother while my dad watched the skies. He was the guardian of our family. He was strong and indestructible, and made sure we felt safe.

As I would tell my mother that he needed to join us in the basement, she would assure me he would if we were in danger. In my mind, we were completely safe with dad guarding the perimeter of our house. Thankfully I never experienced the fear that would have come if he had come running to the basement to join us.

Security comes from many sources besides our parental units. Small children usually find a security object of some sort. Mine was a green blanket which I received when I was a baby. In reflection, I dug it out of the cedar chest last night to take a look at it once again.

It is so worn and tattered, no amount of sewing or reconstruction could mend the thin cloth. It used to be beautiful! It was bright green, yellow and red, and had five white quilt patches, which as I recall, had

pictures of nursery rhyme characters embroidered in them.

Now, the white is pretty much bare with only traces of colored thread left here and there. Somewhere in my mother's photo archives is a picture of my blanket in its glory days. She took the pictures when the blanket was brand new, since right away, I took to it as my favorite.

It was so soft and cool to the touch, and went with me everywhere. I wasn't one of those kids who was like the Peanut character Linus. I didn't take the blanket with me to school or out in public, but rest assured, if I was spending the night anywhere, my blanket was right by my side.

The day came when my blanket no longer was my security. I don't have vivid recall of the day, but my mother said I was in junior high and heading off to camp when she realized I was no longer a little girl. Packing was tight and the decision had to be made. Take the blanket...or pack high heels.

The high heels won out and the blanket retired to the memory box.

We all grow up and change where our security comes from. For most of us adults, it probably isn't a blanket or a monkey (Jim's security toy), but we all find comfort and safety somewhere.

Take some time to reminisce and think about what makes you secure...appreciate the small things.

Hawkins is Family Page and Religion Page editor, and also a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Colby Free Press. Her column appears on Tuesdays.

Classic campaign strategy for Sebelius

John Hanna

• Kansas Politics

By late July, Democrat Kathleen Sebelius had raised about \$1.8 million for her campaign for governor.

During the past month, she's been spending a good chunk of it on four television ads touting her record as insurance commissioner — but not mentioning her party affiliation.

She's following a traditional campaign strategy of attempting to solidify a positive image with voters before GOP nominee Tim Shallenburger and fellow Republicans begin raising questions about her record and politics.

She's also attempting to rise above partisan labels, something she must do to woo moderate Republican voters and win the Nov. 5 general election in a state where Republicans far outnumber Democrats.

"She is clearly trying to establish an identity in the minds of prospective voters in a positive sense, associated with experience and success," said James Sheffield, chairman of Wichita State University's Political Science Department. "This is classic Political Campaign 101."

Sebelius began airing her ads statewide the week before the Aug. 6 primary. All four portray her as a successful administrator who cleaned up the Insurance Department and made it more efficient while protecting consumers.

One, called "Gloves," depicts Sebelius entering the commissioner's office in January 1995 with supporters to clean it up. She snaps on a pair of rubber gloves and says, "Let's get to work."

"It's really important that people are reminded of her record as insurance commissioner," said Sebelius spokeswoman Nicole Corcoran-Basso. "It's important to get this information out there."

The toughest of the four ads may be "Hope," which chastises Republicans, saying they had a negative primary campaign and citing newspaper articles about GOP candidates' squabbles over advertising.

An narrator says, "It was disappointing, so let's hope it ends here."

Shallenburger, the state treasurer, won 41 percent of the vote in a tough Republican primary against Senate President Dave Kerr, of Hutchinson, and Wichita mayor Bob Knight.

Shallenburger spokesman Bob Murray acknowledged last week that the GOP nominee's fund raising for the general election campaign would have to "start from scratch."

But being the GOP nominee reduces or eliminates Sebelius' head start in raising money, if conservative Shallenburger can keep enough moderate Republicans behind him.

Last week, in Cowley County, two Winfield Democrats, Sen. Greta Goodwin and Teresa Krusor, the state Democratic Party's secretary, announced the start of a nonpartisan group to cater to crossover voters.

But such efforts often need public support from a Republican to make a significant difference.

In addition, the primary contest made Shallenburger far more visible in recent months than Sebelius.

"She will not go unchallenged," Murray said. "In a Republican state, Democrats tend to run as close to Republican ideas as they can get."

Republicans clearly hope to paint Sebelius as a liberal. During one primary campaign news conference, Kerr briefly compared Sebelius to New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In a fund raising letter dated the day after the primary, Shallenburger's campaign said Sebelius is a

liberal who "needs to sound like a Republican" to win.

"Well, she is a wolf in sheep's clothing, because if she wins, she will raise your taxes and burden your life with unnecessary government, just like Democrats do once elected," the letter said.

Sebelius has, of course, touted her record in decreasing the Insurance Department's budget and, when asked whether she would increase taxes, promised to initiate a top-to-bottom review of government to find savings. She also has said the state needs to be business friendly.

Her television ads are designed to inoculate her against attacks like the one in Shallenburger's fund-raising letter.

"If you've got a candidate who's got a fairly positive record in an abstract sense, then what you're doing is building a platform that's hard to tear down," Sheffield said.

And Joe Aistrup, chairman of Kansas State University's Political Science Department, said Sebelius has picked a good time to run her commercials, when Shallenburger is raising money to get on the air again.

"She can run the ads and build up her name recognition pretty much without a response," he said.

Murray doubted the effectiveness of early advertising, saying most voters aren't paying attention. Sheffield acknowledged voters often have short memories and "more than a month ago is a previous century."

Ultimately, Sebelius won't know how effective her strategy is Election Day.

But she's taken it straight out of the textbook for candidates.

"It's a classic campaign strategy," Aistrup said.

Correspondent John Hanna has covered Kansas government and politics since 1987.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

