

Other Viewpoints

Focus on jobs welcome but vague

Gov. Sam Brownback has instructed his secretary of administration, Dennis Taylor, to hit the road and crisscross the state to gather reaction to a list of regulatory reform measures designed to encourage job growth in the private sector.

To date, the list of regulations targeted for reform hasn't been made public, which makes commenting on specifics more than a little difficult.

It isn't too early, though, to hope Brownback and those he's enlisted to assist with his push to grow the private sector enjoy more than a little success. Their task is not an easy one.

Encouraging private sector growth on a national scale is proving even more difficult than most expected. The latest recession would wane, the economy would begin to right itself and the rate of unemployment would begin to fall, many thought.

We're told the recession has loosened its grip, but unemployment nationwide remains above 9 percent and most employers are reluctant to add jobs. That's happening at a time when a lot of large corporations are making money and banks are flush with cash to lend if qualified borrowers come knocking.

The problem is employers aren't going to hire more workers until they sense there is a market for the additional goods and services those workers would produce. That won't happen until more people have money to spend and are willing to spend it. The unemployed don't have much spending money, and the buying power of the middle class and those in lower economic brackets has shrunk over the past decade.

To top it off, many of those who do have jobs and money to spend are being frugal and saving more of their money because they're nervous about what the future may bring.

They're right to be nervous, given the gridlock in Washington, D.C. And Brownback is right to focus on what can be done now in Kansas for Kansans.

The governor thinks the key to moving Kansas out of the recession is creating a business-friendly regulatory environment and tax structure – which includes lower taxes on small business owners and individuals – that will foster private investment and jobs. He's recruited a Governor's Council of Economic Advisors to assist and plans to unveil his proposals in January.

That may seem like a long time to wait for specifics, but we don't think anyone's going to complain if Brownback's plan bears fruit.

— *The Topeka Capital-Journal, via the Associated Press*

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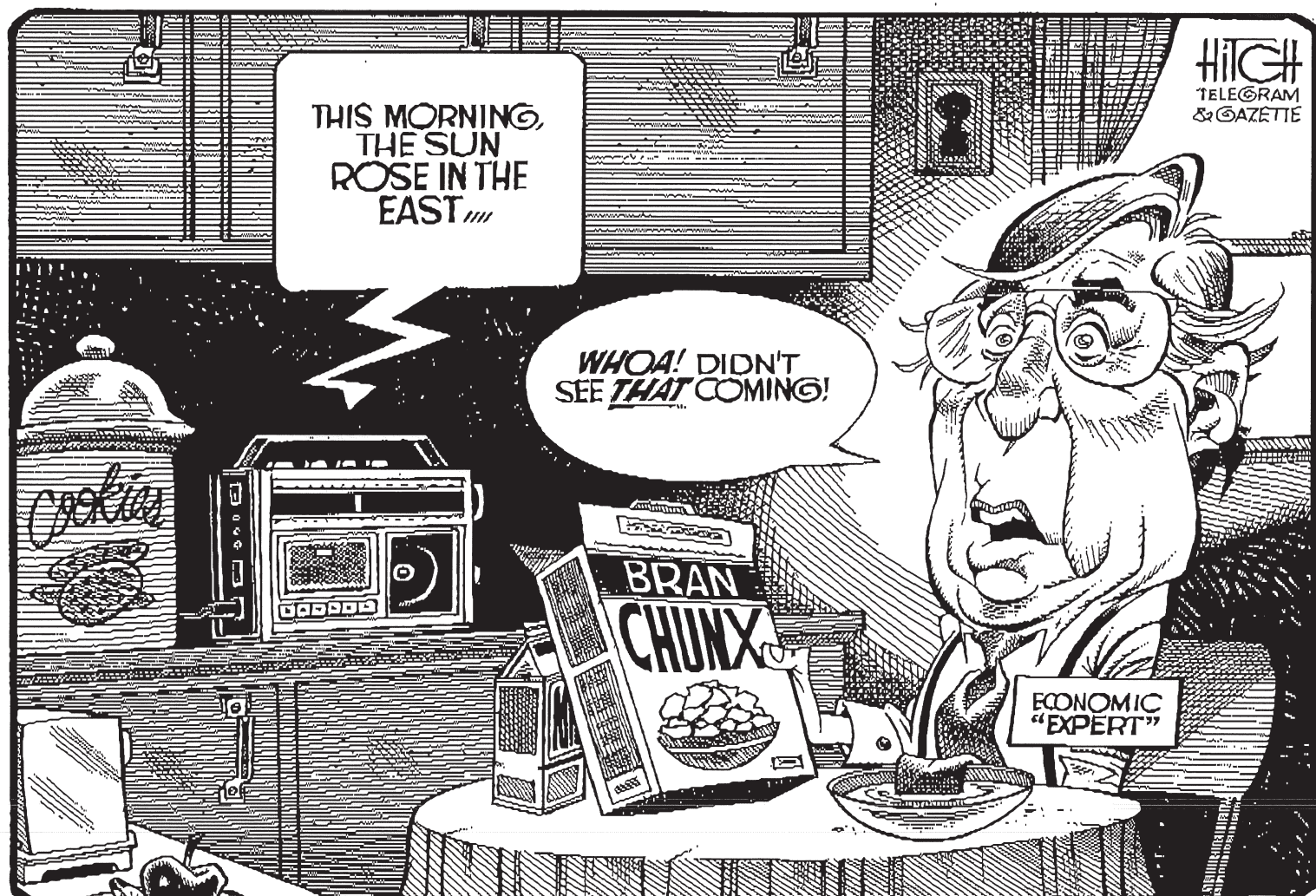
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Rodeo: walk on the 'wild side' for city boy

Dear Community:

I hope you were able to attend the college-sponsored rodeo here in Colby a few weeks ago. Thanks to those who gave time and resources to ensure the event run smoothly. A special word of appreciation goes to Rodeo Coach Allen Russell and his student-athletes for setup and cleanup. With 650 participants, this event is a showcase, generating interest in the good things we have in our community – the money spent locally doesn't hurt either.

The rodeo was a new experience for me – I had only been to one previously and my attention then was more on the festivities than the action. I have a newfound respect for the investment of resources, especially time, and the skills necessary to be competitive. Kudos to all those cowboys and cowgirls who are brave and talented enough to rope and ride under such challenging conditions.

Before the rodeo, colleagues joked with me about what I was planning to wear, knowing I am a city boy at heart. The fact is, there isn't much flannel in my closet. Sure, I could have gone out and purchased a Stetson and boots, but it wouldn't genuinely have been me.

In that vein, I am going to discuss a topic with which I am not always comfortable: me. I won't bore you with personal information, but as people have asked questions to learn more about me, I thought it appropriate to share my three rules. My kids know them and many of my teammates at Colby Community College do as well. These rules I have sought to incorporate into my life, and may give you some insight into who I am and what you should expect from me as I serve you and our college.

The first rule is SUALI which stands for shut up and like it. Simply put, when a decision has been made, get on board with it.

You may find this hard to believe, but when I was younger I had a big mouth and high opinion of my intellect – not rare among the



Steve Vacik

• From the president

young but certainly a dangerous combination. I had a position on everything and was willing to argue to prove I was correct. Even after a decision had been reached, if it wasn't exactly what I thought, I would continue arguing either openly or raising doubts privately with those who would listen.

I still remember when this rule developed in my mind, though I have forgotten the issue. What I do remember was that after a decision was made, and I was still complaining, a mentor took me aside; she shared with me that whether I kept up opposition or not, I would lose. In the process, I was not being a team player. The issue for me, as an aspiring leader, was that unless I could support others – even if I disagreed – no one would support me. To lead well, you must follow well. This doesn't mean I don't still have decided opinions or that I give in rather than contend for what I believe. However, once a decision is made, unless it is immoral or patently unethical, I shut up and like it and move on to future issues.

Rule number two is LIG – let it go!

Our natural tendency is to dwell on past issues and harbor bitterness toward those who have wronged us. I am not suggesting others don't do us harm, or that it is always unintentional. I am stating that animosity only hurts those who hold the grudges. Bitterness tears apart families, churches, work settings and communities. Because of my personal faith, I am compelled to forgive others; it isn't always easy but it is an act of the will.

Don't blame farmers for obesity

File this under the category of: "The lamest excuse to come along in my lifetime." What I'm talking about is the continuing attempt by some in the media and entertainment business to saddle America's farm and ranch families with the growing epidemic of obesity. Seems they would like us to believe farmers and ranchers are producing food that is too affordable and too available.

Stop right there. Many Americans can remember a time when their families or neighbors had trouble keeping food on the table. The concept of food that was too cheap was as foreign as paying two bucks for a bottle of pop – that's twice the size it used be and packs twice the calories.

But the times they are a changing and just like our politicians on both sides of the aisle, folks like to play the blame game. You know, look elsewhere, never in the mirror.

Rather than thank farmers for producing abundant, affordable food so that most of us will never experience the pangs of true hunger, making farmers the scapegoat for obesity appears to be too popular a trend. Some also say federal programs that help stabilize the farm economy encourage farmers to overproduce. Blaming agriculture only diverts attention away from the factors that do contribute to obesity.

This is a slap in the face to the thousands



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

of families that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and the millions of Americans whose standards of living are built on our varied and efficient food, fuel and fiber industry.

Without our nation's farmers and the federal programs that help them through economic and weather disasters, Americans might have to depend on other countries for food just like we already do for oil. That could be a threat not only to our food security, but our national security as well.

Evidence of a global obesity trend indicates that the problem involves more than access to and an abundance of snack foods, deserts and soft drinks. People are reportedly getting heavier even in developing nations where citizens do not have all of the foods and snacks found on our supermarket shelves. That tends to point toward rising incomes and less physical labor around the world as the cause, not just U.S. food industry practices.

Since when do farmers grow junk food?

When did farmers begin to force consumers to eat a specific diet, healthy or otherwise?

Farmers and ranchers are not responsible for the U.S. consumer's dietary and exercise habits. These are all individual choices and matters of personal responsibility.

Whatever happened to personal responsibility in this country?

What about the amount of food we eat at each meal?

How about the many times we eat between meals?

How about the individual holding the knife, fork or spoon?

I can remember when people didn't eat between meals, or if they did it was something healthy like fruit or nuts. Is that just another long and distant dream of mine?

It is time we start looking for real solutions to fix America's growing weight problem instead of blaming the very hands that nutritiously and safely feed America. It's important to note that while farmers produce a wide range of healthy food options, the ultimate consumer choices – moderation and exercise – are made far beyond the farm or ranch.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

