



Other Viewpoints

True sorrow felt for this statesman

With a characteristically gaudy and totalitarian funeral, North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il was laid to rest last week. However, the faked displays of grief by most of his countrymen for the passing of a two-bit thug with a nuclear weapon should not detract from the true sorrow of the passing of one of the larger-than-life statesmen of the past 50 years, Vaclav Havel.

Havel was the playwright-turned-president who led newly free Czechoslovakia out of the communist and Stalinist wilderness imposed by the Warsaw Pact. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, three men loomed large in eastern European politics. Two are well-known: former Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev and Polish labor leader Lech Walesa. However, Havel also was a moral compass pointing out the shortcomings of communism – and spent years in prison or under house arrest because of his views.

When he died Dec. 18, his beloved country – or countries, because of the split between the Czech Republic and Slovakia – had long been members of a free and prosperous Europe that has coalesced in the past generation.

On the other side of the world, North Korea is in shambles, with a kleptocratic class stealing whatever meager resources are generated in the country.

One can only hope the next Vaclav Havel is in North Korea, slowly building the skills necessary to lead a country into the light.

– Loveland Daily Reporter-Herald via the Associated Press

Where to write, call

- U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774 roberts.senate.gov/public/
- U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/
- U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us
- State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 rick.billinger@house.ks.gov

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"BUT PAYING COLLEGE ATHLETES MIGHT COMMERCIALIZE THE MEINEKE CAR-CARE-CHICK-FIL-A-OUTBACK-LITTLE-CAESARS-BEEF-O'BRADYS-FAMOUS-IDAHO-POTATO-CAPITAL-ONE-CHAMPS-SPORTS-SHERATON-INSIGHT-TOSTITOS-GO-DADDY.COM BOWL."

Lists not only for New Year's resolutions

I love weekends, but I never seem to get everything done. Three-day weekends are just a little longer way to not get stuff finished.

I suppose most people have the same problem.

Every weekend is like New Year's Eve for me. I make all these resolutions, and most of them never get done.

I'm a list maker. I have a book where I write down what I want to do each day. That way, if I have a task that has to be done at a certain time, hopefully I won't miss it.

I even separate the work and home stuff.

This is a good thing. But I always have more lines in my little book than time in my schedule.

My list looks a little like this:

Home

- 1. Nap.
- 2. Walk.
- 3. Fold laundry.
- 4. Clean cat boxes.
- 5. Clean dog pen.
- 6. Bake zucchini bread.
- 7. Get groceries.
- 8. Put away Christmas decorations.



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

- 9. Put out trash.
 - 10. Clean out hall closet.
- Office
- 1. Write basketball story.
 - 2. Write wrestling story.
 - 3. Write column.
 - 4. Take pictures at soup luncheon.
 - 5. Finish payroll report.
 - 6. File stuff on chair.
 - 7. Enter postal reports in computer.
- While a good half of this stuff won't get done, the first two items under home will. These are high-priority items that always get done. Sometimes in reverse order. Sometimes early. Sometimes late. But I get really cranky if I don't get my nap, and Steve gets out of sorts if we don't get a walk.

Farm organizations gain from diversity

Agriculture in Kansas has always been about people – farmers and ranchers who share the same vocation, although perhaps different commodity interests and sometimes with a slightly different political bent.

Dedicated members of various farm organizations have always come together under the common bond of unity and spoken with strength on behalf of their ag industry while maintaining their independent farm lifestyle.

Farm organizations, including Farm Bureau, epitomize this. Steeped in a tradition of strong, active leadership, this group of agricultural advocacy volunteers has made this organization a dynamic voice for agriculture year after year.

Members number nearly 40,000 active farmers and ranchers, who live in different parts of the state, with different farming practices and different backgrounds. Such diversification is a real asset when looking at issues impacting agriculture from many points of view.

One farmer or rancher may be a student of policy, while another may be strong in conservation and still another may look at how their farm organization can make inroads for them as producers. The strength of such advocacy organizations lies in their ability to take people with areas of expertise, reach consensus and speak as one voice.

Farmers and ranchers take ownership in their individual organizations. These groups of leaders are intent on developing and promoting the most profitable and permanent system of agriculture. They're also focused on maintain-



John Schlageck

- Insights
- Kansas Farm Bureau

ing the most wholesome and satisfactory living conditions in their county. They believe in the highest ideals of community and rural life. They're dedicated to a citizenship that remains active in local, state and national affairs.

With such a rich heritage comes the expectation that farmers and ranchers, from St. Francis to Baxter Springs, will take care of the business of farming and ranching and any and all policy concerns in our state's capitol.

Some areas of concern during the 2012 session will be taxes, school finance and water.

In the tax arena, the governor is expected to introduce proposals to reduce the current three state income tax brackets to two and substantially lower the rate; reduce the corporate income tax rate; maintain statewide sales taxes at its current level and possibly eliminate some sales tax exemptions.

Kansas farmers and ranchers support a fair and simpler tax policy, but it should not come at the expense of property owners paying higher property taxes.

Related to school finance, elements of a new K-12 funding formula include but are not limited to reduction of equalized state supports

from 20 mills to 15; eliminating the cap on local option budgets; and an equalized, local-option sales tax pool.

Farmers and ranchers who belong to Farm Bureau oppose increasing the local option budget without voter approval. They also support weightings and favor minimal reliance on the property tax to fund schools.

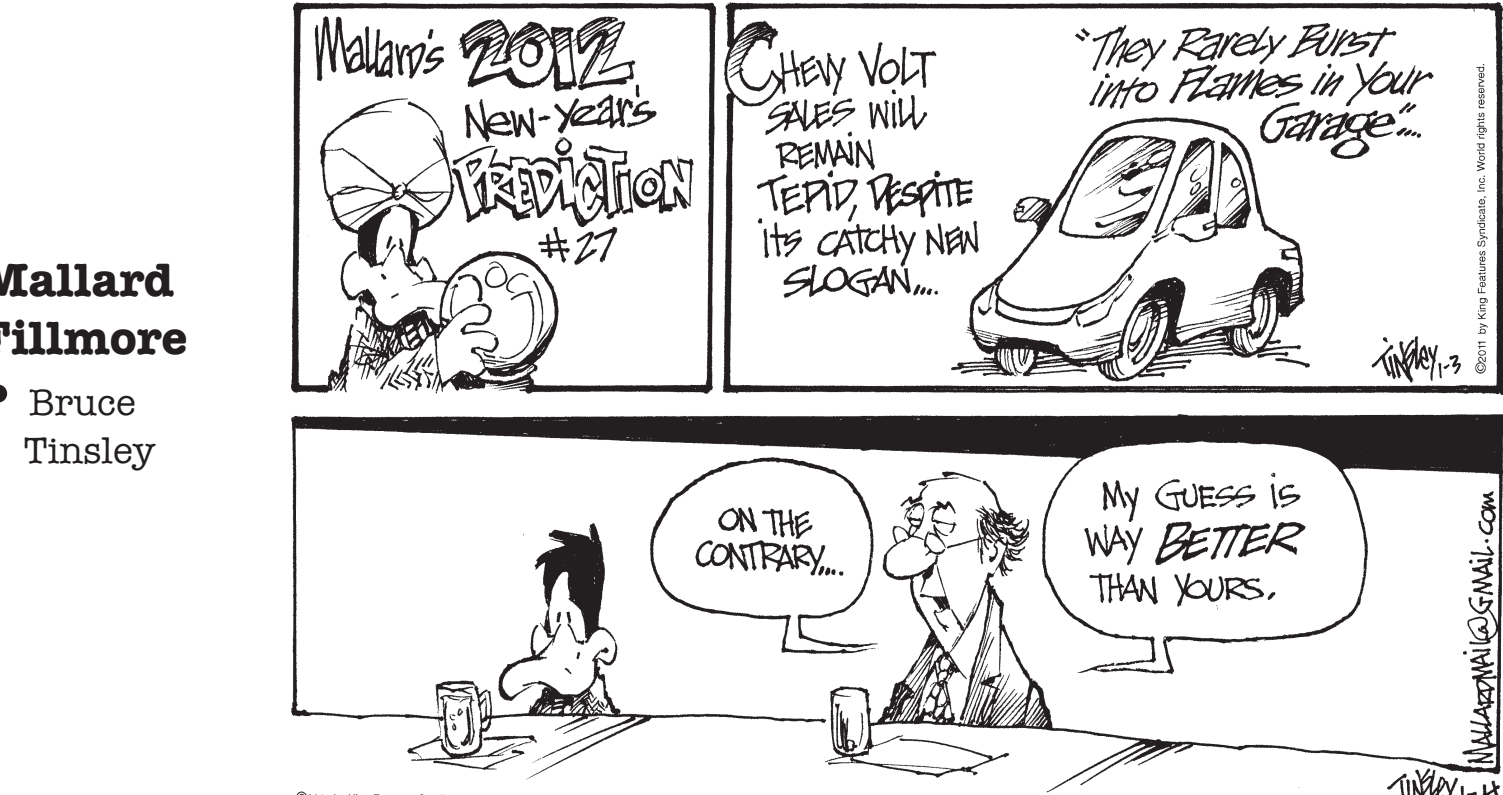
Water will also be at the forefront among farmers during the 2012 session. Farmer members of Farm Bureau support the concept of water flex accounts to provide water right holders greater flexibility in water utilization and profitability. At the same time they would like to protect the source of supply and respect existing water rights.

Farmers continue to support voluntary, incentive-based, stakeholder-driven management plans in over-appropriated areas.

These proposals can provide immediate, much-needed help to drought-stricken Kansas areas. They can also lead to long-term policy improvements that will help manage a dwindling natural and economic resource while protecting property rights.

And while all farmers and ranchers remain busy with their own lives, families and community, they also understand the importance of political involvement. They know politics has a lot to do with preserving their way of life.

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