



Other Viewpoints

Food stamp ‘fix’ hurts poorest kids

In the first month after Kansas changed how it figures household eligibility for food stamps, 2,066 children dropped off the rolls. If Gov. Sam Brownback is surprised that people think he’s balancing the state budget by letting poor kids go hungry, he shouldn’t be.

The Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services used to calculate eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program by counting only a portion of the household income if one or more members failed to provide proof of legal U.S. residency. For example, if a family of five earned \$2,000 a month, and two of the parents weren’t U.S. citizens but the three children were, the department divided the income among the family members. Under this method – which most all states use – the department treated the children as a family of three earning \$1,200 a month.

Social and Rehabilitation Services argues that this method gives immigrant families an advantage over families in which all members are citizens. But instead of fixing this by putting a cap on benefits, the department now counts all the household income but calculates eligibility as if only the citizen children live there.

So in the household of two undocumented parents and three citizen children, SRS now treats the three children as if they earn \$2,000 a month, which makes them no longer eligible for benefits.

Brownback spokeswoman Sherriene Jones-Sontag told the *Kansas City Star*: “It is about properly calculating household income and treating all citizens equally.”

But the move – announced in September among welfare changes aimed at saving the state \$10 million to \$15 million – is denying benefits to U.S.-born children. And that’s not right.

As state Rep. Jerry Henry, D-Cummings, told Associated Press: “We need to make sure that the kids aren’t unfairly getting less food than they need. You have to look at what’s happened to the kids.”

Kansas is only the fourth state to adopt such an eligibility policy, which doesn’t require either legislative or federal approval. The change has sent parents to food pantries, churches and social services looking for answers and help.

It’s especially startling coming from the administration of someone who was a leader in the U.S. Senate in arguing that a nation of immigrants should be understanding and pragmatic in dealing with undocumented immigrants, who came here seeking the American dream.

“The greatness of a society can be measured by the compassion it shows to its least fortunate,” Brownback once wrote in an Eagle commentary on immigration.

In that spirit, Brownback needs to do more than review the food-stamp policy, as he said he’d do Jan. 24. He needs to fix it.

– The Wichita Eagle, via The Associated Press

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Gingrich phenomenon baffles

In Gingrich we trust? Lord, I hope not

I must confess to being surprised by the Newt Gingrich phenomenon. I figured by this time, the Newtster’s presidential campaign would have collapsed under the weight of his enormous ego.

But one day I turned on the news, and there was Newt in all his glory, verbally pummeling one of the only moderate voices on Fox News during a Republican presidential debate in South Carolina. With that “I’m a really smart intellectual and I know it” look plastered on his disingenuous face, the former Speaker of the House lampooned Fox News moderator Juan Williams in front of a raucous South Carolina crowd.

Gingrich’s strong response stemmed from Williams asking Gingrich if some of his comments about African Americans and low-income Americans could be seen as belittling. Gingrich had previously said that poor kids lacked a strong work ethic and African Americans should demand jobs instead of food stamps.

With his usual piousness, Gingrich harangued Williams with partisan gems like “only the elites despise earning money” (isn’t that class warfare?) and “I know among the politically correct you aren’t supposed to use facts that are uncomfortable.” Newt is certainly in his element when he’s throwing political red meat to partisan audiences like chum to a



Andy Heintz

- Wildcat Ramblings

school of hungry sharks.

But are conservatives, particularly social conservatives, really willing to look past Newt’s moral failings? Say what you want about Mitt Romney’s penchant for flip-flopping; compared to Gingrich the paragon of ideological elasticity looks like Mother Teresa. But maybe conservatives distrust Romney so much that they’re willing to hold their noses and support a thrice-married philanderer with more baggage than an airplane full of Paris Hilton wannabes. It’s certainly within the realm of possibility, but I can’t bring myself to believe it.

Having known and befriended conservatives throughout my life, I’m willing to bet that too many of them are unwilling to look past Gingrich’s many behavioral transgressions. Despite my disagreements – and there are a lot of them – with self-professed social conservatives, I have always found the majority to be good-hearted, decent people. I can’t picture these folks getting behind a self-absorbed narcissist

like Gingrich – no matter how much they dislike Romney.

Perhaps social conservatives will reject both candidates and throw their support behind former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum. Although his decision to not correct a woman that accused President Barack Obama of not being president, and of being a Muslim (an unforgivable sin in some circles), at a town hall meeting in Florida was cowardly and pathetic, at least the majority of Santorum’s positions appear to be based on more than just political expediency and cynical opportunism.

Whether you like him or not, the former senator’s views appear to reflect his true moral convictions; the same cannot be said about Romney or Gingrich. Given his rhetoric about faith and family, you would think the moral values crowd would be leaving Gingrich in droves to rally behind Santorum (It should be noted that several social conservatives have stuck to their principles and endorsed the former senator).

Despite my dislike of Gingrich, there is a small part of me that hopes he wins the Republican nomination. If anybody could use a healthy dose of humility, it’s Newt, and a crushing loss to Obama might be just what the doctor ordered.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Celebration shows the Kansas that was

One hundred fifty fortunate grade and high school youngsters attended the annual Kansas Day Celebration at the Logan City Building on Jan. 27. This celebration is designed to provide students and the public with knowledge about the heritage Kansans all have in common.

More than 20 displays, complete with hands-on activities included period clothing, Native American artifacts, the art of bobbin lace, fur displays, an old-fashioned milk separator, fur harvesters, farm-life reenactments, butter churning, chickens and eggs, storytelling, farm machinery and historical photos and memorabilia from Phillips County’s past.

Long-time participant and one of the key organizers of the Kansas Day event, Doug Zillinger says the Kansas Day Celebration teaches youngsters that the city of Logan and its people have been an important part of the fabric and history of Kansas.

“There’s plenty of history and education represented here today for our young people,” Zillinger says. “After attending one of our Kansas Day Celebrations, you seldom see students who don’t walk away with a greater appreciation of our state’s heritage and a better understanding of our farm and ranching industry.”

In addition, Zillinger believes the youngsters are genuinely happy and excited to be part of the celebration. He’s convinced they should have an opportunity to learn more about and understand their Kansas heritage.

As an example, one of the Farm Bureau displays included a corn sheller, a corn grinder that made corn meal and muffins. As with most of the demonstrations at the Phillips County Farm Bureau Kansas Day Celebration, those attending were able to watch their food move from a raw product out of the field to a finished product warm and ready to eat.

“They see the entire cycle of where our food



John Schlageck

- Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

comes from.” Zillinger says. “This is something most children don’t have an opportunity to see because of our large integrated agricultural system.”

Another integral cog in the agricultural history of Kansas displayed at the Phillips County Kansas Day Celebration was a working cream separator. Students from the schools of Plainville, Phillipsburg and Logan saw firsthand how cream is separated from milk from a cow and churned into butter. Once the butter was churned it was spread directly on home-made biscuits and the students received samples of the tasty treats.

Farmer/stockman Leland Rundle brought his mom and dad’s old International cream separator to the celebration. His early 1950s vintage machine purred like a kitten as it separated the cream from milk.

Rundle told the Phillips County students how extra cream on the farm in those long-ago days was poured into metal cans, hauled to town for grading and then dairy producers like his parents received a check for their product.

“Mom always kept some of the cream for us to pour over fresh peaches and strawberries,” Rundle recalls. “We also poured the wonderful cream on green peas picked right out of our garden. There’s absolutely nothing like this wonderful taste today,” he told the youngsters.

Phillips County resident Janet Gottstine organized the day’s celebration and thanked all

the volunteers for their talent, time and energy. Gottstine said that without all of these dedicated folks the Kansas Day Celebration wouldn’t be the success it is each year.

“Our celebration has something for anyone and everyone,” Gottstine says. “I believe the youngsters absorb what interests them from each and every display we feature during our Kansas Day event. I’m so happy we can provide them with an activity that is steeped in our rich Kansas heritage.”

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.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

