



Free Press Viewpoint

Immigration hot as legislative issue

One of the most divisive issues for the Kansas Legislature this coming spring might be immigration, which oddly enough, is mostly the responsibility of the federal government.

Conservatives will be fully in command of the scene in Topeka, and they look to agree on many things. Social conservatives will push for laws restricting abortion, drugs and maybe even strip clubs while trying to defend religious liberty. All of those are areas where people have a lot of protection from the federal courts, however, so whatever the Legislature does is liable to be more for show than substance.

Victory on the floor will make a lot of people feel better after years of having social initiatives suffocated by more liberal governors, though, and Gov. Sam Brownback is liable to sign many of these bills.

Another thing liable to unite disparate conservatives is cutting the budget and keeping tax rates down. While last spring, compromise on drastic tax cuts enacted at the last moment appeared likely for the coming session, all bets are off now that conservatives have solid majorities in both Houses behind a conservative governor.

The smart money says there may be little incentive to raise more money to close an alleged \$700 million budget gap now. Instead, the emphasis may be on cutting programs and slashing the budget even more. The administration maintains it plans to put more money into public schools, however, and not less.

Whatever happens, low income-tax rates pushed last year by the governor appear to be with us for the next few years. Now neighboring Missouri is making noises about copying Kansas rates to keep pace in economic development. Lower taxes are seen as attractive to businesses looking for a new home.

But immigration is the rub. Gov. Brownback and his allies, including the state Chamber of Commerce and farm and ranch groups, tend to look at the situation from the standpoint of labor shortages. They know the state has jobs which can't be filled without immigrants. It's a practical matter with them.

The xenophobic wing of the party, led by Secretary of State Kris Kobach, wants the state to enact restrictions on hiring illegal immigrants, along with tougher-still election laws and maybe even an Arizona-style law requiring police to check the status of possible illegal immigrants.

Mr. Kobach pushed the state to require voters to show photo identification, though he had no proof – and still has none – that illegal immigrants were voting or that there was any kind of problem with voter fraud. His “issue” sounded good enough that he got the bill through a conservative Legislature which should have been concerned with the civil liberties problems it raised.

When push comes to shove, and with more than 50 freshman legislators, no one really knows how to count the votes, but the issue could split the solid-red statehouse down the middle. And make a supposedly slam-dunk session more than a little interesting. – *Steve Haynes*

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House is not a home, but soon will be

It's been a long four months, but our son has gone from being a homeless person to a homeowner.

Lacy went off to KU in 1999 and never left Lawrence. He fell in love with the town and has been living in a series of apartments ever since.

About a year ago, he decided it was time to buy a home. But he had some things he wanted in a house. It needed to be near downtown, and he wanted an older home in one of Lawrence's traditional neighborhoods.

He also needed to find a place he could afford.

He started a serious savings program and contacted a loan officer to advise him as to just how much he could spend. While that amount would have purchased a pretty nice house out here in northwest Kansas, it wasn't much for some place in Lawrence.

Still, he started looking at houses in the area he liked. He moved into a cheaper apartment, just big enough for himself and a couple of cockroaches (not that he had those, mind you). For a while, he worked two jobs and pretty much gave up dating.

By the time he was getting serious in his search, and he was calling home and telling us about houses he had looked at, it was July.

In Lawrence, the rental market is geared to students, and you rent with a year's lease from Aug. 1 to July 31.



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

Lacy hadn't signed a new lease because he knew he couldn't afford to pay for two places, so he was suddenly without an apartment or a house. He had, however, made backup plans. His friend John had a basement with a spare bedroom and bath. Lacy packed up his stuff and became a basement dweller.

Then he found the house on Connecticut Street. He put in a bid with the stipulation that the owners put on a new roof. The owners countered with a higher offer and agreed to the roof.

Over the next month, he worked with the loan company and the government, which was guaranteeing his new-homeowner loan, to ready the place for the transfer.

Last Wednesday, he got homeowner's insurance and put the utilities in his name. On Thursday, he signed the papers and started painting the bedrooms.

It's a cute little place, more than a century old, with two upstairs bedrooms and a downstairs bathroom. Built in 1906, it has floors that

slope and a little front porch that is brightly painted but ready to fall off.

On the plus side, it has a refrigerator, washer, dryer, dishwasher and garbage disposal. On the minus side, it has a hookup for a gas stove and no central air. But, the window units he found neatly stored inside his small garage, and he got a check from Mom and Dad for Christmas to help buy a new stove.

He's one happy man. But, he admitted over lunch on Sunday, he still doesn't quite feel like a homeowner. Each night after work, he goes over and works on the house – everything needs paint and the hardwood floors need to be refinished before he can move in.

He says it just feels like all those times he's helped friends work on their places.

Still, he's envisioning where his furniture will go and hoping to be in his new home by Christmas.

He says if we bring a bed, he'll be happy to have us stay over anytime. And we could save a lot of money that way, except whenever we get near his house, he puts us to work.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Hunting tradition will face more threats

Late fall is a great time to be a hunter in Kansas. From wild turkey and deer, to duck and pheasant, the union of several hunting seasons offers Kansans the opportunity to pursue a variety of birds and game. Thanks to our Founding Fathers' inclusion of Second Amendment freedoms in the Bill of Rights, hunting has been an American tradition for more than two hundred years – and a source of food and enjoyment for sportsmen across the country.

But the benefits of our hunting seasons extend beyond gun owners. Hunting plays an important role in the Kansas economy as our state has become a favorite travel destination for out-of-state hunters. According to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, more than 280,000 hunters enjoy Kansas' rich and diverse group of habitat and game species each year – and more than one-third of these hunters live outside Kansas. These tourists help create an economically significant industry for many of our communities. In fact, hunting has an annual economic impact in our state of nearly \$489 million, and supports more than 5,850 Kansas jobs.

As hunters are spending quality time in the field this fall, I am growing increasingly concerned that the fundamental right of Kansans to keep and bear arms is at risk. This summer, a treaty was proposed at the United Nations conference in New York that I found particularly troubling. The proposed Arms Trade Treaty included several provisions that would undermine the Constitutional freedoms of American gun owners. Despite this treaty's potential to suppress Second Amendment rights, the Obama administration willfully participated in these negotiations, marking a reversal of the policies of both President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush.



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

If implemented, the treaty would threaten the rights of Kansas hunters and all American gun owners. The United Nations has entertained calls for bans on the civilian ownership of guns Americans use to hunt, target shoot and defend themselves. And by requiring firearms to be accounted for throughout their life span, a U.N. Arms Trade Treaty could lead to mandatory nationwide gun registration. Other proposals could result in the marking and tracking of all ammunition.

In response to this summer's misguided treaty negotiations, I led 50 of my colleagues in sending a bipartisan message to the Obama administration that a treaty that does not protect ownership of civilian firearms will fail in the U.S. Senate. On July 26, we notified President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton of our intent to oppose ratification of a treaty that in any way restricts Americans' Second Amendment rights. Our opposition is strong enough to block the treaty from adoption, as treaties submitted to the U.S. Senate require two-thirds approval to be ratified.

Civilian firearms and ammunition should not be included in the scope of the treaty, and regulation of American firearms and ammunition by the United Nations is simply unacceptable. Many U.N. member states, who do not share our freedoms, desire an extremely broad treaty that would be incredibly difficult to enforce and especially threatening to American

companies that manufacture firearms and the law-abiding citizens who purchase them.

When the U.N. Conference dissolved this summer without a treaty, it was clearly a positive conclusion for American citizens – and I'm glad we were able to steer the administration toward this outcome. Unfortunately, the threat is not over.

Within hours of securing his re-election, President Obama declared his support for continued negotiations of the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty. A new round of negotiations is scheduled to take place in March 2013.

While the administration has previously indicated its intent to protect Second Amendment freedoms, the President's insistence on continued talks is concerning. We must avoid a situation where the administration, due to its continued willingness to negotiate, feels pressured to sign a treaty that violates our Constitutional rights. It is now clear that Congress must reiterate its concerns with the latest draft of the treaty, and I will lead this effort once again.

As I celebrated Thanksgiving in Kansas, I thought back to the First Thanksgiving and imagined what the famous feast would have looked like if the Pilgrims had been prevented from hunting for wild turkey and deer. Today, such a situation isn't so farfetched. I am committed to defending our freedoms. I will make certain the president understands our firearm freedoms are not negotiable.

Jerry Moran of Hays is the junior U.S. senator from Kansas. His committee appointments include Appropriations; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Veterans Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Committee on Aging. To sign up for his weekly newsletter, go to moran.senate.gov.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

