

from our viewpoint...

## Census count 2010: It's showdown time

PLEASE fill out your 2010 Census Form. It only takes minutes. There's nothing telling Nothing to fear as some people want us to believe. If you haven't put your pen to the form, do so now so you won't be put in the category of law breaker. It's the law of the land.

What is so disturbing is what we have to lose when we don't answer the questions on the census form. The forms are counted and tabulated and the population of our town and county comes directly from the forms. If we turn out a pale 65 percent and maybe 10 years earlier when the last count was take it was higher, then this census will show us with another population loss.

And when the government doles out money for projects and you read where a community you know is smaller than are we, and they get a bigger piece of the pie it's because their percent of returned census forms was larger than their forms turned in 10 years ago. It's all that simple, folks.

Just think what we could reap if our percentage was 75 percent or even 80. The sky would be the limit. But if we end up with fewer forms making their way to the Census Bureau, then we lose ground. Terribly.

Too, the population of the congressional districts plays big. If we lose a substantial number of people we could end up being a three congressional district state vs. four currently. At one time, Kansas had six congressional districts.

There is just so much that hinges on what information is provided on census forms. We wouldn't have enough space to detail it all.

Now that the mail-in deadline has passed, census workers will be calling on those homes that opted out of taking part. And when they call on you, please be courteous. After all, these census workers will probably be people from out own community. Don't give them a hard time, rather thank them for helping you to comply with the law.

We have overheard the name "Obama" — President Obama, we believe the title is — used unfavorably with the questions appearing on the census form. Don't get caught up in all this garbage. In the same conversation, it was mentioned that President Bush wasn't that intrusive in his last year in office with his census form distribution. President Bush's final year wasn't a year in which the federal census was taken.

Pull out your census from, read it over carefully, and then fill it out. It's as easy as eating ice cream. If you have trashed your census form, fear not the census workers will have extras for those occasions.

This newspaper has done all it could to be a constant reminder to its readers of the census deadlines. But again, sadly, we are still hanging in the 62-63 percent and we need to badly get that number up to where it really counts — 70, 75 or 80 percent. If we would do that, perhaps our population figure will be a pleasant surprise, maybe we really are lager than the figures of 10 years ago placed us. And wouldn't that be a proud feather in our cap.

We have control, a lot of control, over our future. We are the script writers.

To those who still have a blank census form at home, please fill it in and be gracious as you hand it over to the census worker.

We thank those who beat the mailing deadlines, and we thank those in advance who still have them but will have them ready for census workers. —TD

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## New friend's song signal of spring

I picked up a new friend the other day.

He's sort of short and has a bad case of bumpy skin; but he's a really nice guy.

I call him Squeak. He's my first toad of spring.

Steve and I were out for a midnight walk last week. Sometimes that's the only time we can find to take the dog out and get both her and us some exercise.

It had rained, and as we passed under a streetlight, I noticed the grass beside the road moving. Since there was no wind, I bent over to take a look and there he was, hopping up on the curb.

I was wearing a light windbreaker, so I toad-napped him and tucked him in my pocket.

As we continued our walk, the toad, which was about the size of my fist, worked his way to the top of my pocket and squeaked at me.

He did this several times during the walk.

Each time I would gently push him back down into the pocket and he would squeak.



**cynthia haynes**  
• open season

I've never heard a toad squeak before.

By the time we got home, Squeak had started to croak his mating call like a regular toad. My guess is he has just emerged from hibernation and hadn't found his voice yet.

When we got to our yard, Steve put the dog away and I tenderly put Squeak down in a flower bed that has plenty of foliage. I'm hoping he will transfer himself to the garden, but right now that's a pretty bare space for a toad, since it's been tilled but mostly not replanted.

While Squeak was the first toad I've seen this spring, I know the frogs are out in force.

When we get a chance to walk in the park, we can hear them singing. It's the song of spring

as far as I'm concerned.

But silence comes as soon as the dog goes down to the water for a drink and a dip — something she likes to do simultaneously.

You'd think a frog could tell the difference between a dog and a great blue heron, but I'm not complaining. A cautious frog is a safe frog, and a safe frog lives to sing another day. We hear their chorus start up as we leave the area.

Now I don't have to go to the park to hear the song of spring, though. Squeak serenades me.

On those nights when it is warm enough to have the window open, I can hear him calling other toads to come join him in the flower bed behind the yellow house. I sure hope his friends hear and come calling.

Bird calls are all right in the morning, but at night, you can't beat the call of a herd of toads to signal that spring has come.

## 'You can't have one without the other'

We saw a couple of wind farms going to and returning from Topeka last Friday on I-70, and were somewhat in awe. Those giant blades turning to Mother Nature's music caught the eyes of many travelers. I'm sure. The thought going through my head was simply, "Give the wind a try." And why not? We are one of the windiest states in the nation and for years we sat here with no thought of harnessing it in. Wind farms are springing up all over the place, so it seems, and I would expect this will continue. Of course it comes with controversy, but anything worth exploring does.

They say there are some impressively huge wind farms in southwest Kansas and the odds favor northwest Kansas to soon follow.

Someone reasoned that perhaps if we get enough wind farms up and running, or whirling, or whatever, the tumbling tumble weed problem might subside. Wishful thinking, for sure. Wind farms depend on the very thing tumbling tumble weeds depend on. As the words to a song go, "You can't have one without the other."

-td-

With all of the scaffolding around the state capitol building, it sort of looks like they are trying to keep the political critters locked up.

-td-

Only in Kansas, huh?! Son Todd and I were westbound out of Topeka heading to Goodland on I-70 last Saturday when somewhere around the Junction City area we were pulled over by a sheriff's officer with all the flashing lights in operation.. We were speeding;



**tom dreiling**  
• time out with td

doesn't everyone on I-70? But to our surprise what caught the law enforcement officer's eye was not our speed but the fact that Todd's car (he lives in Colorado) didn't have a license plate on the front. In Colorado license plates are required on both the front and rear. He did have the license plate laying on the dash board but the officer couldn't see it. He was a really pleasant guy. Todd has been unable to buy a license tag bracket to fit the front of his 4-door 2000 knock-around Chrysler. Strange as it may seem, he's never been stopped in Colorado for this infraction. But he'll probably find something now to affix the tag to.

-td-

Speaking of patrol lights blinking at full force, further down the road last Saturday a highway patrolman came roaring by us with NO emergency lights blinking and we estimated his speed at 95-100 miles per hour. I've never seen anything go so fast on I-70 in all my life. At that speed with no warning lights in play, boy that was a tragedy waiting to happen. Luckily that wasn't the case because we eventually came onto the trooper talking with some people he had pulled over. I wonder if there is a requirement that patrolmen utilize their warning lights when in pursuit.

-td-

## Don't unravel health care reform

I've talked about the need for reforming America's health care system for nearly two decades. Many people have agreed with me over the years, and many have disagreed. I respect and value differences of opinion. It is precisely those differences, and the debate, that gives me hope that health care reform will help move America forward, rural America in particular.

Reasonable people of differing opinions should be able to disagree about how best to implement health care reform and how far reform should go. And although it may be dissatisfying — for both sides — the checks and balances of democratic decision-making provide an opportunity for wisdom, reason and common-sense to have their part in this debate.



**from other pens**  
• commentary

However, politics, and the machinations that go into political campaigns, often do not make for good public policy decisions. The legal challenge filed by thirteen state Attorneys General immediately after the health care bill was signed into law is a pretty good example of putting politics before people. Ironically, seven of those states are among the top 20 in percentage of citizens that will benefit directly from health care reform.

In Kansas, a state that is not party to the

legal challenge, more than 554,000 people will directly benefit with help from the health care reform bill making their health care coverage more affordable. As the country moves forward with health care reform, we should embrace debate and differences of opinion. But petty partisan politics should not trump the human costs of our policy choices.

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