

from our viewpoint...

## Plan could bring people to rural area

You have to hand it to Gov. Sam Brownback. He's not only talking about doing something to help reverse the population decline in rural Kansas; he's got a real plan.

The governor proposes a five-year rebate of income taxes for anyone who moves to a Kansas county suffering double-digit population declines. That includes most of northwest Kansas excepting Colby and Thomas County, but Colby would benefit greatly if the surrounding counties stopped bleeding people.

While many politicians have talked about stopping the population drain in rural areas, Brownback's is among a handful of actual plans.

No one can say for sure how many people might be influenced to move to rural counties, of course. But the state can hardly lose.

The rural population drain is hurting the entire economy. While our population as a whole is up, rural losses kept the state's growth down below that of others. That threatens the loss of one of our four remaining congressional seats, not this time, but perhaps 10 years down the road.

So the entire state has a stake in our plight. We're all in this together.

The state can't lose on the money end, either.

If few people move to rural areas and claim the rebate, then it won't cost the state much. If a lot of people take the state up on this offer, then rural Kansas will prosper and people will be paying more taxes and the state will benefit in the long run.

From our perspective out in rural Kansas, this program cannot hurt. If it's a winner, the state will be paying. Cities and counties and school districts will reap the rewards.

And let's face it, folks. Something is better than nothing. We're losing our way of life. We need some help.

It's hard to imagine any program that could help rural counties any more than this one. We've seen the standard economic development efforts, and they have not accomplished much.

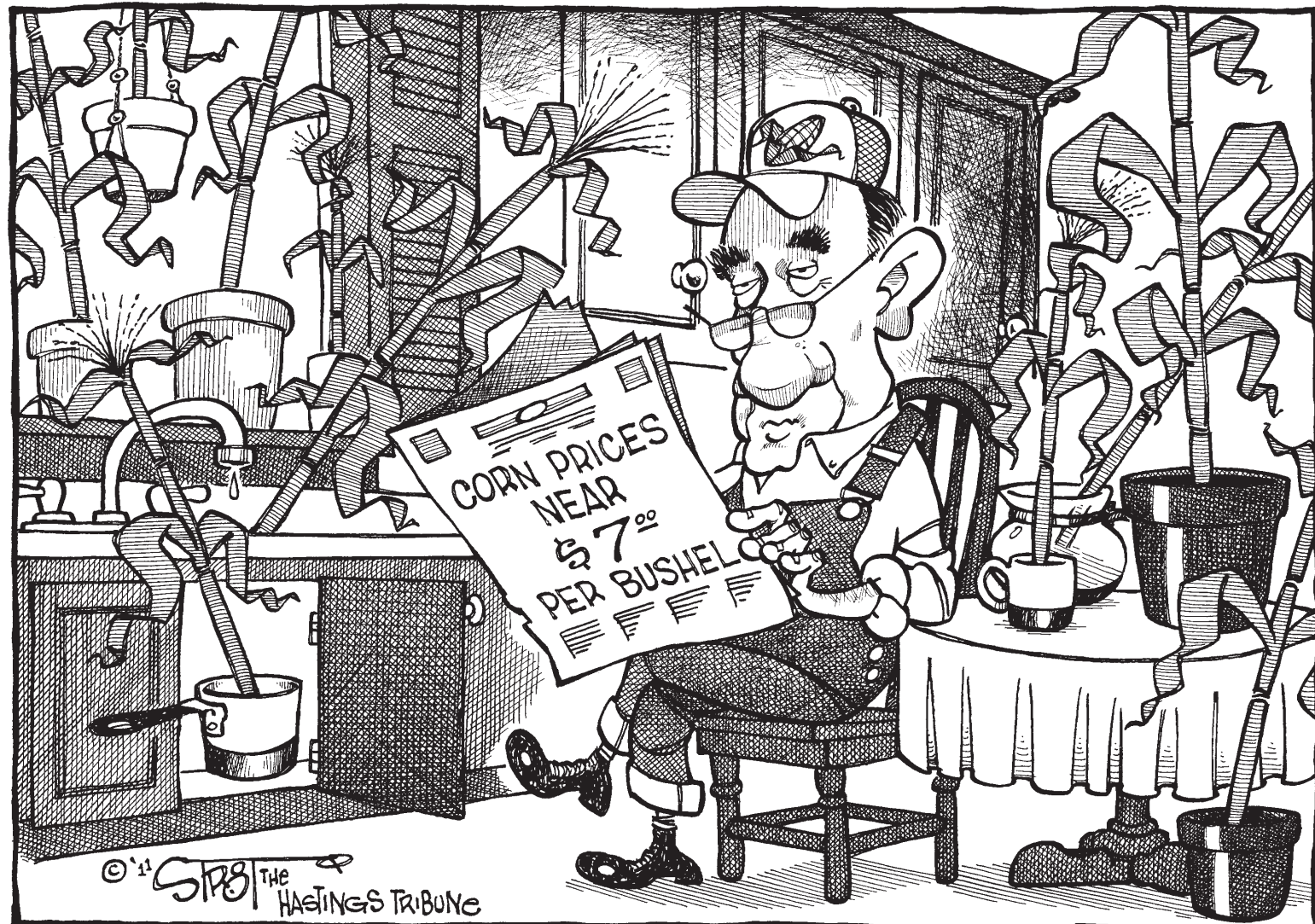
Bringing new jobs to rural areas is tough. The basic problem is the decline in farm numbers, a trend that's been rolling along for more than a century. It's finally gotten to the point there's almost no one left in many rural areas. A lot of farmers live in town, and many plan to retire soon.

With our cities becoming more and more crowded, rural America offers a way of life that includes room to breathe, contact with nature, unpolluted skies and low crime. It's an ideal place to raise a family, but few want to try. Economic challenges, finding a job, are a big part of that.

So we hope the Legislature will pass this part of the governor's program, and quickly. Even if the cost starts to mount, the state will win. We'll be able to afford it.

And there's nothing else on the horizon that might help much.

— Steve Haynes



## Bond means a lot for special needs students

The students of Goodland School District (USD 352) are our future. In the upcoming bond election, let us not forget for whom we are voting. Our children. Our future.

The students in Goodland schools need updated facilities to meet their educational needs. No longer are children with special needs educated outside our district. We are responsible for educating all children; gifted students, typically developing students, children who are intellectually deficient, students who are visually impaired, students who are hearing impaired, and students who have physical impairments.

At the time our current facilities were built, most students with special needs were educated outside our district. There are now federal laws and regulations in place to ensure students are educated within their neighborhood schools.

As a result of providing a free and appropriate public education for all students additional staff and space are required. Services provided by our public school system now include: Title I reading; individualized instruction through special education; early childhood special education; speech-language therapy; occupational therapy; physical therapy; school psychological services; behavioral consultation; counseling; adaptive physical education; hearing impairment consultation; visual impairment consultation; Migrant Education; and, support services to English Language Learners.

Best practices indicate special services are most effective when delivered in the appropriate setting based upon student needs. For



**your schools, community**

• guest column

some students the services are provided in the classroom and others need a more specialized location.

Our current facilities do not allow for private locations for special services to be provided with confidentiality. We make the best of the available space and are currently able to meet all student needs; however, in one building we currently have two Special Education Teachers, two Speech-Language pathologists, one Occupational Therapist, one Physical Therapist and all para-professionals working out of one and one-half rooms.

If the bond issue does not pass we may again need to make cuts which means less room if buildings are reduced and less staff to provide specialized instruction; not to mention the compromise of confidentiality for our students. Special education staff were not the only teachers that were reduced in space. Programs such as music, physical education, Title I, Migrant Education and the English Language Learners Program are adjusting. These programs are critical for students with special needs.

Currently we have approximately 400 students receiving support through special education services, Title I services, migrant education, or the ELL program; and that does

not include the 42 preschool aged children and infants who will be entering our schools. That is 43 percent of our student population who are receiving supports outside the general education classroom.

Another point to consider is the number of transitions our students make. Right now, if things remain unchanged, our students will make three transitions. Each transition made creates challenges for the students as they have to adjust to a new building, new teachers and a new schedule. Transitions are difficult for all students and are more so for students with special needs.

Please take a moment to consider the varied needs of all of our students and the diversity of services provided by our district prior to making your decision regarding how you will vote on the bond issue.

Special Education Service Providers for Goodland School District (USD 352)  
Teresa Gotchall, School Psychologist  
Dixie Teeter, Speech Language Pathologist  
ReNae Mann, Interrelated Teacher  
Robbie Mayer, Interrelated Teacher  
Jana Myers, Interrelated Teacher  
Amy Cebula, Interrelated Teacher  
Aileen Raymer, Speech Language Pathologist  
Melissa Reed, Interrelated Teacher  
Nona Mason, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher  
Karen Sullivan, ED Consultant  
Janice Cundiff, Speech Language Pathologist

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## Veterans can render hand salute to our flag

I must have been sleeping. That's the only way I can explain not knowing that a major change was made allowing veterans, as I am, to render a hand salute when the national anthem is played or when the flag of our great country is raised, lowered, leading a parade, or part of any other ceremony at which veterans might be in attendance. This major change was part of the Defense Authorization Act of 2009. Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma is to be credited for this change; he is an Army veteran.

Prior to this major change, which is in effect, veterans, like everyone else, placed their right hand over their heart to demonstrate respect. Now, when you see people watching a parade, for example, and they are dressed like anyone else would be and they suddenly render a hand salute as the flag passes, they are veterans.

Nice touch. For more information, you can Google 'new hand salute rules.'

I need to thank friend Helen Henderson of St. Augustine, Fl., for drawing my attention to this new law. She, too, is a veteran of the United States Air Force and she served at Misawa AFB, Japan a few years after my tour ended.

The tune goes like this, "The stars at night are big and bright...." But those words now need a rewrite, thanks to the presidential straw



**tom dreiling**

• time out with td

poll results from last weekend's Conservative Political Action Conference (C-PAC) in Washington, D.C. The new words should be, "Ron Paul's the guy, who caught their eye...."

Yep, Texas Congressman Ron Paul captured 30 percent of the vote, with Mitt Romney coming in second at 23 percent. All others were in single digits, ranging from 6 percent down to 2 percent.

The experts already are cautioning that Rep. Paul stands no chance whatsoever of getting the Republican presidential nomination. Those same experts gave little known Sen. Barack Obama no chance either coming out of the gate.

You know, campaigns are like pregnancies: You have to wait several months before you know what the end result will really be. Well...I'll take that statement back. Technology now allows Mom and Dad to peek at what's forming deep, while the political masterminds haven't come up with such a device. Good

thing they haven't, it would just be something else to argue about.

Speaking of polls, I kicked one off a few days ago among those on my contact list. It's for the Republican presidential nomination. I would encourage you readers to get involved in this early, early poll. It's very simple: Just e-mail me at milehitom@hotmail.com with the name of the person you would nominate. That's it; after I place a mark next to your pick, I'll destroy your e-mail. By taking part, you can no longer say, "Nobody ever polled me!"

Looks like the president got another one on Speaker Boehner; he celebrated his first anniversary of being smoke free! Something else for Mr. Boehner to 'cry' about.

In the e-mail:  
"Your mashed potato story is priceless," Carolyn Hammerschmidt, Bowie, Md.  
"Thanks for another enjoyable column (old time phones). You sure took me down memory lane." Yvonne Braun, Hays  
"Memories of our party line...it truly was a PARTY line sometimes. We had a neighbor you could always count on to listen in on your conversations." MaryKay Woodyard, Norton

I don't believe this came from Santa Claus, but that's how it was signed: "When are you going to talk about those old fashioned out-houses?"

Caution: Explosive! While I was trying to make some sense of President Obama's proposed budget, the first set of numbers I punched in...blew up!

Tom Dreiling is a retired northwest Kansas journalist, and graduated in 1953 from what is now Thomas More Prep-Marian. He lives in Aurora, Colo., milehitom@hotmail.com

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