

from our viewpoint...

## Kansas voter law masks power grab

Gov. Sam Brownback signed the Safe and Fair Election bill into law last week making Kansas the toughest state for requirements for voter registration and for voter identification at elections.

Secretary of State Kris Kobach, better known as the author of the Arizona immigration law, was the proponent of the SAFE law and ran his campaign last year saying voter fraud was a big problem in the state and his first act would be to stop that from continuing to happen.

Some people are confused about what Kobach sees as election fraud, but he does not stop at the question of having people show identification when they register or when they vote he is saying the county clerks and election judges have been turning their backs on voter fraud in this state.

The SAFE act is now the law of the state, and with all Republicans and about 75 percent of the Democratic legislators voting in favor it would appear to be a bipartisan bill with lots of public support.

Another name for this is Stop All Free Elections, and the underlying aim of what Kobach was saying in his campaign was we had to protect the elections from all those "illegal" aliens who could be registering to vote and influencing our elections.

Factually Kobach was unable to provide proof the apparent rampant voter fraud he was claiming, but it did not stop him from making the claims to the Kansas Legislative committees. At one point it was reported there had been more than 220 cases in the state, but actual checks of the Secretary of State's records show only seven cases of voter fraud were referred over the past five years, and only one was prosecuted.

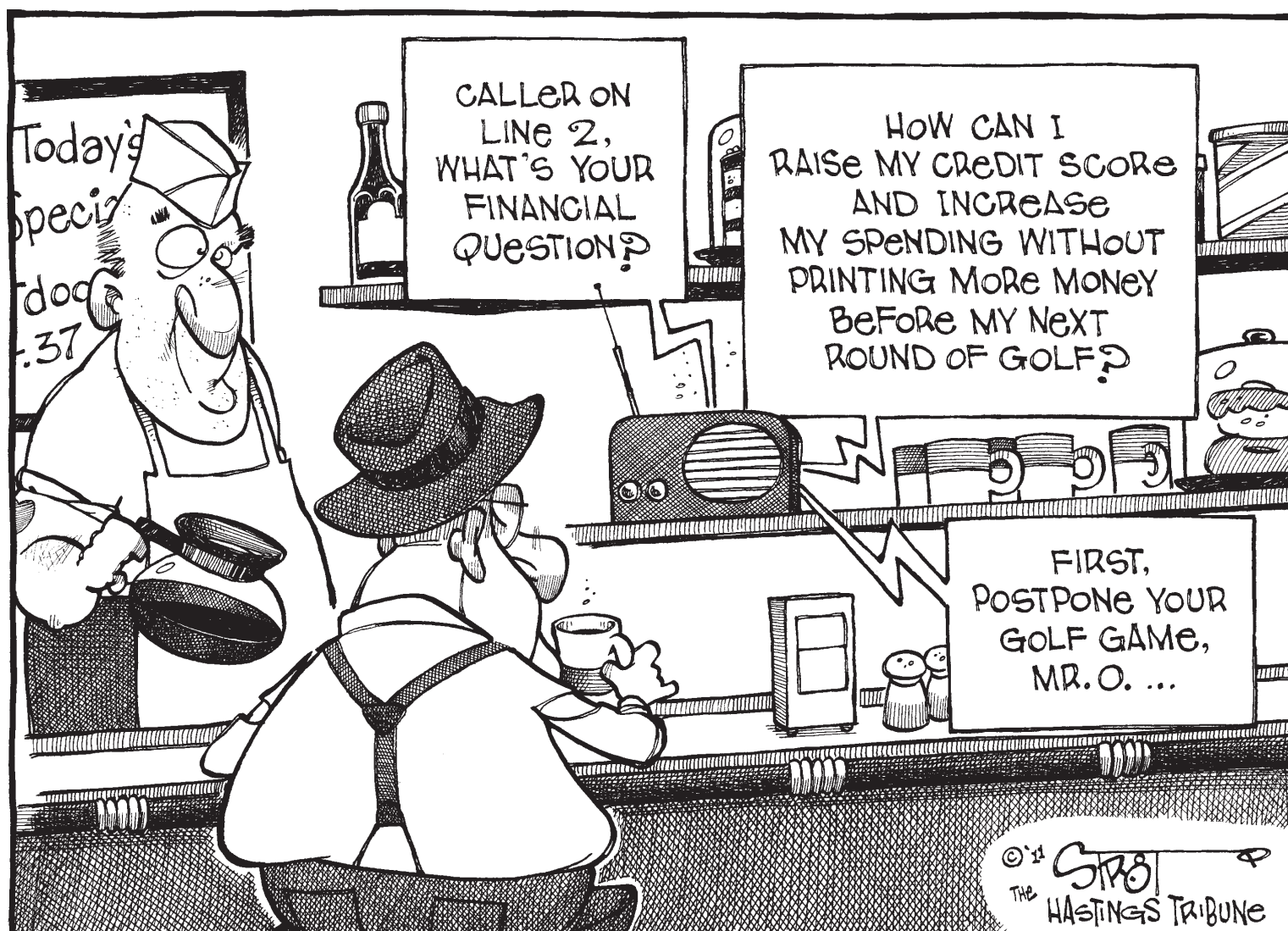
Kobach claimed the dead were voting, but one person he named in a press conference turned out to be alive and well in Wichita and planning to vote in November as he had since 1964. Yet, despite the facts about how thin the real evidence was Kobach won, and now Kansas has the Stop All Free Elections law.

The "we want to reduce government," claim of the GOP goes out the window when one begins to look at what this unfunded mandate may cost in creating databases and then creating all the State Approved Identification Cards.

Many people feel it is not a big thing to have a birth certificate or passport as a requirement to register to vote. For most people it is only a slight inconvenience to find a place to get a copy of your birth certificate, but if you were born in Hawaii and are registering in Kansas it might not be accepted to have a "verification of life birth." That document may be legal in Hawaii, but to listen to many in the GOP – including Donald Trump – it is not proof of birth.

The Stop All Free Elections law in Kansas is one of many across the nation being passed to have an impact not on voter fraud, but to make it harder to hold brach registrations in larger cities or even in some smaller ones. Getting young people and those who may not have been registered in the past has always been a goal of most political activists because you have to have the citizens registered to be able to get them to the polls to vote and make a difference.

The other part is Kobach will now be the one deciding to prosecute any "suspected" voter fraud thus expanding his office's power and expanding government's ability to decide what people have the right to do and on the government's terms. — Tom Betz



## Remembering rockin' good times

Do any of you remember the name of the band that woke up the dancing crowd and got everybody rocking and rolling in Hays and the surrounding territory many years ago?

Does the name, "The Flippers," ring a bell? They moved into the spotlight in the early 1960s, if my memory is still functioning. The dance crowds just couldn't get enough of them. I was privileged to attend one of their dances on a hot June night and was so taken I wrote an article about them in either *The Hays Daily News* or the *Ellis County Star*; I worked for both.

Lee Allan Leiker, a member of the band e-mailed me a copy of that story so I decided to bring back a few memories of an era in which a band changed our lives forever.

My story's headline roared: Flippers, Hays' own rock and roll kings, rock picnic crowd

The Flippers, Hays' own version of the rock and roll kings, rocked the annual St. Joseph's and St. Mary's parish picnic to a smashing success Tuesday night.

The dance was staged at 8:30 and up until 11 o'clock, over two-hundred teenagers and elders danced away. Despite the heat in the auditorium at Jefferson West, everyone engaged in the dancing activities were "cool" man "cool."

The Flippers, well known throughout this area, certainly deserve a word of praise, not only on their playing ability, but on their showmanship. Watching them play is a real treat.

They, unlike other rock and roll bands, don't revert to the so-called "hip" swaying to put over their act. Their ability as musicians was enough to tell all, they are great.

Local boys comprise the band. They are: Terry Wierman, lead guitar; Johnny Fross, rhythm guitar; Tommy Bunker, piano; Dennis Rohr, drums; Lee Allan Leiker, vocalist; and



**tom dreiling**

• time out with td

Jim Gross, saxophone.

The Flippers had everone flipping with their version of today's top hits and the ones of yesterday. For many parents, this was their first opportunity to see just what goes on at a rock and roll dance. To say they overwhelmingly approved, would be an understatement.

In talking with some of the kids, their only wish was more dances of this nature throughout the school year. - T.D.

(T.D. was my signature early on in the world of journalism and I still use it frequently today.)

I don't know the status of any of the band members, but wouldn't it be a treat and a half if they all were still around and could get together in Hays – the town in which they organized – for a night filled with fun and I bet tears as the sounds of The Flippers bring back the memories of a wonderful time in our lives.

Thanks, guys, once again from this Man of the Plains!

Gov. Brownback is to be lauded for the legislation he signed into law at several locations in the state a while back. The law creates incentives for people to move to population-starved counties, like Sherman and Thomas. He forgot, however, to do something that would have really put meat into this new feature; he should have moved some of his family to one of those counties. Talk is cheap, if it isn't backed up by action.

I've got to brag for just a second or two about

an honor received by a grand niece, Jill Marie (Dreiling) Wilson. She was recently presented the Teacher of the Year Award by the Aransas County (Texas) School District. Her grandfather is Dean Dreiling, a Hays native who has lived for many years in Corpus Christi, and graduated from what is now Thomas More Prep-Marian High School and Fort Hays State University. Jill's dad, Fred, is a well known Corpus Christi attorney.

Snippets... "I remember 35 mph speed limit during WW2. Dad said that was a heap lot faster than a horse and buggy!"

"If Donald Trump was elected president, could he get a different hair style?"

"Go Palin.....please go somewhere!"

"...All I see are representatives who pander to the rich and greedy, and ignore the poor and needy."

"If the election was held today, Mr. Obama would be a one-term president...He just doesn't get it!"

"Yes, the Tea Party is in control of the House of Representatives. They are in control of the right and the extreme right and any other right you can find. They are nudging the old worn and torn GOP off the road. They will determine who the presidential candidate will be."

"...No speed limit can match my speed when mother nature calls!"

(Snippets to the e-mail address at the bottom of this column; thanks)

Have a good one!

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## Tallgrass tradition



**Insight this week**

• john schlageck

The sky above the Flint Hills in Riley County was clear and blue as the sun rose April 12. It was a day cattlemen had been waiting for.

After days of roaring southerly winds, conditions were calm.

Dew still glistened on the early morning grass as cattlemen everywhere hurried to begin the spring ritual of controlled burning of the tallgrass prairie.

In less than two hours after daybreak, the first fires crinkled and cracked as the orange flames licked at the Kansas sky sending smoke climbing to the heavens.

Burning conditions were ideal as Barb Downey and husband, Joe Carpenter, flicked his Bic starting the first fire at 8:30 a.m.

The 5-10 miles-per-hour breeze out of the south was already pushing a straight head fire from the south toward the north where they were setting the back fires.

Back fires or back burning provide a natural fire break a head fire cannot cross because there is no fuel (grass).

Joe notified Riley County officials of his intention to burn in advance.

He knows doing so is key in preventing prescribed fires from turning into accidental wildfires and ensuring burning is allowed under existing conditions.

"There's still always nervous anticipation when you light that first fire of the day," Carpenter says. "Even with perfect conditions like today, there's always a chance something will sneak around the hill, or leaves will burn through where you didn't think they would and the worst thing you want to see is a fire out of control."

With that in mind, Carpenter and Downey have carefully orchestrated this 2,000-acre burn with four other neighboring land owners

and several additional helping ranch hands. More feet on the ground means more people to monitor and control burning conditions

They've been in constant contact during the last month in an attempt to select this day based on weather conditions and wind velocity to ensure a safe, controlled burn.

Minutes before the first match was struck, all members of the burn team visited by cell phone.

For Carpenter and Downey, burning their pasture remains part of an ancient phenomenon that began long before humans ever walked these hills.

At that time, fires were ignited by lightning storms and the prairie was charred to restore the health of the native grasses.

This artificially ignited controlled burning of the tall-grass prairie in east-central Kansas is an annual event designed to mimic nature's match.

It has become a tradition, part of the culture of the communities and the people who inhabit this region of our state.

"It's about neighbors helping neighbors," Barb says. "We do together what would be difficult to do alone."

Fire is an essential element of the ecosystem. Burning these pastures is one of the best management tools for maintaining the native prairie.

This annual pasture burning only occurs for a few days each year. It is not a procedure that

is drawn out and lasts for weeks. However, weather conditions dictate the length of the burning seasons most years.

"A properly set head fire has a nice, solid line of flames that will carry a lot of heat out ahead of it," Barb says. "Such a fire will singe the growing nodes of any brush and then flash over the grass itself – not burning the grass crowns – but hitting the brush and woody plants hard and doing exactly what a prairie fire is designed to do."

The fire burns so rapidly and passes over so quickly, the ground temperature cools quickly and the grass plants remain undisturbed. The new grass is ready to come out in two or three days.

"There's a decent amount of moisture in the ground," Barb says. "There's plenty of moisture to get the shoots going. Those healthy roots go down six or eight feet in the ground."

With each day of sunshine bearing down on the now blackened soil, the grass soaks up this radiant heat and soon pops out beautiful and green ready for cattle grazing.

Landowners and cattle producers are proud to do their part keeping the native prairie the way it is intended to be – covered with grass.

Without the spring burns this, unique grassland would soon disappear and become covered with shrubs, woody plants and trees.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.