

from our viewpoint...

# America drifting toward police state?

Bit by bit, America drifts and slides toward becoming a high-tech police state. Bit by bit, freedoms slip away. And it always sounds like a good idea. There is no enemy on the left – or on the right. The threat comes from the bureaucracy, the security apparatus, from authoritarian thinkers on either side of the aisle. Think this is silly? Then why are all the supposedly conservative Republicans in Topeka patting themselves on the back for passing a law forcing all Kansans to show a photo ID card before they can vote? Election fraud's never been a problem here. What's next? Roving checkpoints where police ask for our citizenship papers, as in some third-rate communist dictatorship from the Cold War era? If you think our liberties are not fading, try to get on an airplane without your ID. If you're stopped for some traffic infraction, notice that the officer is likely to chat you up. He may ask you where you've been or where you're going. If your answer is a little hesitant, he might ask if you'd mind him searching the car. It's loads of fun, having your car unpacked and dismantled while you sit beside the road.

The other day, Homeland Security agents swept in and took over the train depot in Savannah, Ga. They stopped and searched anyone who entered, whether they intended to board a train or not. Who knows if the Transportation Security Administration even has that kind of authority. But rail security sounds like a good idea.

Government computers track your movements, your bank accounts, much of your life. And the government can access private computers – at the phone company or the bank or the credit-card company, the airlines, a hundred other firms – and track the rest of your ways.

All of this is done, of course, for the best of reasons. For our own good.

Airport security is vital in the age of terrorism. Transportation Security agents, someone points out, have never caught a terrorist. They have "caught" thousands of people for minor criminal offenses, however.

Your bank is under orders to track your finances, especially any cash you might come across, and report you if you exceed certain limits. You might be a criminal, a drug dealer or a tax evader, after all.

And we all want them caught, right? But when does "enhanced" security begin to impinge on our rights, especially the right to privacy? When is enough security way too much?

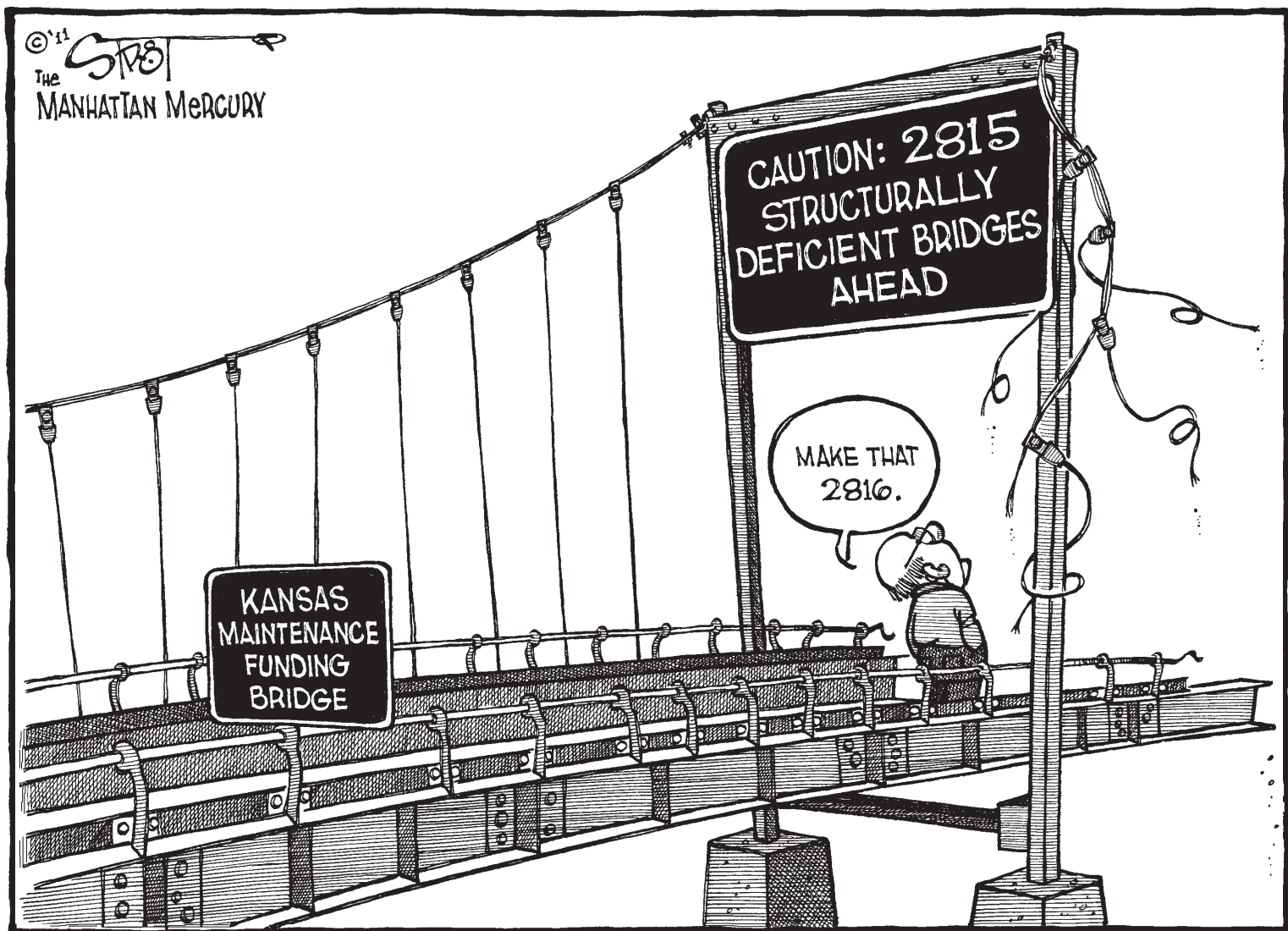
Will we wake up one morning and find out that, instead of the government serving us, with all those computers, cameras, records and files, that we must serve the government?

If that day comes, when it comes, it will be far too late to complain. Records will be made; action taken.

No, the time to defend liberty, as always, is today. Each policy, from the grossly misnamed "Patriot Act," to the latest "voter security" laws, needs to be questioned.

The best level of government involvement in our lives is the least possible. We need to avoid the point where ever-tighter security of all kinds becomes a straightjacket for America.

Ask questions today, not tomorrow. — Steve Haynes



# Washington's change Chicago's machine

It occurs to me that just as most people missed what Barack Obama meant by "change" when he was running for president, most of us missed what was happening after he took office.

For the "change" he was talking about did not mean liberal Democrat control of the White House, the House and the Senate, as most Republicans assumed. The country had seen and survived that before.

No, in this case, "change" meant turning the White House over to the Chicago Democratic party machine.

Hard to believe? Perhaps, but true nonetheless.

For while the president talked about being a "community organizer," the former Illinois senator in fact was tight with the party power structure. He's about as old-fashioned a Democrat as you can find.

One of his chief backers, of course, was Richard M. Daley, 54th mayor of Chicago and nominal head of the current-day Democratic machine. Richard M. is the eldest son of Richard J. Daley, 48th mayor of Chicago.

Yes, that Mayor Daley, the one who delivered Chicago and Illinois to John F. Kennedy in 1960, snatching (or stealing, depending on who you talked to) the election from Richard Nixon. The same Mayor Daley who issued shoot-to-kill orders during the 1968 Chicago



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

riots and whose police made sport of smashing hippies' skulls outside the Democratic National Convention that year.

Richard J. Daley reigned in Chicago for 21 years, a record surpassed only by his son, who had been mayor for 22 years and holds the all-time record.

Richard J. Daley was known as the last of the old-line big city bosses, maintaining tight control over the party machinery and the city government from his office. The son of a sheet-metal worker, he lived in the predominantly Irish Bridgeport neighborhood nearly all his life.

His son John P. Daley still lives there, in fact, still attends the wakes and other neighborhood gatherings his dad was famous for. John P. seems poised to inherit the family mantle as boss of bosses as older brother Richard M. slips into retirement.

John Daley is a member of the Cook County Board of Commissioners and chair of its finance committee. He holds the family

post representing the 11th Ward on the Cook County Democratic Central Committee, passed down by his brother and father. His wife is the daughter of reputed Chicago mob figure, cementing family ties to yet another Democratic power bloc.

Replacing Richard M. as mayor is Rahm Emmanuel, a former Illinois congressman who has been Obama's chief of staff. And replacing Emmanuel as White House chief of staff was William M. Daley, a former Chicago banker and brother of the outgoing mayor and the current county commissioner. And son of that Mayor Daley.

You might think things have changed in Chicago since the 1950s, and it's true the city will have a Jewish mayor in place of an Irish Catholic machine politician. The machine seems to be pretty healthy, however.

Scandal still abounds in local government and city contracts. One recent episode involved trucking contractors with ties to the city and to John Daley's lucrative private insurance business.

But if you have any doubt who's in charge at the White House – or what the president meant by "change" – this should set you straight. It's new in Washington, so that's change, but for the Chicago machine, it's business as usual.

# Praying for rain



**Insight this week**

• john schlageck

Like all Americans, Kansans are paying higher prices for their food. Attribute this rise in costs to Mexican freezes or tight supplies in the pork market, still we're all digging deeper into our pockets to pay for our next meal.

As a result, consumers should reconsider their grocery budgets to account for a 3-4 percent increase in food prices this year, according to the Consumer Price Index.

These increases impact all consumers' grocery bills including farmers and ranchers are consumers. They too understand the pressure Kansans are feeling in the check-out line.

This nation's food producers are taking a hit with production costs. Any Kansas farmer/rancher will tell you his/her input costs are soaring.

Fertilizer prices have doubled. Edwards County farmer Darrell Wood paid \$190 a ton for liquid nitrogen fertilizer in 2010. The same 32-percent liquid nitrogen is selling for \$416 a ton or higher today.

Diesel fuel sold for \$2.50 a gallon last year and \$1.80 a gallon in '09. As I write this, it was selling for \$4.11 a gallon but seems to be going up by the hour instead of the day.

Will the cost of fuel double? "Thank goodness corn, bean and wheat prices are strong," Wood explains. "But even with these high commodity prices, everything has to click just right."

That means buying inputs in bulk, months in advance while marketing your crops or forward contracting at the optimum time to lock in a profit.

Even that can be incredibly risky in today's economic climate, Wood says.

"A neighbor of mine contracted his wheat crop at 10-bushels-per-acre and \$6 a bushel," Wood says. "He's worried he won't be able to grow enough wheat to fill his contract."

If the long-range forecasts are right, there may be little wheat grown in the western half of Kansas. With hit and miss showers bringing only 10 or 15 hundredths of rain, the wheat crop continues to deteriorate rapidly.

Wood believes his 1,000 acres of wheat will amount to a goose egg.

"I'm 55 and I've never seen anything like this," the Edwards County producer says. "We've had 30 hundredths (rain) in the Trousdale area since the middle of November."

But it's not just the dying wheat crop Wood is concerned about. He's going full throttle planting 6,500 acres of irrigated corn and at the same time irrigating the corn ground in front of the planter.

Without pre-irrigating his corn ground Wood didn't believe the crop would have enough moisture to germinate and have the start necessary to weather the dry conditions. It will cost him an additional \$25,000 in fuel to apply one inch of moisture to his corn ground before planting.

This doesn't bode well for the upcoming irrigation season either.

"If we're going to have to put on water like I

think we are this summer, producers are going to have to over pump to keep up with the dry conditions," Wood says. "We've got to receive help from Mother Nature."

This isn't the first time nor will it be the last Wood and his fellow Kansas farmers are faced with drought, disease, hail and other weather conditions they cannot control.

"It's part of farming," Wood says. "You have good times and bad."

And what happens on the farms and on the fields in Kansas and across this country impact the cost of food consumers buy in their neighborhood groceries.

Extremely dry conditions coupled with rising fuel prices affect every stop in the food production chain. It's the reality of farmers and ranchers paying more for basic business inputs including fuel, equipment and fertilizers that foster plant growth. Manufacturing and processing facilities must account for rising fuel costs.

Eventually, food prices tend to level out and consumers can expect to pay only slight increases during the long term. As for the men and women who grow our food, they will hope and pray for rain so they can continue providing the fresh produce, grains and dairy products that stock our grocery shelves. With help from above they will try to maintain profitable and lasting businesses.

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.

## The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association  
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association  
National Newspaper Association  
e-mail: [star.news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star.news@nwkansas.com)

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[nwkansas.com](http://nwkansas.com)

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services  
([nt.betz@nwkansas.com](mailto:nt.betz@nwkansas.com))

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. ([support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com))

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan. Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [star-news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [goodlandads@nwkansas.com](mailto:goodlandads@nwkansas.com)

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

**The Goodland Daily News**  
1932-2003

**The Sherman County Herald**  
Founded by Thomas McCants  
1935-1989

**THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR**  
Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
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## where to write

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; E-mail address — <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=EmailPat>

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966. E-mail address — <http://moran.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-jerry>

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., 20575-1601. (202-225-2715) E-mail address — <https://huelskamp.house.gov/contact-me/email-me>

**State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking State Office Building Rm 724, Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7659, cell (785) 899-4770, home (785) 899-5824. E-mail [rick.billinger@house.ks.gov](mailto:rick.billinger@house.ks.gov).

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785-296-7399; e-mail address — [ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

**Kansas Attorney General**, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767