

from our viewpoint...

Parade showcases election candidates

The 4-H Ambassadors did their usually wonderful job with the opening parade for the Northwest Kansas District Free Fair Saturday evening, even having to move to Broadway Ave., did not dampen the large crowds who lined the street.

The politicians were obvious and numerous with the Primary coming next week. Seeing State Representative and State Senate candidates walking or riding as they try to get support in their newly drawn districts reminds us of the fallout from allowing three federal judges draw state legislative district maps.

The three judges from Kansas City had no political compunction or loyalty as they took the raw numbers and drew the lines. With the stroke of their pens the judges hurt the representative numbers in western and especially northwestern Kansas.

The single-party controlled legislature had the job of drawing the new legislative district lines during the session this year. The State House got their job and map done early with district lines that would preserve the western area state representatives. In that approved map Rick Billinger of Goodland and Ward Cassidy of St. Francis would both continue to have separate districts, but the federal judges did not pay any attention and put the two men in the same district.

Both are good men, and have represented northwest Kansas well. It is a shame the State Senate was unable to reach an agreement that forced the redistricting into the federal court. That backfired on the Senate as the judges did not care about any of their potential suggestions, and again western Kansas lost representation.

This is a lesson in reality, and reminds us the political system established more than 230 years ago depends on compromise to move forward. We have always felt it is the course of absolutely last resort to have the courts determine things better left grey and in the hands of men who can find a way to reach a compromise.

The best example of such a question would be allowing the courts to define what a newspaper is or is not. The U.S. Constitution First Amendment says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Supreme Court decisions have expanded and in some cases narrowed these specific rights.

The inability of the single-party controlled State Senate to reach a compromise turned our future for the next 10 years over to three federal judges. Whether it has a detrimental effect on the western part of the state will be something to watch. With less representation in Topeka it will be important for people, schools, cities, counties and regions to work together to make a case for western Kansas.

As people vote in the Primary Election we know a good man will be elected to run in the General Election to represent northwest Kansas, but we will be sorry to lose a good voice no matter which man wins. —Tom Betz



U.S. sovereignty undermined

For the past two centuries, Americans have enjoyed liberties unparalleled in the world, guaranteed by the United States Constitution — including the fundamental right to keep and bear arms. Today, our freedoms and our country's sovereignty are in danger of being undermined by the United Nations.

In October of 2009, at the U.N. General Assembly, the Obama Administration voted for the United States to participate in negotiating an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)—a reversal of the Bush and Clinton Administration positions. Supporters of the treaty claim it is intended to establish "common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms," including tanks, helicopters and missiles. However, by threatening to include civilian firearms within its scope, the Arms Trade Treaty could restrict the lawful private ownership of firearms in our country.

Proposals being considered by the committee would adversely impact Kansas and all American gun owners. For example, there have been regular calls for bans on the civilian ownership of guns Americans use to hunt, target-shoot and defend themselves. By requiring firearms to be accounted for throughout their life span, the ATT could lead to mandatory nationwide gun registration. Still other proposals could require the marking and tracking of all ammunition.

This week, the U.N. conference on the Arms Trade Treaty is taking place in New York City to finalize the treaty for adoption, which must be ratified by the U.S. Senate. The Chairman of the conference, Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritan of Argentina, has released what is known as the "Chairman's Draft Paper," which includes the wishes of the 193 U.N. member



jerry moran
 • in Congress

states engaged in the treaty negotiations. Based on the process to date, I am concerned this treaty will infringe upon the Second Amendment rights of American gun owners and will be used by other countries that do not share our freedoms to wrongly place the burden of controlling international crime and terrorism on law-abiding American citizens.

Given these serious concerns, I led 50 of my colleagues this week in sending a message to the Obama administration: a U.N. Arms Trade Treaty that does not protect ownership of civilian firearms will fail in the Senate. On July 26, we notified President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham 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 passage, as treaties submitted to the U.S. Senate require two-thirds approval to be ratified. In notifying the Obama administration, we outlined several concerns:

First, while the Draft Paper nominally applies only to "international arms transfers," it defines such transfers as including "transport" across nations. It requires member states to "monitor and control" arms in transit, and to "enforce domestically the obligations of the treaty" by prohibiting the unauthorized "transfer of arms from any location." Such a

treaty would be incredibly difficult to enforce and would pose dangers to all U.S. businesses and individuals involved in any aspect of the firearms industry, from manufacturers to dealers to consumers.

Second, the Draft Paper requires nations to "maintain records of all imports and shipments of arms that transit their territory," including the identity of individual buyers. This information would then be reported to an UN-based firearms registry. At stake is our country's autonomy and the rights of American citizens protected under the Constitution.

Third, the Draft Paper requires that nations "shall take all appropriate measures necessary to prevent the diversion of imported arms into the illicit market or to unintended end users." America leads the world in export standards to ensure arms are transferred for legitimate purposes, and its citizens should not be punished by the ATT. There is no disagreement that sales and transfers to criminals and terrorists are unacceptable, but law-abiding Americans should not be held responsible for international crime and acts of terrorism. Instead, the responsibility should be on U.N. member states that have not enforced existing laws and have failed to block illegal trafficking of arms.

It is critical to further reinforce that our country's sovereignty and firearm freedoms must not be infringed upon by an international organization made up of many countries with little respect for gun rights. I will continue to work with my colleagues to ensure an Arms Trade Treaty that falls short of this standard and undermines the Constitutional rights of American gun owners is dead on arrival in the Senate.

Dry-land corn in trouble

*Sow the seed in the ground below
 Fall on your knees and pray real slow
 That rain will come and kiss the seed
 And bless you with all that you need*

—Joe Ely, "All That You Need"

Drive through the Kansas countryside this summer, and that refrain could be running through the heads of many a farmer or rancher. Rain has become a scarce commodity in all 105 counties of the state for more than a year since the moisture spigot from up above seems to be shut off tight.

Traveling down the roads in the Kansas River valley, some of the corn and beans still appear to be tall, lush and green. But looks can be deceiving.

Most of the corn and beans along U.S. 24 are irrigated. Drive away from the irrigated fields, and the picture changes.

Twenty-five days of 100-degree heat and counting has put the kibosh on dry-land corn, milo and beans. During this period when blast-furnace heat and wind swept through this productive valley, corn literally burned up as farmers watched.

"During these hot afternoons, you can see the corn turning white," Chris Campbell, a Leavenworth County farmer-stockman, says. "Just before it dies, it gets kinda' grayish-white before it turns brown. You can smell it burning."

Campbell says he hasn't filled silage for more than 10 years, but he just dug a large pit to fill with his drought-damaged corn on July 18. This chopped corn will be used to supplement feed for his 150 head of momma cows later in the year and this winter.

"We're worried about the test weight," Campbell says. "Our corn will probably yield less than 30 bushels per acre—if we can get the corn into the machine."

The crop he leaves to harvest may fall over before he has an opportunity to cut it. That's



Insight this week

• john schlageck

why much of the corn is going into the trench silo and during the middle of July — unheard of.

The Leavenworth County farmer has already started supplementing the feed of his cattle in two pastures with hay and protein. He says he hates to feed his winter supply of feed in July because his hay crop is yielding less than half what it generally does.

Last winter was great for cattlemen. There were few if any calving problems, temperatures were mild, the cattle didn't eat as much feed, but now they're paying the piper.

Campbell will be rotating his pastures, running electric fence down near the creek banks and continuing to dip into his winter forage rations throughout the rest of 2012.

The long-time Leavenworth County farmer,

where to write

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who started working on his own in 1980, ranks this year's dry weather, "as bad as he can remember." He understands this year's drought will affect everyone's bottom line. Rising costs with little or no return will eat crop and livestock producers alive — especially if the drought continues next year or the year after.

Like his peers across the Sunflower State, Campbell believes he's in a battle for his livelihood. Like his grandfather and father before him, Campbell is well connected to the soil. He wants to continue growing crops and livestock on the land.

Even though farming comes with pain and strife, he's committed to working beneath the clear blue sky while trying to make a living with his family. Campbell loves his vocation and realizes there's more to farming corn, milo and beans than just planting the seeds. He's been around long enough to know he must take the good years with the bad.

"You have to have a little help from the Lord above," he says. "If he's willing, we'll live to grow and harvest better crops next year."

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