

from our viewpoint...

## Make sure officials know what we want

As the next Legislative session nears, the state will have to sort out its priorities.

We go into next year's session with less of a voice than before, thanks to redistricting. We lost good public servants like Rick Billinger and Allen Schmidt because they got stuck in the same district with other incumbents. Given the population loss, this was inevitable, but it still hurts. Rural issues often take a back seat anyway, since the delegation from Wyandotte County alone is nearly equal to the number of senators and congressmen from western Kansas.

They may not think so in the cities, but we have a lot of pressing concerns out here. Drought, water conservation, Obamacare mandates, water conflicts with Colorado and Nebraska, worker housing and taxes, just to name a few. These are the things we need help with, the things we need our Legislature to decide. We hope that our representatives will continue to act as a voice for rural Kansas, and not just northwest Kansas.

The Senate especially needs to learn a lesson from last year. Redistricting was an utter and complete failure on their part. They left it till the last and then bickered back and forth – and not even along party lines – so it never got done. Both they and the House of Representatives must take up the important issues on day one of the session and get decisions made.

That does not mean, however, that they should just rubber stamp what comes from the governor. Gov. Sam Brownback has plenty of good ideas, but checks and balances mean those ideas must be given the full scrutiny of the legislative branch. His plans for reforming income taxes, especially, must be given due diligence. It may be an economic boom for Kansas, or it may hit our revenues so hard that we have to raise sales and property taxes or cut things like education and road improvements to pay for it.

This is precisely what we elect people to do, take a hard look at the proposals on the table and decide what is best for Kansas.

Don't forget, if you have a concern, write or call Sen. Ostmeyer or Rep. Cassidy. They are the most direct link we have to the state government, and it is their job to represent us, but they can't do that unless we tell them what we want and need. —Kevin Bottrell

## where to write

**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

**State Rep. Ward Cassidy**, Docking State Office Building Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7696, home (785) 332-2850. E-mail ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

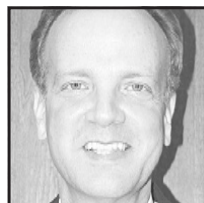


## Hunting: a tradition of freedom

Late fall is a great time to be a hunter in Kansas. From wild turkey and deer, to duck and pheasant, the union of several hunting seasons offers Kansans the opportunity to pursue a variety of birds and game. Thanks to our Founding Fathers' inclusion of Second Amendment freedoms in the Bill of Rights, hunting has been an American tradition for more than two hundred years – and a source of food and enjoyment for sportsmen across the country.

But the benefits of our hunting seasons extend beyond gun owners. Hunting plays an important role in the Kansas economy as our state has become a favorite travel destination for out-of-state hunters. According to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting & Wildlife-associated Recreation, more than 280,000 hunters enjoy Kansas' rich and diverse group of habitat and game species each year – and more than one-third of these hunters live outside Kansas. These tourists help create an economically significant industry for many of our communities. In fact, hunting has an annual economic impact in our state of nearly \$489 million, and supports more than 5,850 Kansas jobs.

As hunters are spending quality time in the field this fall, I am growing increasingly concerned that the fundamental right of Kansans to keep and bear arms is at risk. This summer, a treaty was proposed at the United Nations conference in New York that I found particularly troubling. The proposed Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) included several provisions that would



**jerry moran**  
• in the senate

undermine the Constitutional freedoms of American gun owners. Despite this treaty's potential to suppress Second Amendment rights, the Obama Administration willfully participated in these negotiations, marking a reversal of the policies of both President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush.

If implemented, the ATT would threaten the rights of Kansas hunters and all American gun owners. The United Nations has entertained calls for bans on the civilian ownership of guns Americans use to hunt, target shoot and defend themselves. And by requiring firearms to be accounted for throughout their life span, a U.N. Arms Trade Treaty could lead to mandatory nationwide gun registration. Other proposals could result in the marking and tracking of all ammunition.

In response to this summer's misguided treaty negotiations, I led 50 of my colleagues in sending a powerful bipartisan message to the Obama administration that an ATT that does not protect ownership of civilian firearms will fail in the U.S. Senate. On July 26, 2012, we notified President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary 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 adoption, as treaties submitted to the U.S. Senate require two-thirds approval to be ratified.

Civilian firearms and ammunition should not be included in the scope of the ATT, and regulation of American firearms and ammunition by the United Nations is simply unacceptable. Many U.N. member states, who do not share our freedoms, desire an extremely broad treaty that would be incredibly difficult to enforce and especially threatening to American companies that manufacture firearms and the law-abiding citizens who purchase them.

When the U.N. Conference dissolved this summer without a treaty, it was clearly a positive conclusion for American citizens – and I'm glad we were able to steer the Administration toward this outcome. Unfortunately the threat is not over.

Within hours of securing his reelection, President Obama declared his support for continued negotiations of the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty. A new round of negotiations is scheduled to take place in March 2013.

While the Administration has previously indicated its intent to protect Second Amendment freedoms, the President's insistence on continued ATT talks is concerning. We must avoid a situation where the Administration, due to its continued willingness to negotiate, feels pressured to sign a treaty that violates our Constitutional rights.

## Pheasant hunting and the economy

Nov. 17, I had the pleasure of attending the second Kansas Governor's Pheasant Hunt in Oakley. Oakley did an outstanding job of showcasing Western Kansas hospitality and the excitement of pheasant hunting. The next two years, the event will be in Norton.

Pheasant hunting in Kansas is a \$4 million industry. Pheasant hunting is also a family tradition I have enjoyed all of my life. The drought conditions have hurt our pheasant population drastically, and after opening weekend I am afraid not many people will be traveling here to hunt. It is just one more way the Kansas economy has been hurt by our horrible weather conditions.

I was so concerned I contacted Robin Jennison, the head of Wildlife and Parks, and asked



**from other pens**  
• ward cassidy

him if shortening the season and/or lowering the daily bag limit were being considered.

I received a very informative letter in return, and the gist of the information was that harvesting male pheasants has no impact on future populations: (1) female pheasants are by far the most important in terms of population growth and they cannot be legally harvested. (2) harvesting males has little potential to impact population change because a single rooster can

fertilize more than ten hens, and (3) research shows it is impossible to harvest more than 75 percent of the rooster population.

The bottom line is we need wet weather for many reasons.

On a fun note, I got to hunt with the National Rifle Association lobbyist who gave me a D rating for voting against conceal carry in college dorms. I shot two pheasants out from under him, at the Governor's hunt, and he gave me a hat when we were done.

Monday, Dec. 3, is the most important vote I will make in the next two years. We vote for Speaker of the House. Next week, I'll let you know how that turns out.

Ward Cassidy represents the 120th District in the Kansas House of Representatives.

## Wind subsidy is corporate welfare

Democrats call Republicans defenders of big business. Republicans accuse Democrats of meddling in the market at the expense of taxpayers.

Democrats (sometimes accurately) accuse Republican leadership of prioritizing the interests of Corporate America ahead of the average person. Republicans (often rightfully) criticize the Obama Administration for expensive "investments" in the private sector that yield negative returns for taxpayers.

But, when it comes to energy subsidies, politicians on both sides of the aisle embrace their characterization of the other: Republicans are willing to distort free markets and Democrats are willing to defend corporations. This is reflected in the bipartisan supporters of extending – once again – the massive taxpayer subsidy for the wind energy industry.

A one-year extension of this 20-year-old "tax credit" carries a total price tag of \$12 billion. According to the industry's own estimates, not extending it for one year will result in 37,000 jobs lost. That amounts to roughly \$324,000 in taxpayer subsidy per job. And this wind subsidy is 86 times greater per unit than subsidies



**tim huelskamp**  
• u.s. rep.

for oil, gas, and coal (I'd like to see those gone too, by the way).

Budgeting is always about priorities, particularly so when America is already \$16 trillion in debt. Are we going hand out \$12 billion – 40 percent of which would be borrowed – on propping up a private industry that should stand on its own after 20 years of massive taxpayer support? Or, alternatively should we instead use that \$12 billion for another year of the school lunch program? Or, how about let small businesses and families cough up the \$12 billion with the scheduled massive death tax increase next year? (Or, perhaps Washington will instead do what it has done for decades: put it all on the credit card!)

Contrary to the claims made by well-paid lobbyists, this is no infant industry still in incubation. While the subsidy goes to the wind

farms that produce the energy, the loudest supporters are the large manufacturers who produce turbines and other related equipment. Siemens, which has threatened to lay off workers in Kansas if the tax subsidy is not extended, is a \$100 billion global corporation. General Electric (GE), another big player in the wind product business, is even larger. These companies have enormous legal and accounting departments that should be smart enough to know that Washington cannot keep spending and borrowing forever.

Republicans and Democrats alike should not be tricked into ignoring the principles for which they typically stand just so big businesses do not have to evaluate and improve their own practices. We need more of all types of market competitive energy, and we cannot afford a massive, market-distorting \$12 billion subsidy for an industry that should be profitable by now.

Tim Huelskamp represents the First District of Kansas in the U.S. House of Representatives. He serves on the House Budget, Agriculture, and Veterans' Affairs Committees.

## The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association  
National Newspaper Association

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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@nwkansans.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansans.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

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Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey  
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Haynes Publishing Company