

from our viewpoint...

## Kansas denied their right to vote

Our valiant secretary of state makes all kinds of excuses, but the fact remains, 838 Kansans were turned away at the polls last month simply because they did not have a current photo ID – or forgot to bring it.

Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who invented the “need” for voters to have identification with the fiction of possible voter fraud, sighs and points out that is something like .07 of 1 percent of the total vote.

So, it's no big deal, right?

Unless you are one of the 838 people, whom we guess are mostly citizens who forgot their wallet or purse. No one has any evidence of anything else.

No one is claiming these were illegal aliens or other unqualified voters. The number represents far too small a percentage to indicate any kind of problem with fraud or improper voting.

That threat is something Mr. Kobach, who apparently has no conscience, invented so he would be elected. It was practically his entire platform. Yet, neither the secretary nor anyone else has shown that any problem exists.

Kobach is a prime example of what's wrong with the Republican party today. His entire existence is founded on fear of illegal immigration, an issue that's all but over. Pity the state if the Legislature ever gives him police powers.

And while the flow of immigrants has stopped, our country's immigration system still needs to be fixed, Mr. Kobach has no proposals. He's still fighting the problems of the last decade.

But the Republican party cannot move forward with a base grounded in fear, catering only to a small and ever-shrinking xenophobic minority.

21st century America is different. The Republicans will have to face facts and display their principles to all Americans if the party is to survive.

Secretary Kobach, whom we're sure believes he is doing the right thing, is not the guy to lead us into this new century. He's about 100 years out of date.

Republican principles – smaller government, less spending, more freedom – mean as much as they always have. The party needs to reject leaders, like Mr. Kobach, who want more, and more intrusive, government, no matter their cause, and get back to basics.

Fear and uncertainty do not make a platform. Principles and answers to real needs do. And Republican principles appeal to all groups.

And those 838 Kansans who were refused their right to vote for no good or sufficient cause, other than not having a big-government ID card on their person?

Who will stand up for them – both the inconvenienced 306 who later showed up at the courthouse with their ID, and the 532 who didn't bother? What about their right to vote?

We are headed fast to a Kobach-induced police state where people can be stopped on Kansas roads for no particular reason and subject to search, even arrest, because they have no “papers,” just like in the communist societies of the last century.

That is not America, and that is not freedom. Wake up, Kansas, before it's too late. – *Steve Haynes*



## Celebrating milestones

Exactly 40 years ago this Wednesday, my dad and his Navy helicopter crew pulled three tired men from the Pacific Ocean. Their names were Eugene Cernan, Harrison Schmidt and Ron Evans. They were the last men to go to the moon.

Well, I hope not the last.

There are exciting things going on in unmanned spacetravel. The Curiosity rover is giving us our best-ever look at Mars. The voyage and landing of Curiosity was incredibly ambitious and the landing itself was watched by millions of people. This year saw some successful unmanned commercial space vehicles going to and from the International Space Station and through a space probe, the



**kevin bottrell**

• simple tricks and nonsense

discovery of water on Mercury. We've also discovered that even with the billions of miles the Voyager probe has yet to leave our solar system.

So what is going on with manned spaceflight? It's been a slow year for that, to be sure. With the shuttle fleet finding their new

homes at museums around the country, the only manned spaceflight is going on through the European Union and Russia.

This is not to say the future doesn't look good. Despite tepid commitment to spaceflight from the administration and congress (I suppose they think they have bigger fish to fry), things are moving forward. Work is underway on the Orion, a capsule designed with long-duration spaceflight in mind.

So as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Apollo 17, we should try not consider it an ending, but rather a milestone in our trek through the stars. We have a long way to go yet, and the adventure is just beginning.

## Mother's advice worth listening to

My mother always told me that it's as easy to drive on the top of the gas tank as the bottom. She always stopped and filled her car when it got near the half-empty mark.

My husband is more of a, “It's still half full and I've got better things to do than stand around a gas station, anyway,” kind of person.

I remember driving with my mother to Texas after Daddy died. We would go down in her car and I would fly back each fall. She had a routine and seldom varied from it. When she got older, Steve said that if I wanted to go with her, I'd do the driving. She'd get quiet upset when the gauge went below half a tank and I didn't stop to fill it up.

I thought she was just being silly.

Now, however, I realize, I should have listened to my mother.

Twice within the last six months, I've been in danger of running out of gas while on a fairly long trip.

The first was in Colorado. We were going to fill up in Monte Vista after having lunch at one of our favorite Mexican restaurants, which is about two miles out on the highway. But after lunch, we remembered that they were working



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

on the streets in town, so we just decided to go on to Alamosa, about 25 miles away.

The fancy gauge on the truck said we could drive 30 miles before we ran out of gas. We were golden.

That is when we learned two important lessons:

1. It's a lot farther than 25 miles from the restaurant to Alamosa by the back roads than by the main highway through town.  
2. That gauge lies.

Watching the gauge numbers drop like a stone while checking the roadway markers for how far we had to go was nerve wracking, and I was driving.

We coasted for about two miles into town and rolled into the gas station on 0. I expected the engine to cough and die at any time, but we made it.

Then, a couple of weeks ago, we went to Lawrence, each in our own vehicle. I was to return to Oberlin in Steve's truck with the dog while he went to an Associated Press meeting in Kansas City with my car.

I got to Topeka and realized that he hadn't filled up the truck when I filled my car in Emporia. I started looking for a gas station but, by that time I was pretty much through town and headed west toward Junction City. No way I could get there with the gas I had.

I called him. Where is there a gas station out here? He wasn't sure. There might be one at the little towns off Interstate 70, but going to one of those would use up all the gas I had, and I wasn't sure I could make it back to Topeka. I finally just turned around and drove the 15 miles back to town, getting to the station with about 2 miles left on the gauge.

Well, that blew half an hour, but I was good to go. I got back to my turning point and two miles down the road was a big truck stop. Who would have known?

Next time, maybe I'll remember to listen to my mother.

## No end to Christmas decorations

My house is awash in a sea of decorations. My wife has gone on a binge with the lights and garlands and little trees and whatnot. Every flat surface invites more.

And she's not done yet.

We haven't had this much Christmas fancy since the year our house was on the Holiday Homes Tour. And frankly, it's getting so it has more decorations than most of the houses on the tour this year.

Cynthia started with the outside lights. I was gone that day. We'd gotten the boxes and bins down from the garage attic the day before.

By the time I got home that night, she had most of the bushes in the front yard covered. I pitched in to help fill some holes, but the job was pretty much done. Next day, she was out stringing more white lights on the corner bushes. You'd think three strings each would be enough, but they are big bushes.

Then she replaced the rope lights I'd put on the front walk with C7 lights. I'm not sure why, but they do look better. She even put lights on the dried-up mum plants.

The next time I came home, she was on a ladder, using a long pole and a hook to string lights on what we still call “the little cedar tree.” We discovered the tree 10, 12 years ago, growing at the corner of the old garage. The guy who tore the garage down saved her in a coffee can, and we planted her between the back and side yards.

While she's still our little cedar, she's close to 20 feet today. Getting lights up there is a chore, and Cynthia was not having much luck. Most



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

of them sorta fell into a clump. I promised to get out and help fix them, but we went to Lawrence to see our son's new house instead.

Cynthia was not deterred, however. She just moved indoors. The next week, she started with the tree, then decorated the mantle. That involves moving all the hardback books stored there and replacing them with little trees. Then she puts all our Christmas cards among the little fake evergreens.

She cleared out the fireplace, hauling the logs we never burn and the heavy iron fire basket to the garage. Swept and cleaned, the fireplace is ready for the big ceramic Nativity set whenever she gets another day.

Then she turned her attention again to the tree, an artificial one my mom bought years ago. I thought it was looking a little peaked, but a friend came in and asked if was a real tree. Go figure.

She festooned it with lights and ornaments and tinsel, then wrapped all the packages and put them under it, along with the three leather camels from Tunisia, including the big one named Sweeney, and the alligator she found in the tree. (See her column last week for an explanation.) For good measure, or to complete the tableau, Molly, the diabetic cat, took

up residence under the tree, too.

Then Cynthia started looking for flat surfaces. She cleared off the top of her cedar chest and filled with my old oil lanterns, white fluff and Christmas lights. I had to fix the string, but it was the least I could do. Then she covered the top of the old ice box that serves as our liquor cabinet and strung lights across it and three houseplants taking refuge in the dining room.

Not done yet, she moved to the kitchen, where I'd just completed the finish on the inside of the new bay window. She filled that in a flash with a little tree, a lantern, garland and lights.

Then she was on to the “TV” room upstairs, where I'd mostly cleared off the antique table by the windows. I'm not sure what happened to the pile of stuff I hadn't figured out what to do with yet. Maybe it just got covered in fluff and lights. I'm sure I'll find it come spring.

One good thing about all this: When I have to get up in the middle of the night, I can see what I'm going to trip over. Most of the rooms have lots of lights, and those that don't bask in the glow from the bushes and the cedar tree outside. You could read a book in a couple of those rooms.

The scary part is, she's not done. She's still got to put out that Nativity set and probably string lights and fluff all around it. If we're lucky, she'll finish before Epiphany, when it's time to put all the lights and wreaths away.

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