

## Congress pushes for immigration reform

It's hard to believe, but a bipartisan group in Congress is making another push to "reform" the long-broken federal immigration system.

"About time," you might say, and you'd be right.

We will to, when we see a bill that looks like it might actually work.

Our immigration laws have been somewhere between ineffectual and totally worthless for the last 20 years or so, ever since Congress decided to make it next to impossible for many people to come here to work.

Unfortunately for all concerned, the lure of jobs and a better life proved much stronger than the law. It always does. Any attempt to keep something out of a country that people want and need, whether it's beer, cigarettes or workers, is doomed to failure.

In the case of our immigration policy, the longer Congress failed to do something, the worse the situation got. That's how we got to have an estimated 11 million illegal aliens of this side of the Rio Grande, most of them latinos, but including people from all over the world who entered the U.S. illegally or simply overstayed their visas.

It's been five years since the last attempt to change things failed, but maybe it'll be different this time. We hope so.

One thing that is different is that business and labor have been meeting, trying to come to an agreement on the bill. They're represented by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which knows that businesses depend on foreign workers, and the AFL-CIO, which knows that also, and which smells the sweet smell of growth if newly legal workers can join its member unions.

That is one thing the bill must address: What to do with those 11 million illegals in the country today, most of them gainfully employed. It's not a huge group, only a little more than 3 percent of our population, but it's still a lot of illegal aliens to deal with. And the chances we can just send them all home are nil.

Any "amnesty" proposal will be unpopular in some quarters, but just try to figure out what else will work. Meantime, the administration has stepped up programs to deport illegals who commit crimes or cause other problems. And yes, the administration is working with Congress, the unions and management to put this bill together.

Other things a bill must deal with is a total ban on paying welfare or free medical care for immigrants and their children. If people come here and can't find work, we should instead help them find a way back home.

And the bill will need to provide a simple and easy way for guest workers to come fill jobs that go begging, either in the fields or in high-tech offices. Today, doctors and engineers can come to work, though there are many roadblocks. For farm hands and road workers, however, it's next to impossible to come here legally.

Our current policy is not working. It has brought us nothing but grief.

More border guards, a higher fence and tough enforcement have not worked. Our policy has failed, and it's time to try something else. If we make it easy for guest workers to come for a set time, people won't have to risk their lives in the desert.

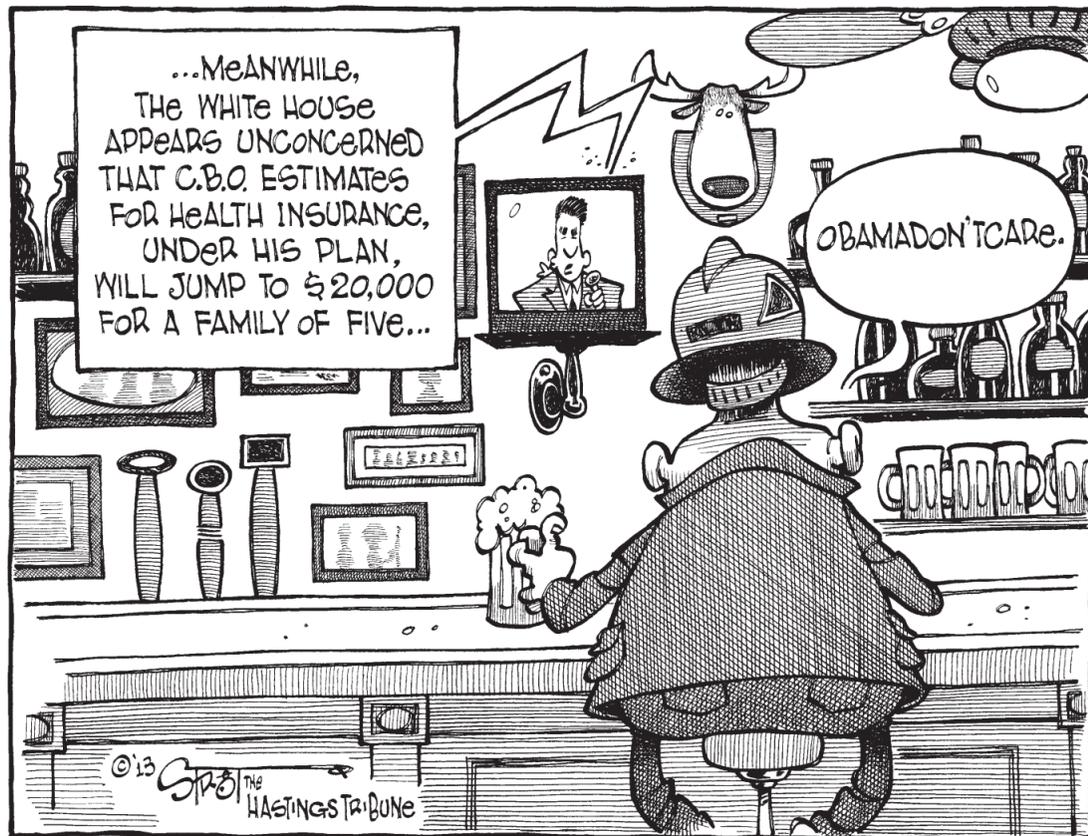
And as a nation of immigrants, we should welcome newcomers who come legally and have work to do here.

We should not pay welfare or provide a good life for anyone who comes and does not have work. There's no point in that, but then, it's hard so say how much of a problem there has been, either.

Let's hope this effort succeeds. It might be the beginning of bipartisan solutions to a lot of our country's problems.

— Steve Haynes

On the  
Prairie Dog  
Steve Haynes



## It's like Old McDonald's farm

The baby chicks we hatched last summer are almost full grown. They have been moved to temporary quarters right next door to the hen house with a chicken wire fence between the two enclosures. You should see the old rooster. He patrols the fence line like a soldier on watch. I fear that if one of the young roosters sticks his head through the fence, the old "General" might just take it off. I'm not sure if the old guy is more interested in attacking the young roosters or trying to make the acquaintance of the young "chicks".

Jim has to get busy and build another laying box because one of the pullets laid her first egg. Not too big, but definitely an egg. That puts us one step closer to "retiring" the old girls.

—ob—

It's like the Pied Piper of Hamelin when Jim calls the cats. It's his job to feed them and all he has to say is,

Out Back  
Carolyn Plotts



"Here, kitty, kitty."

Cats come thundering from every direction. Yes, thundering. Not soft, quiet little kitty footsteps. Big, loud pounces that say, "Outta my way. I'm hungry." All three like me, or at least tolerate me, but at meal time they are all Jim's.

They don't know it yet, but their cushy lifestyle is about over. In less than a month they are getting the boot outdoors. When we learned of our Guatemala trip I said to Jim, "The cats have to go out. I am not leaving them in the house while we're gone and ask

someone to not only feed them, but put them out in the morning and expect to get them back in at night. You have a month to figure out new sleeping arrangements for them."

Looks like the north porch will become their new home. It's protected. They can each have sleeping boxes and our next door neighbors have already volunteered to feed them. Problem solved.

—ob—

Judging by the number of geese we've seen flying north it looks like we may have an early spring. Recent days have been almost balmy. I know Spring is coming because a farmer friend said, "I'm itchin' to get some seeds in the ground."

Of course, Mother Nature has to throw in a few miserable windy days just to remind us that she's not through with winter yet.

## Welcome to the land of opportunity

Nowhere on earth can you invest your money more safely or profitably than western Kansas. That was the marketing pitch back in 1905 from Wise & Stern dealers in farms, grazing lands and stock ranches.

Wise & Stern, located at 806 Grand Ave. in Kansas City, Mo., had already been selling land in western Kansas for several years; this company was convinced western Kansas was the new heaven on earth and destined for greatness.

Crops that year were excellent and a feeling of prosperity prevailed across the western third to half of Kansas. Reports of wheat yields of more than 25 bushels per acre in the region of Lane, Finney, Kearney, Wichita, Greely, Hamilton and Scott counties were heralded as average with many farmers reporting even "better" yields. Wheat sold for a whopping 80 cents per bushel.

A decided change for the better in rainfall during the last few years steamrolled the excitement among those like Wise & Stern who marketed a 28-page pamphlet touting Western Kansas as the land of opportunity. They also provided rail trips to show off their holdings to anyone wishing to invest in land.

"The breaking up and cultivating of these prairies south of western Kansas (in Oklahoma and Texas) has changed these prairies and has changed these winds to more moisture-laden breezes, so that there is an appreciable increase in the rainfall on the plains of Western Kansas over the average of ten years ago," according to Wise & Stern's pamphlet.

Insight  
John Schlageck



According to a story in the Kansas City Journal, a western Kansan was quoted as saying, "we have found out how to farm Western Kansas now and the rainfall has changed. It used to rain all at once, and then stay dry.... Now we have gentle, soaking rains all over Western Kansas. Cloudbursts and floods no longer trouble us."

Blessed with well watered, fertile soil — rich, black loam ranging from two to four feet deep and a "mild" climate with short winters, cool nights in the summer and almost always a gentle breeze, western Kansas was touted as "God's Country" at the beginning of the 20th Century.

During the nine-year period between 1897 and 1905, western Kansas averaged more than 20 inches of rainfall per year in Finney County, according to B.F. Stocks, a local observer with the U.S. Weather Bureau. Such a rosy rainfall record provided even more reason to invest in western Kansas land.

Another attribute that boded well for buying farm and ranch land in western Kansas 108 years ago was the cheap price.

Land in this region of Kansas could be purchased from \$2.50 to \$15 per acre. Individuals interested in buying land were encouraged to look around at the rich farmer neighbors from Illinois,

Indiana and Iowa. They all became wealthy because they bought land when it was cheap, so the sales pitch went.

"The same opportunity is open to you, providing you choose to take advantage of it," according to Wise & Stern. "This is probably your last opportunity for good, smooth and productive lands at \$3 to \$15 an acre."

Yes, western Kansas was indeed the Promised Land back in 1905. Visions of this rich, smooth, fertile prairie becoming the breadbasket of the world were being heralded throughout the land.

Fields producing 20 to 45 bushels per acres with a test weight of 60 to 66 pounds per bushel were seen as commonplace with never a thought given to extended periods of drought, blowing winds and soil. More than 100 years ago, western Kansas was indeed the new, undeveloped region where opportunities and advantages were limitless.

Examples of production costs including interest and taxes — but no mention of labor, toil and trial — totaled \$874 to put in a wheat crop and harvest it on 160 acres. With a yield of 20 bushels per acre, at 60 cents per bushel, a farmer could gross \$1,920. Net profit on 160 acres for one year and one wheat crop totaled \$1,046. Quite a return back in 1905.

This formula for success was sound. No need for argument. All that was required was for the farmer to till the soil properly and the elements would do the rest. However, no man should expect nature to do it all.

Welcome to the land of opportunity.

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ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654  
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

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Nor'West Newspapers  
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Publishers, 1970-2002