

Splitting the farm bill is what's needed

On the Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



You have to hope the House Republicans know what they are doing, splitting the Farm Bill into separate agriculture and welfare legislation.

Farmers have gotten by for years with a sort of unholy alliance of Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, who came together every few years to pass a farm bill. This year, in the era of polarity, that system has broken down.

In years past, liberals on both sides of the aisle could vote for the farm bill because it contained authorization for Food Stamps, nutrition programs, school lunches and other "agriculture-related" assistance. Conservatives and farm-state legislators – often the same people – got what they wanted for farmers.

And if anyone objected to the "wasteful" spending on the other part of the bill, the deal implied by the big-tent farm bill kept them quiet.

This has been important for farmers, because their numbers and influence have been declining. They still rank among the stronger business lobbying forces because the Farm Bureau and other groups have them well organized. Farmers show up on Capitol Hill in numbers a farm-state senator or representative can't ignore. And nearly every state has its farm vote.

The numbers keep shifting in favor of the cities, however. Even in Kansas, each census brings news that there are fewer of us in rural areas and more of them in cities and suburbs.

And while a strong farm sector is in most everyone's best interest, a lot of people don't know that. Most Americans today have never seen where their food comes from and really don't have much idea who grows it. They think bread comes from Sarah Lee and steak from Omaha, hamburger from McDonalds and cotton from Walmart.

Perhaps splitting the farm bill will allow all the programs to be judged on their own merits. The conservative House Republicans will certainly want to chop check out of the every-burgeoning food-stamp program.

But many city liberals have their sights on farm subsidies. They will be waiting in the Senate, where the Democrats are in charge and the rules are different.

In the end, the two houses will have to compromise both bills, and perhaps the grand alliance can be put back together.

Farmers can hope and work for some kind of deal that keeps the most important programs going, particularly crop insurance and emergency relief. Liberals will vote for "environmental" parts of the bill, but programs like direct payments will be on the line for elimination or limitations.

And increasingly, farm groups may have to choose the parts of the bill they need the most.

This may not be what we want to see, but it looks like the future. Here's hoping the House strategy helps – and not hurts. – Steve Haynes



A board game that teaches so much

What would you say if I told you a \$9.99 board game could help a child improve their math and English skills, build their self-confidence and encourage creativity? Not a bad investment you might say, and research suggests you would be right. Furthermore, studies indicate the game strengthens a person's problem solving capabilities, as well.

Jared Shelton, Norton Community High School senior, began playing chess when he was about six. Finding others his age who knew the game, was a challenge. In fourth grade, Jared attended the Anatoly Karpov Chess Camp in Lindsborg, Kansas. While there, he realized most of the camp kids either belonged to a chess club or their school offered chess as a class. With the interest and support of his parents, Pam and Jay, and Librarian, Mary Leuhrs, he began to hold free chess classes twice a week at the Norton Library. The Friends of the Norton Library generously provide the treat for the young group. Area individuals have supported the program by providing

Phase II
Mary Kay Woodyard



chess sets, clocks and even a chess set available to be checked out.

As Jared became more involved in school, the classes were cut back to once a week, nevertheless the players' interest has not waned and he has had, at times, as many as 20 youth participating.

Some might say, it is just a game, but nothing could be further from the truth and the studies support this finding. By creating this avenue for young people, Jared has offered a "sport" complete with competition. He also has become a mentor/role model for youth to realize there are many directions to take your interests and skills. Some of the young chess players have gone on to participate in area competitions and

have placed and won.

Jared told me, "It sounds cliché, but I am happy when kids learn how to play, and have fun. I like it when they get better, and make good moves in their games and when new kids come to learn, or bring their friends."

What started as a search for co-players became a mission for Jared. A mission to provide to the youth of Norton a creative outlet, a learning experience and an example of what it means to give to your community.

The notion of the value of chess in one's life or maybe even more importantly in our community life was perhaps best stated by the well known Statesman Benjamin Franklin, "we learn from chess the greatest maxim in life - that even when everything seems to be going badly for us we should not lose heart, but always hoping for a change for the better, steadfastly continue searching for the solutions to our problems."

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How modern agriculture affects our health

It irritated my dad when a meal did not include bread. "Don't you know where your money comes from?"

I recall the Wheat Growers' ads of a few years ago. "Where there is wheat, there is bread, in more ways than one!"

I'm thankful Daddy did not live long enough to see today's "epidemic" of celiac disease. And hopeful maybe we can bring back those ads and a little common sense about bread!

The incidence of the celiac disease is one in 133-141. My cousin's grandson has celiac disease. I know how serious it can be. I have no argument with stores or restaurants making gluten free choices available.

On the other hand, my young cousin (twice removed) was savvy enough from elementary school to manage his disease; to navigate birthday parties and other outings without his parents protecting him. Now in high school, he is tall, intelligent and an athlete. He is older than his classmates because before his diagnosis, his disease was so severe he was thought to be autistic; thus his entry into school was delayed.

Even with a personal understanding of the problems celiac poses; as my father's daughter and a person who knows where bread comes from, I have little patience for the current anti-gluten bandwagon.

Almost every day I see the demonization of wheat. Just yesterday I saw a story "Foods you should never eat!" "Modern wheat" (a term that is gaining popularity) made the list.

I'm not exactly sure what "modern wheat" is. This story defined it as

This Too Shall Pass
Nancy Hagman



hybrid wheat. Meanwhile, Washington State University is working on a hybrid that is gluten free.

The "health" experts insist: eliminate gluten, you will feel better! Just a little FYI: If you are being screened for celiac, do not alter your diet before diagnosis. It affects test results.

Could celiac be eliminated with "antique" wheat. The disease is considered to be heredity. Is it possible before explosion of hybrid wheat (40-50 years ago); celiac was merely not diagnosed?

Children failed to thrive and were malnourished but no one knew why. Celiac also manifests after a time of stress or pregnancy. Perhaps the symptoms were blamed on the stressor. Can it be proven celiac is truly connected to "modern wheat"?

The August 2013 issue of "Progressive Farmer" features a profile on Patrick Moore. He is a co-founder of Greenpeace. He broke with the group in 1986.

Some of his thoughts about "modern" agriculture include, "No one is using genetic modification for evil purposes; everyone is using it to improve things."

Modern agriculture "is the solution to poverty and population growth.

All countries that have mechanized agriculture---have negative population growth and great wealth."

He goes on to compare countries with mechanized agriculture and all that it brings (GMO's, large, efficient farms, etc.) with other countries. In the mechanized countries less than 5 percent of people grow food versus 80 percent. With 80 percent employed in food production "you don't have people to do other things like making goods and providing services."

Another movement urges us to buy locally produced food. In Kansas this would mean someone in the household must spend a great deal of time preserving seasonal foods for later use. It is satisfying to see a row of freshly canned produce on the kitchen counter. However it represents a great deal of work to do enough to sustain a family for a winter.

Meaning someone will have to leave the non-agricultural sector of the workforce.

Most of us have rural roots. It is easy to wish for simpler times. But how many of us want to plant acres of garden, milk cows, raise chickens, smoke hams, and (risking celiac) grind wheat so we can bake bread?

Kansans know: nothing is more basic than bread. It is the staff of life. If we need to eliminate anything from our lives perhaps it should be giving into the temptation of reading stories about "Foods you should never eat"! If only I could do it, I'm certain I would feel better!

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