

OPINIONS

Thank Kansas farmers, but don't cut their programs

BY JENNIFER M. LATZKE
KansasFarmer.com

National Agriculture Day usually brings a warm, fuzzy feeling to my heart. It's the one day a year that we all pause and say "thank you" to the people who raise food, fiber and fuel for our nation and the world.

This year, though, all I felt was knots in the pit of my stomach.

On March 14, Kansas State University announced that it will be suspending its two Feed the Future labs on April 12. The labs are funded by \$137 million in U.S. Agency for International Development grants.

That's the same program that K-State found put more than \$8 back into U.S. farmer pockets for every \$1 spent on research.

The same day, word came from USDA that it will be cutting the Local Food for Schools program and the Local Food Purchase Assistance program, slashing \$10.6 million that would have put local food from Kansas farmers in our schools and food banks. That's an area where we see many beginning and next-generation farmers getting a foot in the door of farming.

Then came a call from a contact in Topeka with word that the state Senate has a proposed budget that would cut all Economic Development Initiatives Funds from all state agencies' marketing departments — including the departments of Agriculture and Commerce. The reason given? To "have a discussion" about how EDIF funds are spent across those agencies.

OK, let's discuss.

First, EDIF is money from state gaming revenues — casinos, lottery and parimutuel betting. It is held in the State Gaming Revenues Fund, and in fiscal 2024, it was about \$50 million total. By statute, it "shall be used to finance programs that support and enhance the economic foundation of the state and foster growth to the state's economic foundation."

Many of the programs that EDIF money goes toward directly affect rural Kansans and the agricultural sector, which makes up about a third of our state's economy.

In the approved fiscal 2024 budget, the Kansas Department of Commerce received the bulk, at about \$36.4 million. That



Latzke

covers its agencies and programs such as:

- international trade, \$1.4 million
- Rural Opportunity Zones, \$1.03 million
- apprenticeships, \$1.01 million
- broadband development, \$1.04 million
- tourism, \$4.8 million.

Also, the Board of Regents was allocated \$4.5 million, with \$2.5 million earmarked for vocational education.

In fiscal 2024, KDA's Agriculture Marketing Program received a total of \$1.03 million in EDIF money. That funds the 10 full-time employees for its marketing division, from the ag economist to the hay market reporter and live cattle market reporters to others. KDA uses some of those dollars in the joint Kansas Ag Business Development Program it runs with KDC.

EDIF funds our From the Land of Kansas program, which helps local food entrepreneurs get started. That \$1 million in EDIF money also supports KDA's international ag market development, workforce development and agricultural education efforts.

There's not a farmer, rancher or agribusiness that isn't impacted by those funds at some point. You could argue the \$1 million in EDIF funds KDA is allocated each year — along with EDIF funds at KDC and other agencies — supports Kansas' \$88 billion ag industry and its 260,582 jobs.

KDA has thrifty reputation

Mike Bergmeier, the president of ShieldAg in Hutchinson, sits on the KDA Marketing Advisory Board. He has long been an advocate for workforce development in this state for agricultural businesses like his, and KDA has been creating partnerships to train the next generation through apprenticeships and other programs.

"Honestly, in my limited involvement with volunteer boards, the KDA staff is one of the very few that can take two nickels, rub them together and make a quarter out of it," he says. "They are accountable and work hard on projects that have real value for ag in Kansas."

That frugality will be tested. At press time, negotiations between the House and Senate returned the EDIF to the budget — with a 5% cut of about \$54,000.

My question is: Why is this proposed in the first place?

For the 25 years I've been covering Kansas and U.S. agriculture, I've never met a farm lobby group that lobbied against research dollars, or market expansion, or workforce develop-

ment, or a farm safety net. And yet, suddenly now those things are centers of wasteful spending?

Yes, we should root out fraud. But indiscriminately throwing out the good with the bad just sets us back as a state, as a nation and as an industry.

That's no way to thank a farmer.

* * * *

What are your thoughts? Send an email to jennifer.latzke@farmprogress.com.

If the 'little table' could talk, the stories would be plentiful

BY KATHY TAYLOR, co-publisher
Taylor Newspapers

On the list of important matters, a small table in Andy Taylor's newspaper office doesn't jump off the page.

But I still did a double take when I saw a photo of Andy working with his computers as he produced last week's Montgomery County Chronicle.

I can't even tell you when it was made, or which publisher of the past placed it in our office. I remember my dad, H.K. "Skeet" George, sitting by his linotype in the old Caney Daily Chronicle office, and reaching over to a wire basket which sat on that table. It was his copy box — a place where stories were placed in preparation for final typesetting.

Knowing my dad, the table came with the business when he and mother bought it in 1943. My mother would save money and buy some nice furniture at home, but not at the office which was a little on the inky side, always smelling like molten lead and printer's ink.

So, did the former newspaper owner, L.T. Perrill, also use the little table to hold "news copy" for him. Might the table with fluted legs and three layers of paint experience the 1930s or '20's Even earlier? We will never know.

When Rudy and I bought the newspaper in 1970, the table still was in use — serving as a table to hold the "news box" where typesetters, Anna Wetmore and Irene Kindley reached in it to find country correspondent news from area towns — Wayside, Havana, Pleasant Hill, Copan, Niotaze, Tyro and Peru.

Stories by my dad were short and newsy, and editorials and columns were fun and pithy to read. And, they all passed across that little table.

Typesetting equipment changed to more modern types, such as the Justewriter and Compugraphic machines that served us for three decades.

As times changed and we remodeled the office, the little table got a fresh coat of green paint to coordinate with our yellow walls.

For a while, it held a lamp, then a Tipline machine and later a wax machine that allowed paper strips to stick to layout sheets.

When we moved into remodeled digs across the street in 1982, the table came along. Longtime employee Patty Cron needed it beside her Compuwriter to hold the stories written by the Taylor family — Matt, Andy, Jenny, Rudy and me.

As computers made way into our newspaper office in 1991, we no longer needed staff to "set type" so a copy box wasn't so necessary.

But, it held coffee mugs, pizza boxes, noontime hamburger and french fries sacks, and pop cans.

It has also been used to hold birthday cakes —for those times when staff employees and family members had to hold a quick birthday party in between press deadlines.

Then, the little table sat in our back room for several years — out of the way and out of sight.

When Andy came home from college in 1993 and joined our company, he opened an office in Cherryvale, then at Independence where he now works.

Somehow, the table with pretty legs and a rough looking top ended up with him.

Andy likes to display meaningful artifacts of journalism in his office, so it held old cameras, typewriters and framed pictures.

But when a picture was snapped last week in Andy's office as he scurried to deadline, there it was — holding lists, ad sheets and sometimes — news copy.

The table holds no value and wouldn't bring two dollars at a garage sale.

But, glancing at it and realizing its place in our newspaper offices for the past century makes it a special conversation piece.

If only the little table could talk . . .



After more than 80 years in the family, the "little table" remains in use by the Chronicle editor's desk.

PUBLIC FORUM

Drum Creek crossing should remain open, citizen says

Editor:

The county commissioners are considering closing the low water crossing on Drum Creek at county road 6200 — west of U.S. 169 highway.

When the Kansas Department of Transportation had U.S. 169 closed between Thayer and U.S. 400, the semis used this road as a detour.

After people complained about the semis wrecking in their fields, local sheriff's deputies tried to stop the semis from traveling on that road.

That wasn't a debut but when the county put up road blocks, the semis just drove around it. Then, when law enforcement had to come to investigate the accidents, traffic tickets were not issued.

The county commissioners started looking at that crossing and decided it wasn't safe for travel. Now, a certified engineering came out to check on it. The engineering firm is recommending to close that crossing. The cost to replace it would be more than \$630,000.

Closing the crossing — and that road — to traffic will cause a lot of inconveniences, besides the danger for emergency vehicles to get to that rural neighborhood.

Several years, KDOT closed the old K-37 highway going to U.S. 400 because its proximity to the nearby U.S. 169/400 junction. Now, county road 6200 appears to be closing because the commission does not want to spend our tax money that would benefit a lot of people.

Commissioners will discuss the matter at its meeting at 9 a.m., next Monday, April 28 in the Montgomery County Judicial Center lower level.

Everyone should please show up if they are interested in this situation.

**Geneva Duke
Independence, Kan.**

LOCAL NEWS

Lack of quorum cancels Caney city meeting

CANEY — Lack of a quorum led to the cancellation of Monday's meeting of the Caney City Council.

Only four members of the council showed up for the regularly scheduled meeting at Caney City Hall.

No action could be taken because of the lack of a quorum (a minimum of five members is needed to conduct business).

By the powers vested with Mayor Josh Elliott, a public hearing scheduled for May 5 was approved to discuss the issuance of Industrial Revenue Bonds for the expansion of Spears Manufacturing.

City councilors were expected to hear more details about Spears' expansion plans at Monday's meeting.

The Caney City Council meets the first and third Monday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Caney City Hall.

Prescription Take Back Day set for Saturday

Live Healthy Montgomery County encourages everyone to safely dispose of unused or expired prescription medications at designated take back locations on Saturday, April 26.

Proper disposal helps prevent misuse and protects the community and environment. Keep Montgomery County safe and healthy by dropping off your medications on Saturday, April 26 at the following kiosks in Montgomery County.

- Coffeyville Police Department, 1206 W. 11th. Open 24-7.
- Caney Police Department, 100 W. 4th. Open 24-7.
- Independence Police Department, 120 N. 6th. Open 24-7.

Fireworks to be sold year-round in Kansas

TOPEKA — Fireworks can now be sold year-round in the state of Kansas, thanks to a new law signed by Gov. Laura Kelly last week.

In addition to expanding fireworks sales, the law would require permanent retailers to register with the state fire marshal, requires all sales and transfers to be made at a physical location, and creates licensing categories of distributors for display fireworks and pyrotechnic articles.

It also limits the lawful sale of fireworks labeled "For Professional Use Only" to certain licensing categories.

Kansas joins neighboring Missouri in allowing year-round sales of fireworks.

The new law, which goes into effect on July 1, only pertains to the sale of fireworks. It is up to local cities and counties to decide when fireworks can be used.

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