

# OPINION

**THE HUTCHINSON NEWS**

**Editorial Board**

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**EDITORIALS**

## Circular reason

Economy depends on variety of factors, including housing, retail

Economic development is a circular, not linear, process. That was the essence of a slide and economic development expert showed to a Hutchinson business crowd last week. It also was arguably the main current running through the findings of the Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce's business conditions survey conducted this past summer.

Carlton Schwab, president and CEO of the Texas Economic Development Council, was the featured speaker at the chamber's fall economic development meeting. At first, Schwab seemed to support the traditional viewpoint that job creation stimulates all other economic development when he defined "primary jobs" as those that support the sale of products and services outside of the immediate market area. He said he cringes when someone in a small community says the biggest need is to attract a desirable retailer, because first comes primary jobs before all the other economic development can happen.

But then Schwab showed the slide that put primary job creation in a circle along with quality of life, housing and related forms of economic and community development. Visually, that revealed the chicken-or-the-egg challenge of economic development.

Yes, when a community already has strong quality of life – including the strong retail sector that so many people equate with quality of life these days – and plentiful and affordable housing, then growing jobs becomes the simple impetus to economic development. But sometimes a community needs the housing and quality of life to attract people to fill the jobs to support new business recruitment and existing business expansion. It is hard to attract primary jobs without the people to do the jobs.

And the chamber's own survey of the market's top employers bears that out. When asked what the strengths of doing business in

Reno County were, they listed "workforce" at No. 2 – right behind location and logistics. And when asked what the top weaknesses of the community are, guess what is No. 1? "Workforce."

How is this explained? Existing employers value the strong work ethic of the local labor pool. But when recruiting, they don't find enough qualified job applicants – "qualified" sometimes being as simple as showing up for work and passing the drug test.

No. 2 and 3 on the list of community weaknesses are retail, restaurants and entertainment, and housing. The community rates well for its school system and being a good place to raise a family but not so good on housing and amenities.

That's why the economic challenge for the chamber is to include housing development and retail recruitment in its mix of activities. People have to want to live here to work the jobs trying to be created.

The economic development checkup last week revealed a couple initiatives that show the smarts of the community and chamber: What Hutch may be doing most right is vocational-technical training. This has become a big strength of Hutchinson Community College and of the Hutchinson school district, for one. The two have a strong partnership on this, and it addresses the need to train a qualified local labor pool.

The other feather in Hutch's cap is the chamber's certification of the Kansas Enterprise Industrial Park, situated on the city's southeast side and home to the Siemens Energy wind turbine manufacturing plant. The chamber went through an exhaustive process to evaluate the property, utilities, environmental and other site-selection issues so that its consultant could declare the industrial park "Shovel Ready Site" certified. This was a smart investment that should position the site competitively.

With that and its associated marketing, and the chamber's own feedback from existing employers, the road map for economic development looks well charted.

## Sports apparel

After months of talks, Dillons to sell HCC attire

For years, Hutchinson Community College has ignored a key marketing opportunity that could have put considerably more money into the college's coffers – Blue Dragon brand marketing.

HCC has been steadfast in selling its signature clothing items only in the college's bookstore while denying other stores the prospect of helping brand the college.

The bookstore might be a good place for students to purchase a Blue Dragons sweatshirt or shorts, but it is not ideal for the general public, which has little reason to be on the campus. Much like KU and K-State fans who can find Jayhawk and Wildcat apparel in a number of local stores without traveling to Lawrence or Manhattan.

The Blue Dragons have a large fan base, and as far as colleges it's the only one in town.

That's why a recent near-misstep by the college is important to note.

When the incredible Dillons Marketplace opened its doors in late August, shoppers found they could buy seemingly everything

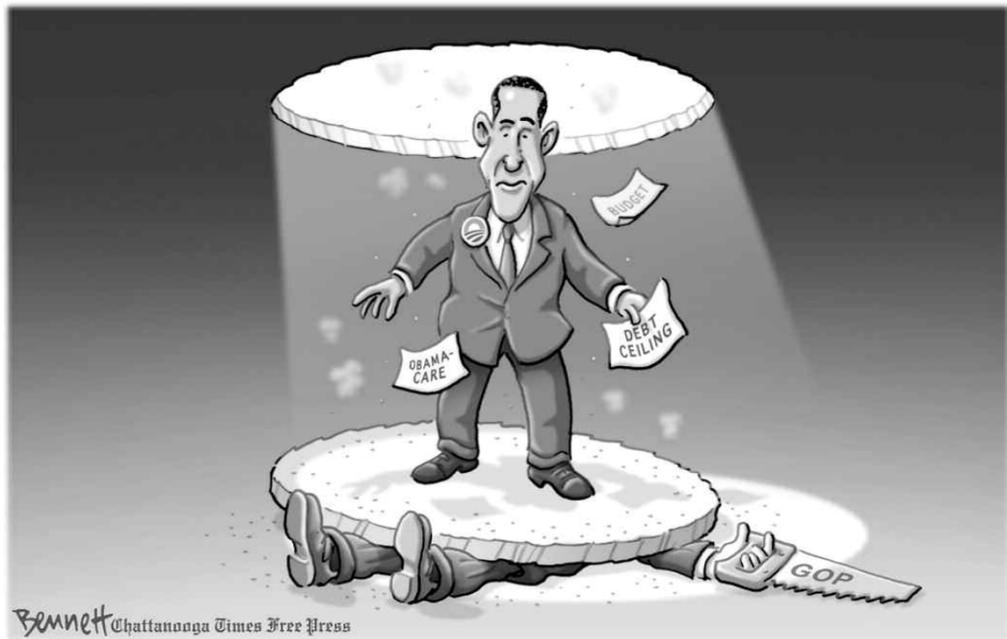
from groceries to jewelry to furniture to sports clothing, including KU and K-State attire.

Blue Dragons apparel was absent. Yes, the hometown team was not represented. The college and Dillons representatives were in negotiations about placement of HCC items in the store, and now after seven months of talks, HCC officials finally have relented and shoppers soon will be able to buy Blue Dragons apparel at the Marketplace.

Turning a blind eye to branding the college via clothing items at other venues has been a huge mistake on the part of HCC. It is out of step and out of touch for a college that prides itself – and rightly so – on its growing student population, expansive curriculum and athletic team success.

Thanks to Dillons, the college finally was convinced that there are many ways to market and brand its image. A shirt sporting a large Blue Dragon sometimes is a more effective marketing tool than a brochure received in the mail. And sometimes, fans just want easy access to sports apparel.

Maybe the Dillons experience will encourage the college to broaden its vision and license its brand more broadly.



Bennett Chattanooga Times Free Press

**COLUMNISTS**

## What I want for America

Several weeks ago, a reader regularly critical of The News' editorial board asked a question for which he'd like to see an answer.

*"I have wondered why The News skewers our patriot group at every opportunity. Does our paper believe in higher taxes, representatives without principles or a government that wants everyone to 'toe the mark'? Seemingly, The News' editorial staff and Harris papers do, but it is certainly not what is wanted by many locals, including me.*

*"I called feature writer Amy Bickel recently with a question. 'What does The Hutchinson News want for America(ns)?' I don't know if we will see a response or not. But given its editorial slant and liberal arrogance towards others, the community deserves an answer."*

I can't speak for the editorial board, but I can speak for myself, and I will gladly offer my answer to anyone who wants to read it.

What I want for America is neither liberal nor conservative. I don't care about any party's ideology; I care even less about the ideas that come from the fringes. I am a father, a husband, a son, a friend and a native of the state of Kansas, and those experiences have shaped my thoughts about what I want for America, and for Kansas.

I want America to be a place where someone raised in abject poverty has a fair shot at life. Even for those who start life with nothing, or who have made mistakes along the way, America's promise of opportunity should be more than a part-time job paying minimum wage.

I am not rich, nor am I poor. I'm right in the middle, and I am tired of watching America's middle class – the true foundation of our economy – being squeezed by increasing poverty on one end and an insatiable appetite for wealth on the other. I want America's guiding principle to be something other than profitability; I want its biggest political achievements to



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be more moral than celebrating new ways to withhold food or medicine from our most impoverished neighbors.

I want America to disagree without the corrosiveness of anger and hatred.

I want my country to stop being so afraid. I want it to stop seeing danger around every corner, malfeasance at every turn, and treachery in every effort to do something new. I want America to return to its message of promise and possibility; I'm tired of hearing that we're doomed and that the future is hopeless.

I want America to be responsible and equitable in its taxation; I want it to tax its citizens as little as possible but enough to do what is required to maintain and grow our country's unparalleled standard of living well beyond my generation.

I want members of the tea party, many of whom grew up in an era of unprecedented growth and prosperity, to admit it was largely made possible by government investment – whether it was rural electrification to make the sparsely populated parts of Kansas livable or the GI Bill that sent millions of military veterans to college. I want them to admit that the Americans who came before them had the foresight and commitment to invest in the highways, research, education and social programs that created the stable platform from which wealth and prosperity launch and flourish. I want them to ask if they can do the same for the next generation.

I want the tea party to stop speaking in generalities and be

honest about the parts of government it is willing to live without. Is it the roads you drive on every day? Is it Social Security and Medicare, both government programs developed generations ago to address urgent and growing concerns in the country? Is it the government that moves floodwater out of your neighborhood, or is it the part that allows you to turn on a faucet for clean water and flush a toilet to remove waste? Is it the part that prosecutes criminals and holds them in prisons, safely away from your family?

I want America to recognize that when two people refuse to compromise, neither gains. I want my country to remember that Benjamin Franklin helped steer the "Great Compromise" that resulted in acceptance of the U.S. Constitution. He didn't lack a backbone, nor did he lack principles. He believed in the future of America and found the common ground needed to give birth to a new, experimental nation – a nation that today owes its existence to our forefathers' spirit of compromise.

I want America to believe in itself again, like it did when it dammed rivers to prevent floods or generate electricity, built an interstate highway system, ignited a war machine to topple a dictator, or when it developed a cutting-edge space program that sent a man to the moon.

I want America to look forward to the future and all the possibility that it holds.

I want America to believe this country still holds more good than bad. I want America to remember that love is better than hate and that compassion is better than judgment.

And I want America to tell its children that hope and faith build nations but that fear and anger destroy them.

Jason Probst is news editor at The Hutchinson News. Email: jprobst@hutchnews.com.

## Village idiots take aim at Miss America

A few months ago, I got an email from Supreet.

Supreet is in the 11th grade. He shops at Wal-Mart and plays basketball. His father came to this country from India and both are Sikhs, followers of a centuries-old faith founded in the Punjab region. Supreet wanted to tell me what it is like being a Sikh in America.

He wrote about how, after 9/11, his father became "perhaps the most hated man in our small town." He wrote about how his dad had to stop wearing the turban Sikh men use to cover their "kesh," the hair their faith forbids them to cut. He wrote about bullying and depression suffered by young Sikhs. He wrote about black boys who taunted him as "Osama's son." He wrote about Wade Michael Page, who in 2012, shot 10 people, killing six, at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin, likely thinking it was a mosque. He wrote about how President Obama canceled a visit to a Sikh holy site in 2010, which some people thought was because male visitors are required to cover their heads and Obama didn't want anyone calling him a Muslim.

"But Sikhs are NOT Muslims," wrote Supreet. "Why do we keep getting labeled as Muslims?"

It is a plaintive question with which the new Miss America would doubtless sympathize. Nina Davuluri of New York state won the crown last week, becoming the first Indian American to do so. Her triumph was marred by an eruption of – pardon the tautology – ignorant bigotry on social media.

"Audrey Graham" tweeted, "Miss America is a terrorist. Whatever. It's fine."

"Luke Brasili" tweeted, "9/11 was four days ago and she gets



Leonard Pitts

miss America?"

"De La Rutherford" tweeted, "Congratulations, Al-Qaeda. Our Miss America is one of you."

And you are almost – almost –



Miss America Nina Davuluri

less appalled by the bigotry than by the slack-jawed, knuckle-dragging, dull-eyed ignorance of people so stupefyingly uninformed that they can't even hate straight. Miss America's parents are Hindus. Hindus are not Muslims, either. Not that hating them would be acceptable even if they were. And not that the distinction will matter to the folks quoted above. All dark-skinned people with exotic names or unfamiliar customs are Muslim terrorists to that bunch of nuclear physicists.

There was more. "Jessica Ayres" offered this self-negating

bon mot when Davuluri won: "I swear I'm not racist, but this is America." Then there was "Jonah Carlin," who tweeted images of blond, blue-eyed Miss Kansas, Theresa Vail, dubbing her "a real Miss America."

And so it goes. Some of us are not beauty pageant fans. Indeed, some of us find them archaic outposts of retrograde sexism. But surely all of us can agree that if we are going to have such pageants, they should not be stained by xenophobic prejudice.

Nina Davuluri deserves better. So does Supreet. Their families, after all, chose this country. Consider what that means: To give up everything you have always known and of all the other options available, decide that this is where you want to be. Presumably, one factor in that choice was America's promise: Here you are equal, here you are free, here you may rise to whatever height aspiration and hard work will take you.

So the treatment they have received is not just ugly, but embarrassing, and not just embarrassing but promise-breaking. Jonah Carlin and others like him need to read the writing on the demographic wall. What was exotic and unfamiliar yesterday is shopping at Wal-Mart and shooting hoops today. Change is coming; that fact is non-negotiable. But our success or lack thereof in incorporating that change will determine what America is 50 years from now.

Step one: Decide if we are serious in what we claim ourselves to be. In other words, we can either keep America's promise or else stop making it.

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