

OPINION
Veoz Viewpoints

Guest Editorial

Kentucky should offer incentives to small businesses at home
By Tom Underwood

I was watching TV the other day when I saw a commercial for Visa aimed squarely at small business owners by offering a half dozen entrepreneurs talking about ways the credit card company is helping them build their businesses and live out their dreams.

Well, I realized, understands something that Kentucky's legislature can't seem to grasp: Small business is the engine that can pull the economy out of tough times.

We are in an economic downturn. Kentucky continues to face a tight budget that leaves many needs unmet and many opportunities lost. As state director of the National Federation of Independent Business, I believe the solution is a long-term investment in the state's economy.

I'm not suggesting Kentucky needs higher taxes. I believe in the saying, "You can't dig yourself out of a hole." Raising taxes during an economic downturn, as has been called for by a number of media outlets and pundits, invites a further drain on business growth and creates a spiraling effect that thwarts business expansion and investment.

But Kentucky issues literally hundreds of millions of dollars each year in economic development tax credits to major corporations from around the world in a bid to bring jobs to the state. We maintain foreign offices in far corners of the globe to lure companies to the Bluegrass. We have had many successes over the years, and we encourage these mom-and-pop businesses to grow and create jobs.

Small business, though, has been woefully underrepresented in these incentive efforts.

With more than \$3,000 million in business in the state employing 61 percent of Kentucky's non-farm private workforce, it only makes sense that we encourage these mom-and-pop businesses to grow and create jobs.

If only 10 percent of Kentucky's small businesses were to create one additional job, those jobs would be spread across the Commonwealth, not concentrated in one county.

Better yet, small-business jobs would directly benefit local communities — not just in wages but through local ownership.

House Bill 38, introduced by Reps. Tony Pallin and Scott Brinkman in this year's General Assembly, called for such a long-term strategy. HB 38 would have given small businesses that create at least one new position and invest a minimum of \$500 in new equipment or technology a tax credit of up to \$25,000. The program was capped at \$5 million in tax credits.

The bill had dozens of co-sponsors but was not even allowed a hearing.

We were told, "There's no money." I understand that money is tight, but Kentucky has already approved \$500 million in tax incentives to attract alternative energy companies to the state. While that is a worthy investment, it seems we could allocate 1 percent of that to fund a proven economic engine.

Small business owners, their employees and their families should not receive a little less help in growing the state's economy. This is an election year. They're listening.

Tom Underwood is state director of the National Federation of Independent Business, the state's leading small business association. He lives in Frankfort.

Greetings from Nevada! I hope you are all having a great week.

By one Saturday day for the Veoz family. Let me start by saying that I love taking the kids to do new things. However, for as long as I've been taking them to do new things, I've been taking them to do new things in a more sitting-still manner than I've been taking them to do new things in a more active manner.

We got up Saturday morning after our first night of sleeping through the night with one small exception of Antonio needing his pacifier after several weeks of late night interruptions.

Anytime Ben had gone to do some curbing and then we had to go to the store for some friends of his who own a business. I got the kids' dinner changed and up in their high chairs for breakfast. I made us some pancakes and the kids also had some apples.

After breakfast we all got dressed, including Ben. We were home now, so we could have our Vegas by 9:30. My friend that I used to work with brought a change of clothes,

since they were all dressed up for the wedding ceremony. We decided to change into our Vegas clothes. I walked out with my very nice set down in the bowl of rice that it was all over his bottom and it was the most embarrassing moment of my life.

We had to run to Target before our next adventure anyway, so I took the liberty of buying him a cheap pair of shorts to get us through the rest of the day. I could have put on his other outfit but it was kind of thick and it was more than 100 degrees outside and believe me, it was hot! I didn't want him to be any hotter than he already was because of the temperature outside.

Anyway, I made the quick run in to Target to let the others nap and then we had lunch. We went to the Circus! The circus was in town for the first time in 100 years. I'm sure they will love it even more!

Until next week, make it a great one! Amy

I know the kids are a little young and probably won't remember it, but they were there. It was worth it. Even with my very nice set down in the bowl of rice that it was all over his bottom and it was the most embarrassing moment of my life.

The acrobats were great, but what impressed the kids the most were when the animals came out. There were horses, dogs, tigers and my absolute favorite, elephants.

It was really sweet, Antonio and Analise would both point at the animals and when they would go back out, Antonio would cry a little as if he wanted them to come back. It was just so great. Ben and I said we would definitely have to try to go again next year.

Next year, I'm sure they will love it even more!

Until next week, make it a great one! Amy

Talkin' From The Mountains

Dale Greer's post brain wanders around Ben



Talkin' From The Mountains by Dale Greer

Been listening to the cicadas for weeks and weeks now and wondering why they came to the surface every 13 or 17 years or so. I don't know. Nature usually has a good reason for something like that.

The cicadas have to be doing something worthwhile—they have to have a purpose. Everything in nature has a purpose.

The Lexington Herald-Leader answered my question when it reported recently that when I'm on smaller roads, there is nothing I can do but pray.

Attacking bagpipers is an excellent reason for the cicadas to come back. I'd rather listen to them than a bagpipe. God bless you, Cicadas. Keep up the good work.

That kidding. Some of my best friends are bagpipers.)

Anybody ever wonder why so many people talk-gate? I could understand it if I was going to slow down that wouldn't make it right but it would be a reason.

What is their problem? Are they sitting back there thinking, "Boy, this is fun. I'm making the lives of those strangers in the car in front of me." And lots of trucks tail-gate!

I don't believe in blaming on the brakes. That would be being as irresponsible as the talk-gater, but I have—there are no cars behind the talk-gater—slow down to a snail's pace.

My thinking is if they hit me, they can hit me at 20 miles an hour. That way, maybe, family—and theirs—will survive.

The fascinating thing is that talk-gaters seldom get it. Like I slow down to 20 and they speed up and inch off my bumper. If I do the speed limit, they speed up and say a half-inch off my bumper.

I would appreciate hearing from a police officer, a psychiatrist — someone who could help me understand why so many people

talk-gate. It can't be stupidity. Too many drivers do it. I would read this talk-gater, please. Email me and explain why you do it. I just don't understand!

Another highway tale from the "I must be on Candy Cane" road. A policeman pulled up beside me in the passing lane on a highway. Instead of pulling right beside me, he drove right beside me for about a mile.

He finally got out on the right lane, pulled me over, and said, "You're driving right beside me!"

When I explained to him that he had been with me who broke the law by driving beside me in the passing and turning lane, he said, "I don't know what you're going to let me go this time."

George W. Bush is trying to change his image as a mental midget. He says he has become a reader of books.

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Steve's Report

There is an ancient Greek story about a sphinx that guarded the crossroads outside the city of Thebes. Travelers who encountered the sphinx had to answer her riddle correctly or they were eaten. "What goes on four legs in the morning, on two legs in the afternoon, and on three legs in the evening?"

In another story, "The Hobbit," Bilbo Baggins got caught up in a similar riddle game. "What has roots that grows no leaves, bears no flowers, and grows no fruit?"

As hard as these questions are, they are nothing compared to the riddle that has plagued me most of my life: "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

I wasn't even 9 years old when people started asking me that question. My father said the answer right off the bat. They all wanted to be doctors or lawyers, policemen or firemen, teachers or even President of the United States. But I didn't have a clue.

When I was in eighth grade, the guidance counselor rounded up all the kids who still hadn't figured out what we wanted to be and gave us a "vocational aptitude" test with a bunch of questions designed to help us figure out what our interests were.

I had just seen the movie "Jeremiah Johnson" and so I was pretty interested in becoming a mountain man.

My dad said, "You're not a mountain man. You're a lawyer." Sure glad we Americans decide not to vote for a candidate for the right reasons, such as:

"He once forgot to put his hand over his heart during the pledge of allegiance."

"His wife is stuck up."

"His ears are too big."

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And when I wasn't off in the woods chasing after deer tracks, I was in the backyard, building ramps trying to find out how many garbage cans I could jump over with my Sting ray bicycle.

So when the test asked me what I liked doing, these interests naturally influenced the results. A few weeks later, the guidance counselor called me into his office with a concerned look on his face as he reviewed the results of the test with me.

"Are you sure you answered the questions seriously?" he asked me. My interests suggested becoming either a forest ranger or a Hollywood stuntman, what I did not expect, asking a 13-year-old kid questions about his interests?

Four years later, I was graduating from high school and was still no closer to solving that riddle. My dad encouraged me to start college anyway, so I enrolled at the local university taking Math, English, and Chemistry.

After that, I took a two-year break, served on a mission in Germany. I did a lot of growing up and finally figured out that I wanted to become a psychiatrist. I wish my dad had just said, "I want you to be a doctor."

It was about the time I met Cindy and started developing some serious romantic intentions. I realized if I wanted to get married, I needed to find the answer to that riddle pretty quickly, by any means possible.

It was while I was struggling with this decision that my life took a turn of its own. I was driving down the highway — on my way to fulfill a promise to my brother that I would talk to the Army recruiter — when I had a little talk with God. I was just coming to the exit when I said, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do with my life, God, and joining the Army is just about at the bottom of the list. I need some help. Could you point me in the right direction — maybe show me a sign?"

I don't know what I saw, but I saw a sign in the right direction — the freeway, and the engine seized to go. Later, the mechanic said the engine seals seemed to be bad at one. He said he never saw anything like it. It was less than a minute, the engine didn't have a drop of oil left in it.

I owed money on the car, still in it. I didn't have a choice. I had to have the engine replaced. That wiped out my college savings and then some. I could't help noticing, however, that the car had broken down right in front of the recruiter's office. I looked up and said, "Couldn't you have sent a sign that was a little less expensive?"

And so I joined the Army. It has been a good life, but it has come at a cost. I was gone a lot, either on deployments or on training exercises. This left very little opportunity to take college courses. But I did what I could; taking classes here and there, whenever I had the chance.

Finally this month, 29 years after taking my first college course, I received a letter from the University of Maryland, congratulating me on finally completing my degree. I don't suppose that was the record for the longest time to complete

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4th District Report

The Truth about the Outer Continental Shelf

Gas prices broke another record last week when the national average for a gallon of regular unleaded reached \$4.08.

As gas prices continue to break records, more people are recognizing the importance of energy.

The Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) contains valuable energy resources that could greatly expand American oil and gasoline production.

Unfortunately, such debates and confusion surrounds the OCS and its ability to impact our domestic energy supply. It is important to separate the facts from the fiction as Congress begins working toward a new energy strategy for our future.

The OCS is comprised of the submerged lands off the coast and seabed that extend approximately 230 miles offshore from U.S. coasts.

According to estimates from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service, the OCS could have a total of 86 billion barrels of oil and 42 trillion cubic feet of natural gas available for extraction.

That would be enough oil to satisfy U.S. demand at current consumption levels, for more than a decade.

Since 1980, the U.S. has observed the Outer Continental Shelf moratorium, which bans exploration for offshore natural gas and oil deposits in nearly 90% of the OCS. The ban was originally enacted in

response to environmentalists' fears of oil spills close to U.S. shores. The ban has not been lifted and is being taken into account the numerous technological advances that have made it possible to conduct oil exploration in the areas that is out of sight of the coast, protects coral reefs and habitats, and protects against oil spills.

In 1977, the U.S. and O.C.S. signed a treaty that even divided the Florida Straits to preserve each country's economy. Nearly 65% of all U.S. oil and coal exports are shipped through the Florida Straits.

The agreement also divided access to the vast underwater oil and gas fields on both sides of the line. The Cuban government has been expanding its production with several countries, including Venezuela, Vietnam, Canada and Spain.

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