

THE LEXINGTON LEADER

The Judge's Perspective

The Big Picture: National Security Begins with Community Security

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by Lee County Judge Frank Malinak

I would like to address a number of issues that will have a significant impact on the future security of our State and Nation.

Our national security depends on a strong U. S. economy. Revitalization of U. S. manufacturing will sustain our economy and allow us to pay for advanced military systems and intelligence gathering capabilities and provide a measure of economic independence from our adversaries, and, of course, pay down our massive national debt. I think most everyone would rather create manufacturing jobs here in America instead of paying countries like Communist China to do it for us. China is thriving because we buy their manufactured goods. America is strongest when we reduce our dependence on foreign goods and services, especially from adversarial nations.

The way to return manufacturing to this country is to make it profitable. We may pay a little more, but we will be keeping money at home to support our economy and secure our future. To energize our industrial base, we must have sufficient energy production and expanded development of our own natural resources, and nobody does it better than Texans. (or Texas??)

A smart man living here once asked why we should settle for seeing our children only a few times a year because they had to move to a big city to find decent paying jobs to raise a family. Alcoa Aluminum was once the major employer in Central Texas and when it closed, it hurt the economy of Texas. We must bring industry to our area for the sake of our families. Lee County is in the Texas Triangle, one of the fastest growing areas of the nation. Rampant uncontrolled growth would change our rural way of life, so this calls for a balancing act of sorts.

Samsung, Tesla and other high-tech companies are already here. But perhaps Sandow Lakes Ranch promises to be the most significant because of their large manufacturing campus, the inclusion of a large power generating plant, the proximity of a rail system, and SLR's selective process on the business they accept onto their facilities. Water is also an

issue. If cities like San Antonio would repair their leaking water mains they wouldn't need to pursue our water.

Let me delve into one of my concerns. Computer microchips we use in manufacturing everything from washing machines to jet airplanes, are made on the island of Taiwan. The problem is, Taiwan is under threat of takeover by Communist China.

I'll add a bit of history here for clarity. In a brutal civil war at the end of the Second World War, Communists took control of the country and mainland China became "The Peoples Republic of China", a communist nation. The surviving Democratic Nationalists retreated to the island of Taiwan, where they created a thriving industrial complex.

Communist China has vowed to reclaim Taiwan with its valuable manufacturing capabilities and has warned America against supporting the island nation. This vulnerability is the reason computer chip manufacturing must be ramped up in America and why the Samsung plant near Taylor is so important. The free world's manufacturing and technology sectors and our defense industry cannot be held hostage if Communists gain control over Taiwan's critical manufacturing centers.

Any modernization of manufacturing almost certainly will involve some aspect of artificial intelligence. AI is the natural progression of computerization, like wagons followed the invention of the wheel. America is in a race against foreign rivals to develop artificial intelligence to support a host of cutting-edge technologies for communications, food production, power generation, manufacturing, transportation, medicine, and the list goes on. This includes defense industry applications because the world seems to be getting more dangerous by the day. And next on the horizon is quantum computing, which will change everything we think we know about digital computing. Developing these extreme technologies is a race we cannot afford to lose.

Data centers are a crucial part of the emerging artificial intelligence infrastructure. One downside is the amount of electricity they use. Promising new power generation technologies are on the horizon, but for now, the State will have to rely on more traditional sources of power to keep ahead of electricity shortfalls. At some point, the Texas Power Grid may lack sufficient capacity to keep up with the State's expanding population and, as a result, technology companies may have to supply their own power.

America has ramped up oil and gas production to insulate us from being held hostage by foreign producers, including OPEC. Our vital energy production must include clean electrical power generation using natural gas. Thankfully, for their large-scale development, Sandow Lakes Ranch is bringing their own power, with plans to build a natural gas power plant utilizing the latest clean energy technology from Siemens, a leading German

Company. The power generated from their plant will be added to the Texas grid, benefiting the entire state. Sandow Lakes will draw electricity from the grid as needed, but at least they're contributing far more than they consume. Rather than relying solely on an already strained system, they're bringing added capacity that supports not only their project, but Texans across the state.

Now to the point of all this, and how the 89th Texas Legislature took action on one front to protect national security. For decades, China has infiltrated our institutions of higher learning and research facilities to steal our hard-earned cutting-edge technologies. Recently, a Chinese spy working at universities in Texas and Michigan was arrested for smuggling a crop-killing plant fungus into America. This fungus could have had devastating consequences if unleashed on our grain crops. There are reports that some imported Chinese technologies may intentionally allow penetration by hackers. And now we find out from our intelligence agencies that China was attempting to influence the last election by producing fake American identification cards. Over the past year, unidentified drones have penetrated our airspace, mostly on the Eastern Seaboard and suspected high-altitude Chinese spy balloons have been shot down. Recently, China attempted to gain control over the Panama Canal, but America intervened. Instead of looking like just a rival, China is looking more like an enemy. China's aim is to replace the U.S. dollar with the Chinese yen as the gold standard for the worldwide economy.

Adversarial countries, especially China, have been buying land in America, near our military bases. Some Texas lawmakers saw this as a threat, recognizing the potential for these sites to be used for nefarious infrastructure to steal our cutting-edge technologies, smuggle dangerous biologics, launch spy drones, intercept national security information, and commit sabotage and espionage.

Two years ago, Senator Lois Kolkhorst introduced legislation that would prohibit adversarial countries from buying land in Texas. Incredibly, her bill faced stiff opposition and failed. Undaunted, Senator Kolkhorst joined by Representative Stan Gerdes and other lawmakers, refiled the bill this year in the 89th legislature.

During a House floor presentation, the opposition used lengthy tactical delays and points of order in an attempt to kill the bill. Thankfully, common sense prevailed and the foreign adversary land bill passed and has now been signed into law by the Governor. This threat has become so serious that Congress is now considering federal legislation. Incidentally, Arizona recently passed similar legislation but stunningly, it was vetoed by their Governor.

Power generation, development of natural resources, and new investment strategies, can revitalize America's domestic manufacturing and bolster our economic security. A strong

economy, coupled with a first-class educational system, and the strongest military in the world, can keep America on top, but we must stay informed and support our lawmakers when they act to protect our national interests.

National Security starts with Community Security, so ultimately, it comes down to the private sector and local, state, and federal governments working together. Heaven knows we have so many lost souls in this country who don't have a patriotic bone in their bodies, but true patriots in Texas and the nation will always step forward to protect these United States of America. That's the way I see "the big picture".