



SICK OF IT ALL

Readers find plenty about the health care debate that raises their blood pressures

Has universal health care been the goal of some Democrats all along?

I WATCHED C-SPAN this morning and an interesting discussion on the health care debate. Much of the discussion was about Medicaid and the changes that are being proposed to it.

I came away with an interesting take. I don't think we have a Medicaid problem; I believe we have a poverty problem. In order to qualify for Medicaid, you have to be in some sort of a poverty condition.

The panelists indicated that there are 73 million people in the United States covered by Medicaid. That is nearly 25 percent of the population of our country. New Mexico, at last report, had (nearly half) of the population covered by Medicaid.

The war on poverty began during the Johnson administration over 50 years ago. In that time, nearly \$25 trillion has been spent to win the war. It has not gotten better; it has only gotten worse.

Now some Democrats are proposing that we can turn to universal health care to cover all. I believe that this was their goal all along. They believe that they can handle our health care issues better than we ourselves can. We must ask ourselves are these the people we want to run our health care in the country.

STEVE STILLMAN
Albuquerque

Senate's Better Care Reconciliation Act chooses tax cuts over health care

I RECENTLY EXPRESSED my concern to our senators in Washington about the Senate Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA). They agreed with my general concerns about losing my health care and shared more of their own concerns for New Mexicans.

According to recent estimates from Sen. Tom Udall's office, nearly 300,000 New Mexicans would be in jeopardy of losing health care coverage through Medicaid expansion or the individual market. The majority would be children, the disabled and the elderly.

The BCRA shifts funding from the federal government to states. In addition, Udall's office estimates 49,513 jobs, largely created by the health care expansion, would be lost in New Mexico by 2022. If you think it's hard to get care now, imagine what it will be like if this bill passes. With the loss of so many jobs, the BCRA would destabilize the marketplace adversely, affecting one in six Americans by 2020. Families will see the cost of maternity care rise by thousands of dollars, putting it out of reach for millions of people.

If you think only the poor will be affected, think again. The Kaiser Family Foundation projects a 59 percent increase in premiums for New Mexico. This is a killer bill, and we need to let all (lawmakers) everywhere know we don't want to see our loved ones die for tax cuts to corporations and the very wealthy.

If you wonder why Republicans would do this, read the article in the June 26 Albuquerque Journal about Republican donors refusing to give money to Republican candidates until the ACA is repealed and a tax-reform bill with large cuts for corporations and the wealthy are done.

Meanwhile, be vigilant about their amendments over the holiday.

SANDRA L. DUCKERT
Corrales

Why repeal or replace Obamacare when it's about to implode soon?

WE ALL KNOW by now that the Democrats are never going to vote to get rid of President Obama's "signature" piece of legislation, whether or not the replacement is better or worse! And, we know that not one Republican voted for his plan.

But, the first question we should be asking is this: If this Obamacare plan is so wonderful, why did the Congress immediately vote to exempt themselves and their staff from having to use it? The answer is pretty clear — they liked it for themselves else but not for them!

Virtually nothing that Obama promised in his plan was true. Premiums did not go down, you could not keep your doctor or your plan. And, to subsidize premiums for millions of people through Medicaid, he became the first president in history to actually reduce money going into the Medicare Fund so he could move over \$550 billion to Medicaid.

The truth about Obamacare is that the premiums have gone up every year and many insurance companies have dropped out, leaving people few choices. And, deductibles are so high in most plans that many people never get any

benefit from the plan at all. Next year, many states might not even have one company left.

So, the Republicans should just drop their plan and simply allow Obamacare to implode on itself — it's only a matter of time for that to happen! Then we'll see if the Democrats are willing to talk about a replacement.

DAN O'CONNOR
Albuquerque

GOP, spend money on health care, not islands in the South China Sea

I HAVE MANY questions about this health care issue that I have not seen brought up. What is it about Republicans' greed that refuses to join the rest of the civilized world in providing health care for their people? Do they not have enough first, second, third mansions or yachts to buy? Luxury automobiles and fancy clothes and jewelry?

Rumor is that they now need to buy islands on which to escape when the whole world economy collapses. And islands don't come cheap. Can the estimated \$7 million that each of the 400 richest families loot each year by the Senate's version of the bill denying 22 million — not the original 23 million projected by the House — actually buy an island? Maybe in China where they are building up islands in the South China Sea. But who would want to live there? I just don't get it. Maybe they just have a money addiction and they need to get rehab for their insatiable greed.

But how does one sleep at night when one is so rich and yet feels they do not have enough money without looting the little the poor have? Well nothing happened to them when they looted the middle class in 2008 so I now understand why it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. The rich have lost whatever social conscience they may have ever had. And who am I to judge them? It just boggles the mind, and all I can think is *obscene, obscene, obscene!*

KATHY SULLIVAN
Albuquerque

Squabble over health care mostly about passing tax cuts for the rich

THE GREAT SENATE health care bill show is on and we have seen the show before. Where? In the House of Representatives, of course. We know the Democrats are not voting for the bill, so much attention is given to those Republicans who are on the fence. One group proclaiming the bill doesn't go far enough, the other group complaining that it goes too far. How will (Senate Majority Leader) Mitch McConnell bring in those complainers and proclaimers and get the bill passed?

The drama is underwhelming. The answer is really simple. (House Speaker Paul) Ryan showed the way when he gave each side a little tweak, enough so they could say to constituents: "Hey! I did what I could to make the legislation what you wanted and changes were made to make it just right."

The whole process is being presented as a contest between giants valiantly contesting the various aspects of the health care for America, rather than as what it is: A squabble among politicians trying to get a huge tax cut for the wealthy passed under the radar.

WILLIAM BRAMLETT
Las Cruces

Should your tax money be spent to promote ideas you don't agree with?

ON SUNDAY I watched the political shows on TV and I finally understand the problem in Washington. One senator said the 27-year-old man doesn't want to pay for health insurance that covers maternity costs. This is the same argument that the same man could use when he says he is against his tax money being spent on public schools. And it is the same argument that the guy who walks our sidewalks in a loincloth espouses for paying no taxes. And the person who owns an inflammable house who doesn't want to pay for a fire department.

Our current government has cancelled aid to foreign countries, especially reproductive care, with the same argument — that they should pay for their own people. Now that I understand their position on things, it makes sense to let the chips fly where they land. We will see if we have a righteous country or have new freedom to die.

You know it floods every year in the Southeast, maybe we shouldn't send federal money to clean it up? I hope these issues will be made clear next year when Americans go to the polls!

MICHELE BUCHANAN
Albuquerque

TALK OF THE TOWN



Vote yes on sick-leave issue

RECENTLY AN op-ed (June 22) questioned the intent of the sick-leave measure that will be voted on by Albuquerque voters in October. Once again attempts to protect employees from arbitrary actions of employers and respecting the economic security desired by their employees is derided.

Metro area businesses employ a significant number of workers, many of whom barely make minimum wage. They include the working poor who not only experience the stresses of finding jobs but earning enough to pay rent for safe affordable housing and provide for their families. A number of these workers are female heads of household. They go to work ill while they risk loss of jobs when their children are ill and miss school or the parent must schedule doctor appointments or, perhaps, must renew applications for SNAP. ...

This ballot question is *not* an attempt to control businesses; rather, it is an affirmation of the worth and dignity of these workers and an indication of the respect for their needs. Such regulations on businesses are not punitive — they are statements of the respect and value this community places on each person. They protect the working single mother whose 3-year-old child has to be taken to the doctor before returning to her preschool, who has no support system and who does not want to return to work the next day and be told she is fired because she had to leave work early the prior day. Is this the "discipline," aka retaliation, that would no longer be possible? Then my vote is Yes. ...

ANGELA MERKERT
Albuquerque

Kadhim has earned asylum

I AM SECOND-generation Panamanian on my father's side and only a few generations of German and Russian immigrants on my mother's side.

I am a United States Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam 1968. I thought the reasons for military duty was to protect our Constitution and our values, with open arms to protect those fleeing wars and oppression with a well-founded fear for their lives.

How shameful that our Department of Homeland Security would target Muslims and Middle East refugees. It appears to be a form of retaliation for failing to win in the courts enforcement of President Trump's Muslim ban. So rather than abandoning a failed and unpopular ban that had all the markings as a racist and xenophobic policy, they sic Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on a(n) ... Iraqi father of four who is married to an American-born U.S. citizen.

Kadhim Mohammed was tortured before ever coming to the United States, he has lived in the U.S. for 26 years and trained our soldiers headed to Iraq while working for a military base in San Diego. Because of his work with our military, he would be targeted for assassination if deported back to Iraq.

Were we not told we went to war with Iraq to liberate the Iraqis from just such practices of discrimination, torture and oppression, from a ruthless and heartless dictator? What kind of monsters have we become when we are willing to deport such a man as Kadhim to his certain death, leaving his wife a widow and his children fatherless?

Kadhim should be granted asylum, not deportation, citizenship for the years he has lived in the U.S. and for the services he has provided to our military.

Let us not become the monsters we profess to battle.

DANIEL SHEA
Board of Directors, Veterans For Peace
Portland, Ore.

PED needs more than a clone

JUST READ A massive Journal editorial on how spending three years in the Teach for America program makes the new replacement for (former Education Secretary) Skandera "just one of the guys."

Read how being yet another import from a state sharing few, if any, demographic or economic similarities with New Mexico uniquely qualifies him to lead the Public Education Department. Read about how six years of stellar leadership by the former secretary-designate and then secretary has benefitted students and families across the state, even though we rank last in almost every meaningful category.

At first I thought it was a clever piece of fictional ironic writing, but then I realized the editorial was attempting to be serious. We have been driven to the bottom and rated as poorly as a state's education system can be for a reason. Six years of reform has actually been six years of destruction. The baton has been passed to a clone. Teachers will just have to hang onto the sinking ship until a regime change is realized in 2018.

DEL HANSEN
Las Cruces

Online letters

Submit letters to the editor at
abqjournal.com/letters/new