

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Fixing the system

By Kathleen Sebelius
Kansas Governor

Our health care system in Kansas is broken. The rising cost of care has become an increased burden for businesses and families and for too many an insurmountable obstacle to receiving much needed health services.

There is no easy fix to this problem. The only solution is comprehensive health care reform – from the way we administer health services to the choices we make in our own lives.

The Kansas Health Policy Authority, after visiting communities across the state, has submitted an aggressive plan to repair this ailing system. To pay for the health reform proposals, this plan includes a fifty-cent increase in tobacco taxes. Some view this as a political liability – a tax increase in an election year.

However, Kansans overwhelmingly support an increase in tobacco taxes if it provides health care to more children – and this plan does that. The tobacco tax will open the doors of health care to 20,000 Kansas children.

To think that Kansans view a tobacco tax the same way they view income or property taxes, greatly underestimates the people of our state.

Tobacco related diseases are the number one preventable cause of death in Kansas, killing over 4,000 Kansas each year and generating nearly \$930 million in health care costs.

Increasing the cost of tobacco products reduces the number of smokers and keeps teenagers from starting to smoke in the first place. Saving lives, enabling more children to receive health insurance, and paying for the comprehensive health reform Kansas needs are three great reasons to increase this tax.

For every member of the Kansas House of Representatives and the Kansas Senate, 2008 is an election year. There has been talk from some from legislators who say they will not pass a tax increase in an election year. Most Kansans and I hope that is not the case. The Kansas Legislature has a moral obligation to pass the health reform package in its entirety, including the tobacco tax as a funding source. It's what Kansans want; it's what our children deserve.

Where to write, call

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- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
- U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
- State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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Not just another Sunday

If you dig deep and look close enough, you'll still find some evidence of football related to Sunday's Super Bowl.

New England is trying to cap an undefeated season. New York does not need home field advantage. Tom Brady's ankle may be dinged up. Or is it? Eli Manning stole the attention from his quarterback brother Peyton.

Yes, there's much to do about football, but like in year's past, the non-football related things in the Super Bowl are still mentioned, and probably too much.

I'm surprised the FOX network didn't quickly increase the price for commercials once New England and New York were determined the Super Bowl teams. Major media outlets, especially television, desire anything East Coast-based because of the potential numbers of viewers. Imagine the number of people watching the game Sunday from metro-New York City to metro-Boston.

More people watching means TV can increase the intensity to businesses, all under the sales pitch. "Imagine the number of people who won't blink their eyes for more than three hours because of this!"

Let me explain my point. Years ago, when St. Louis played Tennessee in the Super Bowl, one unnamed television executive said he was worried no one would watch because of the relatively low population, and TV ratings, between St. Louis and Nashville. Turned out that was the best Super Bowl game of all. According to the Associated Press, that Super Bowl was the fifth-most watched TV event in history at that time. (Insert raspberry here.)

Of course, TV executives need the viewers



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

to justify all the hoopla and astronomical price for 30-second commercial spots. The price this year is \$2.7 million, up \$100,000 from a year ago. (The recession shows!) Even in our presidential election year, FOX is not allowing campaign ads. Why not benefit from the at least \$200 million needed to run a campaign?

I think the famous Super Bowl commercials are wearing out. Somebody does something stupid for a Bud Light. More men will be made the punch line of embarrassing jokes or situations. Just as worn-out songs from 10, 20, or maybe even last year, will be used.

Although Anheuser-Busch (the makers of Bud Light) may be predictable when it comes to their Super Bowl commercials, I do think they lead the way with at least attempting to be creative with advertising. They can easily afford the commercials knowing at least 2.7 million Bud Lights are guzzled during each play of the Super Bowl.

About 20 years ago, they introduced the Bud Bowl, a series of commercials about animated beer bottles playing football with all the details of an actual football game. At about the start of the decade, Anheuser-Busch started its "Real Men of Genius" radio ads — a hilarious (and flirting with offensive) take on some everyday

people most all of us can relate to.

I would have thought the NFL would have learned from the ridiculous Janet Jackson "wardrobe malfunction" from 2004 and scrapped the halftime show altogether. Other than Jackson, we've seen Aerosmith, Paul McCartney, Prince and the Rolling Stones over the years.

Reminds me of the commercials - just throw money at it and use an old song. What's happened to new, young talent? Is there any?

I completely understand the NFL's attempt to make as much of the Super Bowl as they can. But why get away from its foundation of football? It's just like MTV. Ten years ago you could actually watch a music video. Now, you have to wait for one to show up after all the reality-shows are over.

The same thing is happening to football. Television is determining the framework of the game. Teams make megabucks from the network.

The NFL Network is slowly airing more games even though they are still battling with cable companies. The NFL's contract with network television puts fans in positions they really shouldn't be in — forced to watch regional teams; can't watch exciting last seconds of other games live; and TV adds to the polished gambling ring called fantasy football by continually running stats of players along the bottom of the screen during games.

"2.7 million bottles of beer on the wall, 2.7 million bottles of beer, take one down, pass it around, 2,699,999 bottles of beer on the wall...."

—John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press

Your turn

Check out the candidates

John W. Powell
Atwood, Kan

The time for action is now. Kansas voters have the opportunity on Feb. 5 to vote in the Democrat and Republican caucuses in our state. I encourage Kansans to find out where the candidates stand on two critical issues — affordable health care and lifetime financial

security.

Find out whether, if elected, they are willing to work across party lines to come up with bipartisan solutions to ensure that all American have affordable, quality health care and secure financial future.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) through a movement called "Divide We Fail," is demanding solutions from

presidential candidates, members of Congress and business and civic leaders.

All of our voices are needed to be raised to ensure that all Americans have affordable health care and can afford to retire when the time comes.

Check out how the candidates stand by going to www.aarp.org/issues/dividedwefail and read "In Their Own Words."

Democrats are needed

Tim Peterson
Monument

All Democrats in the state Senate District 40 (northwest Kansas) can help select the next Democratic nominee for the President of the United States. On Tuesday, Feb. 5, 2008, all registered Democrats can attend a caucus at the NWK Educational Service Center, 703 W 2nd in Oakley, Kan., to express their prefer-

ence.

Doors will open for registration at 6 p.m. and the caucus will begin at 7 p.m. In order to participate in the process, you must be a registered Democrat (you can register or change your registration status at the door) and eligible to vote by Nov. 4, 2008.

Once inside the caucus, voters will break into groups supporting each candidate. After groups are formed, members of any non-viable

candidate groups (those that are comprised of less than 15 percent of the total attendees) are given the opportunity to switch to viable candidate groups.

After this final realignment, the number of delegates for each candidate is determined. The groups then elect delegates to represent their candidate at the First Congressional District Convention to be held Saturday, April 12, in Hays.

About those letters . . .

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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