Volume 120, Number 146 Friday, September 18, 2009



Free Press Viewpoint

Moving beyond health and money

It is time to move on from health care and the economy. In the past month or so, the United States, especially the government and the media, has almost become a one- or twoissue country in the way it hasn't been since the Cold War and Civil Rights era.

Health care is important. Fixing a system that leaves millions of Americans unable to afford basic medical services is one of the most important things the government should be working on. The economy is important; so is curbing rising unemployment, foreclosure rates and other recession effects that hurt real people.

Three congressional candidates have come through Colby recently, and all three talked about health care and the economy. And why not? We're so focused on the two issues that we'll make them the deciding factor in an election.

But, at the moment, those two issues seem to be the only things we're focusing on. Even the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have often fallen off the front page in light of these two domestic issues. People are dying, Americans are dying, and it's being overshadowed. Have we have gotten so lost in two debates that we have forgotten about the rest? There are more issues out there, and we need to get to them.

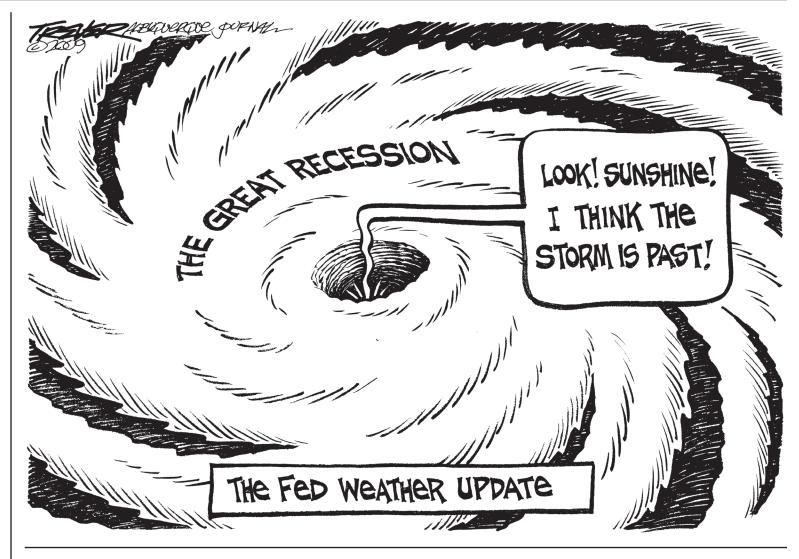
It starts with us, the ordinary people of America. We need to stand up and say, "We've had the debate, everybody knows where everybody else stands. Now come up with fixes for health care and the economy so we can move on."

We need to stop buying into the controversy. We have made these issues - health care especially - into glamorous affairs where even the smallest action made makes the headlines. Anyone who says anything gets their 15 minutes of fame. When the biggest story for three or four days is one backbench congressman's two-word outburst over health care, its time to put the issue to bed.

We can't blame CNN or Fox News for making big deals out of these things. We, the audience, are already there and willing to watch it, even if we say we deplore such things. If we stop watching it, they'll stop running it. If we stop reading it, they'll stop printing it. That's how you change the debate.

Another way you change the debate is to challenge your elected representatives. We need to ask our senators and representatives where they stand on every issue, not just these two. How did Rep. Moran vote on funding for the "community organizing" group Acorn? Where does Sen. Brownback stand on missile defense for Europe? Where do they stand on education, stem cell research, immigration, nuclear proliferation, relations with Cuba and all the other issues that affect us.

Don't forget the candidates. We're coming up to an election year, and already we have a passel of candidates running around the state. Don't let them set the agenda. They will harp on one issue over and over if they think it will win them an election. Challenge them to tell you what they believe and how they would act on these other issues. How else can you really decide if you want them to represent you?



Rhetoric and reality clash in the media

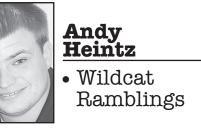
American politics has always been full of double standards. For most of our history, our citizens have generally believed in the idea of American exceptionalism.

There is nothing particularly unusual or inherently wrong about this. Every nation or religion tends to believe that they are free of the problems that hinder other cultures.

But this belief becomes a problem when politicians and media pundits can get away with egregious examples of selective outrage, selective use of religion and selective memories. The cultural managers of our society have created an atmosphere that promotes a wholesale denial of reality.

This is why, when I read letters to the editor bemoaning the state of our country and complaining we have turned away from the visions of our Founding Fathers, I'm never surprised that the authors conveniently forget that those founders denied the vote to over half the American population.

Since exceptionalism has been cleverly ingrained in the psyche of many Americans, the myth of the Founding Fathers is widely accepted, and the complex nature of the actual people who founded our country is forgotten. Anyone brave enough to suggest that African Americans, women and Native Americans have no reason to honor those who denied them the right to vote will be castigated as a politically correct elitist. These character as- keep pushing the bootstrap myth that people in sassinations make sure actual reality doesn't this country get rich strictly by working hard, prevail over the perception that passes for conventional wisdom on Fox News and far-right- for the super wealthy must be ignored while the common good will be impossible. wing radio outlets that claim a monopoly over organizations representing working class and the meaning of American values.



pare it to reality. One way to do this is to look at the groups that are deemed domestic threats to the American way of life.

While the Republican and Democrats bail out the bankers who almost wrecked the global economy and fund immoral private contractors like Halliburton and Blackwater with taxpayer money, Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck and others are trying convince people that the real dangers to our culture are illegal immigrants, mothers on welfare, labor unions, teacher unions, liberals and some corrupt members in a non-profit group called the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) whose supporters are mainly poor, unregistered voters living in inner cities and the homeless. So in this Alice-in-Wonderland version of the world, it's the least powerful members of our society who wield all the political influence in the halls of Washington.

But the fact these men have so many followers should come as no surprise. In order to uncomfortable facts about corporate socialism poor sectors of society must be seen as parasites or elitists trying to bring down a selfreliant nation. In this atmosphere, low-income

people who support policies destined to create a new Gilded Age are praised for their pro-American way of thinking.

American foreign policy is an area where there is a bipartisan consensus to promote the myth of American exceptionalism. We are told our country has always been a beacon of freedom. The elements in our society who tend to think otherwise are labeled anti-American. This is why even liberal politicians no that it would be political suicide to have a serious conversation with the public about some of our past actions in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Latin America. Any effort to connect the dots would be viciously attacked by a combination of powerful groups whose ideological and economic longevity depends on people believing that our country only acts for altruistic reasons.

The unwanted truth that has been deemed unfit for public discourse is that our foreign policy has always been a been a mix of courageous acts of heroism and vicious imperialistic wars that apologists dismiss as good intentions gone wrong or necessary evils to protect freedom. This promotes an atmosphere where denying reality and ignoring past atrocities are considered American values.

George Orwell was right when he said, "Those who control the past control the future. Those who control the present control the past."

Until acknowledging reality becomes politially acceptable, any kind of major reform for

Health care and the economy are important, and finding solutions for our current problems in those areas is also important. But we should not do so at the expense of the other issues facing this country.

It's time to find solutions to those two issues and move on to what's next. We are a country of 307 million people and 3.8 million square miles. Surely we can deal with more than just two problems. - Kevin Bottrell

COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920)

155 W. Fifth St. Colby, Kan. 67701

(785) 462-3963 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby,

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72

The key to understanding American exceptionalism is to listen to rhetoric and then com-

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Laws add to health care expenses

On the surface, it is easy to be seduced by the promises of the left.

They promise free health care for everyone. No pre-conditions for coverage. You can keep your doctor. They assure us that business will prosper because they will not be paying for employee health insurance.

Only one problem. These government promises come at a price we will be unable to pay.

Already, the government has created an anticompetitive health care culture. Why can't you move your health care insurance when you change jobs? Answer - existing law. Why can't you buy health insurance from another state if it is cheaper and better? Answer - existing law. Why do Kansans have to buy substance abuse and mental health riders on their medical insurance policies if they do not want them? Answer - existing law.

Insurance companies have to operate within these constraints, regardless of consumer demand.

With these laws and regulations, the government effectively stifles competition and forces people to buy insurance coverage they don't need or want. This increases insurance rates and decreases the quality of the product.

Leftists would like us to believe that the fault is the insurance companies' and use this as an example of failed capitalism. They then step in and promise more government as the solution, ignoring the fact that government intervention caused the problem in the first place.

National health care will completely remove financial incentives from entrepreneurs and

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Other **Opinions**

Craig Reed Thomas County

slow the discovery of new cures, drugs and procedures. Law will dictate what is paid for and new ideas will be slow to market. Healthcare providers will be punished financially if they do not follow government rules. And most importantly, you will have no other choice for insurance.

If national health care passes, you are no longer a consumer, you are a bureaucrat's statistic that needs to be cost-contained. Ask yourself how frustrating it is to deal with any level of government, and picture that frustration with every health decision.

The free market in the United States has created more innovations in health care than any other country in human history. Capitalism works every time it is tried. So my suggestion – remove government mandates from the health care system and let the industry develop the products that consumers want.

The natural cost-containment mechanism of true competition will lower costs and provide consumer-driven insurance products, something a bureaucratic government could never accomplish.

Choose freedom instead of government monopolies. After all, it's very much American to be free.

Craig Reed is a long time Thomas County resident. He is a graduate of Colby High School and Colby Community College, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Kansas State University. After working as an engineer in Oklahoma and Texas, he returned home in 2001 and now has a farm operation in Thomas, Logan and Scott counties.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley