# Opinion



### **Free Press Viewpoint**

## Despite health 'win,' reform still a puzzle

The smiles and frowns told the story. While the Senate Finance Committee approved advancement of the Baucus Healthcare Reform Plan last week, it wasn't time to break out the champagne.

Far from it.

The 14-9 vote sent the \$829 billion measure to the floor for debate. The smiles came when Republican Sen. Olympia Snow joined the 13 Democrats to move the Baucus plan forward. The frowns, needless to say, came from the nine Republicans who had hoped for a show of unity on their side. Hey, they fell just one vote shy of their goal.

The vote was barely over before the network news crazies called it a bipartisan victory. If one vote determines partisan vs. nonpartisan, so be it, but that small leak in the health-care dike could be easily patched before the flow gets critical.

The measure by Sen. Max Baucus (D-Montana) would affect health insurance for millions of Americans. It would expand insurance to nearly 29 million people who otherwise would not have it by requiring that they purchase a policy, and would offer subsidies to help low- and moderate-income families afford the premiums.

Health-care reform is far from a Rose Garden signature ceremony with President Barack Obama. While the Baucus victory was hailed in some quarters as the starting point, it still must face challenge from another Senate plan and several other plans in the House of Representatives. There is no smooth sailing ahead.

One of the biggest problems is the little we Americans know about healthcare reform as viewed by those who would advance it or stop it in its tracks. We are bombarded with questionable information and we can thank the likes of Fox and MSNBC for much of the confusion. You know how that works: keep them confused and they will keep watching and eventually believing.

Would we vote for the health-care plans currently on the table? Probably not. They always advise voting against something you don't understand. And listening to the political mouths on Capitol Hill it is clear they, likewise, don't understand them either. It almost seems like they are not interested in what is best for 'We the people,' but rather what is best for moving their particular agenda forward.

It's been 50 years (or more) since health care was last reformed. So, what's the big hurry? Well, the big hurry is next year's election, at which all 435 members of the House and a goodly number of senators will be up for re-election. And a lot of what happens on election day 2010 will be tied to the knock-down, drag-out over health-care reform in 2009.

Tom Dreiling

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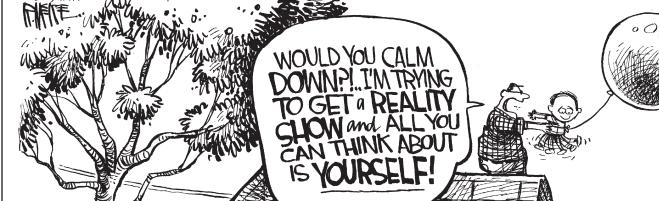
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## Nothing like October fly-fishing

The rise is a little slower, the strike a little softer than just a few weeks ago.

Sometimes, the fish just misses the fly, and you have to cast it back into the hole for an-

It's October. The water is low and clear. And

Instead of fishing at daybreak or dusk, you have to go right after lunch, when the river warms up enough to get the trout going.

Still, they're not moving that fast. It takes even more patience to work a fly in October. But then, with a flash of orange and green, a

nice little brookie takes your lure. Nothing fancy. No dancing on the water or

leaping into the air as in summer. Just a gentle strike, and you let the fish run a hair. Then set the hook. October weather can be spectacular in the mountains. With elk season just a couple of

days away, it can be the best fishing weather of the year. Or sometimes the worst. This time, it's the best. Highs 50 to 60, sun-

ny, not much wind. Perfect for casting a fly on the big river, or

up the side canyons above town. But the big browns on the river will be spent from spawning, their flesh soggy and unappealing. Better to stick to the creeks, where the brook trout dominate.

The brookies are not too big – 10 inches is

#### Steve Haynes

 Along the Sappa

late in the year, pretty hungry. Most rise on the first drift through a hole and at least make a stab at the fly. Some just can't connect. They strike, they nibble, they rise, then they settle down in the

hole and just watch the fly. In the clear water,

you can see them fan their fins to hold station.

Nothing gonna happen here. But the next cast, the next hole: bam!

You can't worry about much when you're casting a fly. You have to pick your spot, then hit it. If the fish is going to strike, usually it happens right ... about ... now. A hungry trout won't wait to see if somebody else is going to eat its supper.

Then it's a matter of timing. Set the hook too soon, the fish will get off. Worse yet, you'll nick its mouth and it'll go hide. If you're lucky, you can make another pass and the trout will come back for another try.

You have to watch the fly, be ready to react. When you get the timing down, you catch

the trout for another day.

There's time to admire the deep blue fall sky, the rocks and the trees on the canyon rim high above. The old mines clinging to the cliffs, where miners rode ore buckets to work at the start of a shift and back down at the end of the day.

Time to admire the day, but you have to

watch your footing and keep your balance. In cold water, you don't want to fall. There's a lot to think about, but no time for worry. The cares of the world just seem to fade away. You don't even have to be catching fish.

Just working the river on a day like this is like Too soon, the sun starts to slip behind the

rim. It may be only 3:30, but the shadows come early at the bottom of the canyon. The water will cool off, and the fish will stop biting. Besides, you can't see much in the shad-

ows. It's more guesswork than aim. Time to go home with a few nice ones for dinner. Out in the valley, there's plenty of time to sit in the sun and admire the day some more. And then to clean the fish.

This is the way to live. Anyone who doesn't fish has too much stress

in his, or her, life. Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The

Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that about tops – but they're feisty and even this some fish. Gently remove the hook. Release is, he like to ride and watch trains.

### Missing piece of the health care problem

The cost of health insurance not only distributes the cost of medical care across the population, but it also spreads the cost of medical ignorance.

Compared to the populations of other developed nations, Americans are — pardon the phrase — "science stupid." We teach from one-half to one-third the amount of science taught in other developed countries. And we pay a high price for it:

- Unfounded fear of vaccination.
- Seeing a doctor for unnecessary medical
- Not reporting to physicians when there are serious symptoms.

And why are we avoiding eating pork, since

we can't get "swine" flu from it? ... and on and

German citizens study enough about their body in high school to self-refer themselves to a specialist without going through a primarycare physician. But only a few Americans, educated in biology or medical-related fields, can speak knowledgeably and in depth with their physicians.

Our per capita health-care costs (medical plus insurance) are roughly \$6,000 per year. Other developed countries pay \$4,000, and a dozen of them have better and universal care.

While the cost of our medical ignorance is difficult to quantify, it contributes to a major portion of this difference — a difference equal to a Troubled Asset Relief Program bailout each and every year!

Physicians cannot make up for our failure to know how our bodies work in adequate detail. The limited time doctors have to inspect symptoms, run tests and diagnose leaves no time for what should have been a full year of high school study of human anatomy, physiology, and microbiology.



#### John Richard Schrock

 Education Frontlines

"Preventive medicine" requires citizens who know enough to make intelligent decisions beforehand, a far deeper understanding that currently found in our general population.

To make things worse, we sit on juries and make uneducated judgments that drive up medical insurance and drive the medical community to overtest.

Without laboratory coursework that teaches students scientific "significance" and helps them recognize "maloccurrence" in nature, there will be no end to the escalation in "malpractice" awards.

Efforts to cap malpractice awards try to cap the effects of ignorance. We should be working to wipe out that ignorance.

Restoring anatomy and physiology education in high school will also increase our pipeline of future physicians and health care

We need more students to go into medicine, and that interest is usually grown in high school. And then we need to pay their tuition in medical school. When a doctor no longer has to recover \$200,000 in medical school costs, that cuts health care costs as well.

I am not talking shallow "medical literacy," the superficial set of nutrition and sex ed do's-and-don'ts sometimes preached in health classes. Other developed countries know that their citizens need to know enough about their own "owner's manual" to respond immediate-

ly and directly to chronic health conditions, as well as acute situations as they arise.

That means well-trained biology teachers and a biology curriculum that equips every future citizen to be a knowledgeable patient.

But human anatomy and physiology, as well as microbiology, were pulled from the secondary level in the most recent Kansas Science Education Standards.

They are absent from high school science standards in half of our states and from the high school portion of the National Science Education Standards.

With policy dominated by Schools of Education, we have been under a less-science-notmore philosophy for 20 years, unable to expand the science curriculum.

Nearly half of biology teachers across the United States no longer take human anatomy and physiology courses in their college curriculum, and that includes biology teachers trained at KU and K-State. And you can't teach what you don't know.

21st Century futurists tout the error-laden Internet, but ignorant patients lack the knowledge to ask questions in detail, or if they somehow get an authoritative answer, to know what that answer means.

Without a return to high school coursework in human anatomy, physiology, and microbiology for all students, it is unlikely that any reform can substantially reduce the cost of U.S. health care. We all pay for both our shared medical risks, and our shared medical igno-

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

#### Mallard **Fillmore**

Bruce Tinsley



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