



Other Viewpoints

Cutting Medicaid won't cut costs for state, taxpayers

As Kansas legislators attempt to find ways to close a nearly \$400 million budget gap for the upcoming fiscal year, one place that has been eyeballed has been Medicaid, which serves welfare clients and others on public assistance.

The initial proposal from Gov. Mark Parkinson was to cut Medicaid in order to save \$22 million, but the math simply does not add up.

The money for Medicaid — a shared federal and state program — is structured so that the state pays only 30 cents of each dollar spent while the federal government pays the other 70 cents.

Tom Bell, president of the Kansas Hospital Association, says health-care providers will have to give up \$73 million if the state proceeds with these cuts to Medicaid.

If that math works out, the state would give up \$51 million in federal money to save \$22 million. That is the problem.

Not to mention the fact that if Medicaid cuts are carried over into fiscal year 2011, the proposed payment reduction will give the state a savings of \$77 million while leaving \$140 million in federal money on the table.

The problem we see is that when there are talks about cutting Medicaid, it generally leads to a cut in services. That means over 300,000 low-income Kansans will have their health care services access threatened.

That simply does not fly.

Not to mention the fact that if health care providers are forced to trim services because of a reduction in Medicaid payments, the effect is far wider.

This could also lead to further job cuts in the health-care industry, as well as a hold on providers purchasing new, life-saving equipment and even just basic replacements.

An attempt to rob Peter to pay Paul is just not the answer.

There has to be a better way, because leaving low-income Kansans without critical health care is, quite simply, unacceptable.

— *The Pittsburg Morning Sun, via The Associated Press*

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

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. Room 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

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155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

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Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell @ nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

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Richard Westfahl - General Manager
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Thanks for support; we're looking better

Readers have been gracious about the mess here at the *Colby Free Press* since our little flood incident.

A lot of people have said comforting things when they finally find us, packed together in the back room. Others of you have asked how we're doing when we run into them around town.

We appreciate the concern, believe me. It is a mess up there, and for a week or so, the building smelled like wet dirt and mildew. But no matter how bad it looks, things are getting better every day.

Tuesday, with a lot of effort from Dan Geshwender and our staff, who moved the furniture (except me; I had to go to Norton, and took some ribbing for it), the old carpet left. Wednesday, Dan got all the bad sheet rock replaced in the conference room and he painted on Friday.

We planned to be choosing a heating contractor Friday, and carpet vendors were here all day measuring the floors. The humidity is dropping every day. There's still a lot of work to do, but we can see the day coming soon when we'll be back in the front room and can move the files back into the morgue (our name for the back room).

In the last several weeks, the city put the water main back together and fixed the street.



Steve Haynes

• Letter From the Publisher

It really was quite a job. If you've heard the snide comments about public works crews and ever wondered what those guys do to earn their keep, you should have been down here watching them struggle with those pipes for hours, in waist-deep water and sometimes a soaking spray and 10-degree temperatures.

They have our respect, I can say that.

Our biggest problem is we still can't use the front office, so we're all crammed together in the back. It gets noisy with all of us back there. Sometimes it's hard to think. Temps can flare, yet collectively, we all find it hard to be quiet. We're a vocal bunch.

I think everyone will be glad to spread out again and have their own territory. We'll all appreciate the office more, too.

And with new carpet and some paint, it'll actually look better than ever. In fact, the news staff — whose space escaped the flood, but who have had to put up with everyone else all

month — has been talking about painting their room. Everyone is kind of excited about the "new" office, though we'll still have plenty of things we could fix or paint.

Our landlords, Travis and Sara Oliver, have been great. Sara keeps saying how sorry she is we had to go through this, like it was some fault of hers. I just look at it as one of those things, like the weather, that you can't control and just have to suffer through. And an opportunity to make things better.

It's either that, or cry, right?

Through it all, I've been proud of our staff, who've done what needed to be done and then some throughout the whole mess.

Mess, yes, it has been, but we can see a better day from here. Not too far off now.

Maybe we'll throw a party when we get it all back together, but for now, we still have to draw up plans for that slumping wall in the basement, the one that's holding up that pile of mud, and we're not really sure what's behind it.

And sweep the front room for the carpet layers.

Steve Haynes is publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

Farmers must look to industry's future

If today's crop of young farmers and ranchers plan to play a part in the future of agriculture, they must position themselves where this industry will be — not where it is.

It is especially important for those in agriculture to focus on the future rather than the past. Sometimes, farmers and ranchers tend to look wistfully to yesterday and that's not reality. Those in the industry must look at their industry and say, "This is what agriculture will look like."

There are four key considerations young farm and ranch couples must take to heart and mind if they are to reach their full potential in the agricultural industry. These include: be willing to change; be part of something bigger than yourself; accept the future; and give up your own independence.

Addressing change is something young farmers and ranchers are familiar with. They have no trouble recognizing change — it's doing something about it that is so difficult.

Everyone tends to give change a chance but when difficulty pops up all of us tend to revert back to our old ways of doing things. To change we must develop a new process of thinking and implementing change.

Secondly, we as humans, especially young farmers and ranchers must strive toward something greater than self-actualization to fulfill our own unique potential.

This means providing ourselves with something bigger than we are. To accomplish any-



John Schlageck

• Insights
Kansas Farm Bureau

thing of greatness, we must work with others.

Agriculture is not just about the local community, the family or the farm and ranch operation. It is not just about growing corn, wheat or raising livestock. Producers must see themselves as part of the food industry which remains the most critical industry in the world.

As far as accepting the future, some people will continue to dig in their heels and think, "That may be what the future is like, but I want no part of it."

What alternative is there?

We can't recreate the world in the image we want. Instead, we must identify the world as it's going to be. In agriculture we must focus on the consumers of our products and not make this an issue about what we're doing on the family farm. It's not about us, it's about the customers we serve.

If farmers and ranchers are just trying to survive, they will fail. If agricultural producers strive to serve, they will succeed.

The fourth block on which to build a future in agriculture includes giving up indepen-

dence. Americans revere their independence. The United States was born out of independence.

However, unless farmers and ranchers move to interdependence they will not survive.

In today's world no one is an island. We all must work together.

We can't be focused on a single issue. We must look at the bigger picture and understand that we're all in this together. We're in the food industry and it's bigger than any of us.

Those who remain independent continue to work on the principal of rewards and punishments. That's the same system animals toil under and if humans continue down that path, they are destined to fail.

A farmer and rancher cannot remain independent and farm in the future. Producers must be willing to give themselves to something bigger for a common purpose and impact the world with the help of others.

While these four building blocks may sound simple, implementing them is extremely difficult. Many will fail and start over. Some will not make it. For others it will remain a life-long commitment. The important thing is to begin.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area

should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

