



Free Press Viewpoint

Jobs bill offers mixed optimism

Even though it's less than a day old, the \$18 billion jobs bill just signed by President Barack Obama has been swept under the rug by the elephant in the room, the health care bill. But the jobs bill deserves its day in the sun, if only because it shows a ray of bipartisanship in a sky clouded with divisive rhetoric.

The bill, officially called the Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act, does a few different things. First, it says that companies don't have to pay Social Security payroll taxes for the rest of 2010 on any employee who had been unemployed for 60 days or more. It also includes a \$1,000 tax credit (or 6.2 percent their wages, whichever is less) for each of these workers who stay with a company for one year. It extends a tax break on equipment purchases and expands a program to help state, city and county governments get funding for infrastructure.

First, let's get one things straight, although this bill is often referred to as "the jobs bill," by itself it actually creates no jobs. It's one of the most enduring myths of politics

Presidents and legislatures don't create jobs the way we think they do. They don't wave a magic wand and suddenly 10 million more people have jobs in the private sector. The only way government directly creates jobs is by expanding government agencies or hiring more staffers for elected officials, two things that meet with intense opposition. In fact, the administration created 750,000 new jobs this year for the census, but those are only temporary.

When a politician promises he or she will create jobs, what they mean is they will help create a favorable atmosphere for businesses to hire workers. That's what this bill does. It doesn't guarantee that your cousin Phil who got laid off from the meat packing plant will go back to work, but it might help that plant to hire him back if he's been out of work for two months.

But let's see if this bill will actually work. Everyone likes tax breaks, but are they enough? Social Security taxes account for about 6 percent of an employee's wages. For someone making \$400 a week, that's \$25 a week or about \$900 for the rest of the year that the employer doesn't have to pay into Social Security. That's not bad once you add it up, especially with the extra \$1,000 if they make it to a year, but remember it goes away next year. This is also only applicable to payroll taxes. Employees still have to pay their share.

The good thing is that any size company can take advantage of this for unlimited numbers of workers.

The break for equipment purchases will benefit small businesses. They can write off as much as \$250,000 in capital expenditures, which could encourage small business to put the money they were going to have to pay on expenditure taxes toward hiring new employees. Of course, this expires at the end of the year too. It phases out if a business spends more than \$800,000 per year on equipment.

This is not a perfect bill by any means, but it is likely to encourage some hiring. The president got it right Thursday morning when he said this bill is not enough. It will not get jobs for every unemployed American, but let's be realistic, no legislation will do that. He proposed a much larger job stimulus in January, but that was gradually pared down by Congress. Congress doesn't want to debate sweeping changes right now, they don't want another health care fight when that one isn't done yet, but smaller measures like this one can slip past the gridlock and hopefully do some good. — *Kevin Bottrell*

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WHY STOP AT HEALTH CARE?



Check the definition you use for freedom

Conformity is a trap that keeps human beings from reaching their true potential.

While the majority of us, including yours truly, will always be somewhat influenced by prevailing norms and behavior codes in our culture, this shouldn't blind us to alternative thinking. And the self-proclaimed cultural managers of our society should encourage new ways of thinking that challenge the status quo.

There is nothing healthy about championing conformist logic. If the standard way of thinking is working to the benefit of society as a whole, people will most likely adhere to it. But if the path we are on is clearly not working, there is no reason not to consider ideas that deviate from the norm.

Today, words like freedom, terrorism, anti-Americanism, patriotism, socialism and family values have been defined in a way that aligns with the material and ideological interests of those who benefit from the current system. While the meaning of these words in reality could vary from person to person, many of today's politicians and media pundits are determined to monopolize their definition out of self-interest.

For example, the overwhelming majority of the people in the media would be unwilling to label past atrocities committed by the CIA and their allies as terrorism. But the people who resided in CIA-targeted countries like Haiti, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala may think differently. And they would have legitimate reasons to think this way.



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

Past actions such as the CIA bombings of Guatemala in 1954 and Indonesia in 1958 coupled with support for the brutal Salvadoran Army, Battalion 316 (a secret Honduran Army intelligence unit), the right-wing paramilitary group known as the Front for the Advancement and Progress in Haiti and its leader Emmanuel Constant, certain members of the Nicaraguan Contras and Iran/Contra ally Luis Posada Cariles (identified by the FBI and the CIA as the mastermind of the bombing of Cuban Airflight 855 in 1976) could legitimately be considered direct acts of terrorism or direct sponsorship of terrorism.

I don't think there is any harm in carefully scrutinizing whether past American actions failed the standards we hold other nations to. Journalists rarely tread these waters because they live in fear of being labeled a liberal or even worse, a radical.

The word "freedom" is one people on both sides of the political spectrum attempt define to strengthen their own agendas. Politicians and media pundits love to preach about freedom, but often act like only one type of freedom is important. In the current health care debate there is a lot of talk about freedom. But

the type of freedom being preached about depends on the beliefs of the person doing the preaching.

When you cut through all the self-righteous talk by political figures, you figure out that this debate revolves around what type of freedom individuals in this country value. Since sickness hurts a person's freedom to pursue the life of their choice, is this type of freedom more important than another person's freedom not to be interfered with? A person's views on health care reform is most likely shaped by which of these freedoms he or she values more.

Unfortunately, many on both sides of this debate solely stress the importance of the type of freedom they value, while acting like the other – suppressed – freedom doesn't exist.

The prevailing culture in politics is perfectly captured by the famous song, "For What Its Worth," written by the band Buffalo Springfield in the late 1960s.

In the song the band sings:

"What a field-day for the heat, / A thousand people in the street, / Singing songs and carrying signs, / Mostly say, hurray for my side."

The inflexibility of today's politicians, combined with the media and political establishments' hostility to new ideas, is stifling our country's ability to create a culture where everyone is free to hear all sides of an argument.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Departing doctor worries patient

To the Editor:

I suddenly realized this morning that I had a serious problem. If I got sick, I had no doctor to admit me in the hospital, renew my prescription, give me my yearly checkup, etc.

I'm curious that a doctor can just close his business and walk out of town with no concern for his many patients. I had no idea on March 5 that there was a problem until I read an article in the Atwood paper that they were wanting Dr. Slavens to come there. I sent the attached fax to Doc's on Call and have had no answer:

"Dear Andy and Dr. Slavens,

"I've been hearing gossip of your closing Doc's on Call. I don't may much attention to gossip but I get the Atwood paper and read the article in yesterday's paper. I would like to know what's happening.

"If you are staying, Andy, I definitely wish to stay with you. But if not I would like to be able to change while I can do it on my own.



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

You have taken such great care of me the last two years I've gotten spoiled. My prescription to Walgreens come up next month. Anxious to hear if you are leaving. I wish you and your families the best, and can you refer me to someone?"

I'm curious as to where our records are, what are my options for another doctor and where I can get some answers. This is a very serious situation, the first time in 82 years I've had this

concern. Where do I start?

Elsie Bryan, Colby

Editors note: According to Jane Slavens, a letter has been sent to Doc's on Call patients detailing the situation. Patients need to come to the clinic and request their medical records, where they will get a computer disk they can take to another doctor.

Kids learn to care

To the Editor:

On Sunday, I was driving home from town and I saw Ron Brier and his two young sons out picking up trash in the ditch along on Veteran's Memorial Drive. What a great example this father sets for his sons, teaching them pride for their community and spending time with his children.

Teri Cloe, Colby

Where to write, call

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

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 274-W, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7676 e-mail: jmmorriso@ink.org

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

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

