

Other Viewpoints

Reduce waiting list before cutting taxes

Gov. Sam Brownback is correct in noting that he inherited a long waiting list for social services. But as advocates for individuals with physical disabilities point out, he is overstating his administration's efforts to solve the problem.

The fact is that Brownback deliberately chose not to use available resources to reduce the waiting list, preferring instead to cut taxes.

More than 3,400 Kansans with physical disabilities are on a waiting list for home- and community-based services. Many have been on the list for more than two years. This appears to be a violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act and court decisions including the U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead case, which ruled that a disabled person has a right to live in the "least restrictive environment."

The Office of Civil Rights within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services began an investigation of the waiting list in 2009. Last month, the office concluded that it was unable to reach an agreement with the Brownback administration and referred the matter to the U.S. Department of Justice for possible legal action.

In response, Brownback sent a sharply worded letter to the director, noting that the long waiting lists began and grew dramatically during the administration of Kathleen Sebelius, who is now secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. "Effectively, Secretary Sebelius decided upon joining the Obama administration that Gov. Sebelius and her policies were in violation of federal law," he wrote.

Brownback also said that after his administration took office, it took "several immediate steps to reduce the Sebelius waiting lists," such as changing a policy that allowed only one new person to start receiving services for every two who stopped getting services.

But Shannon Jones, executive director of the Statewide Independent Living Council of Kansas, thinks that Brownback is blowing smoke.

"The state's own numbers don't support the governor's position," she told the Kansas Health Institute News Service. "If you go back three years and look, there were 7,200 (physically disabled) people receiving services. Today there are 6,100. That's not an increase, it's a decrease."

She also notes that several of the initiatives Brownback mentioned in his letter only began a couple of weeks before he wrote the office.

"He makes them sound like they're a long-standing policy, but they're not," she said. "They've barely gotten started."

Also, the total dollars allotted for the care services have decreased during the Brownback administration, KHI News Service reported, and Brownback proposed additional cuts for next fiscal year. To its credit, the Kansas House voted to add \$5.8 million to the budget to help reduce waiting lists.

"I think it's interesting that the governor criticized Sebelius' waiting list but made no mention of the \$22 million that he's (proposed to) cut from the PD (physically disabled) budget," Jones said.

And though Sebelius faced a severe budget shortfall, that's no longer the case. The state has the money to significantly reduce the waiting list.

That's one reason why the Justice Department likely will sue — and win.

— The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press

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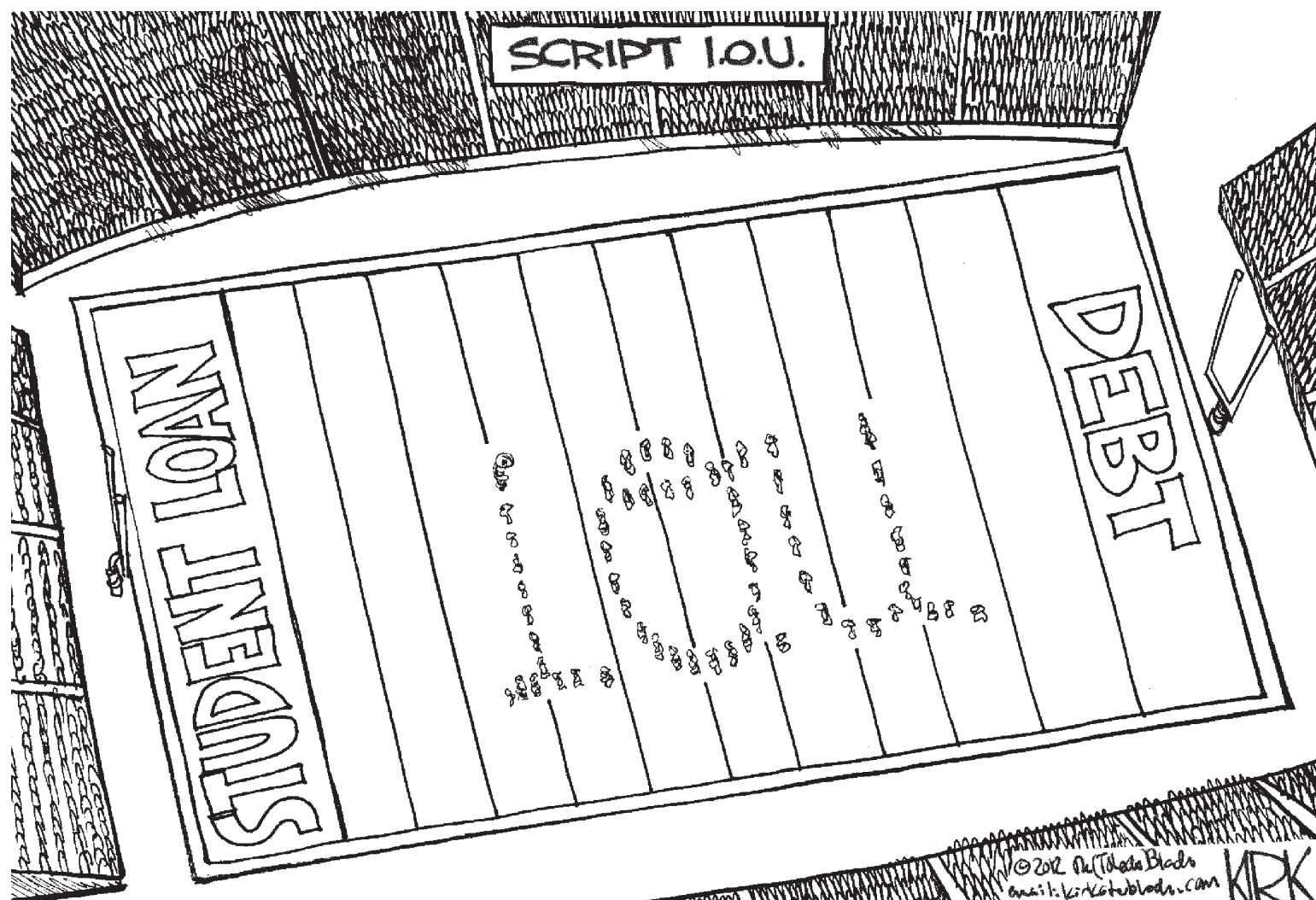
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Memories of family just keep coming

I ran out of room in my last column about the J.P. Phillips family and had to leave several things out. So, as Paul Harvey used to say, here is "the rest of the story."

When thinking of Glenn Crabb, J.P. Phillips' son-in-law and my first real boss at my first real job, selling popcorn at the Colby Theater, I will say he was a perfect boss for young, inexperienced workers. He never got upset over little problems. One thing he taught me was to keep a box of salt on the counter right by the floor furnace. The grate was behind the counter by the popcorn popper.

Because we had to add oil to the popper to pop the corn, sometimes a little oil was spilled down the furnace. When that happened, it made a terrible amount of smoke. The solution to that was to pour salt down on the furnace. That worked just fine.

I'm sure that furnace isn't there today, but if it was, I imagine it'd have a big pile of salt on top of it. Some of it put there by me.

On Dorothy (Phillips) Crabb's memory wall at the Prairie Senior Living Center is a story she told about J.P. Phillips, her father. She said he often walked up and down the halls of the school chewing on a big cigar. Sometimes he would light the cigar and smoke as he paraded



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

up and down the halls.

At those times, the older children would call out to him, "Hey Prof, your chewing tobacco is on fire." I can just imagine what would happen to a teacher who tried to smoke a cigar in the halls at Colby High School today.

When I talked to Don Phillip's wife, Arliss, she told me that Don, J.P. Phillips' son, had worked in the Library of Congress in Washington when he was attending law school there — another little fact I left out but I think deserves to be told.

Actually, Dorothy was quite an actress. For years she belonged to the drama club here in Colby. She played the lead role in their performances of "HMS Pinafore" by Gilbert and Sullivan and "Solid Gold Cadillac" by George S. Kaufman and Howard Teichmann.

I was fortunate enough to see her perfor-

mance in "Solid Gold Cadillac." She played the lead part of Lora Partridge, and did a fantastic job. I also saw the movie; that part was played by a little blond actress with a high-pitched voice, Judy Holliday, who also did a good job. However, I think if the director had seen Dorothy in the role first, he might have chosen her instead of Judy.

I have often wished someone would start a drama club in Colby today. I would go to every one of their performances.

Dorothy would have been the first to admit that she was proud of her long curly hair when she was a child. She had a friend, though, who had long braids Dorothy liked a lot. She and the friend made an agreement once; they decided they would exchange hair. The friend cut one of her braids off to give to Dorothy. However, Dorothy chickened out and refused to cut any of her hair. She never mentioned in her story what ever happened to that friendship.

Now I feel like I have completed the story of the Phillips family. I guess it's time to find a new subject.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Don't give austerity a bad rap

When the left takes a strident position on any given issue, that's a clear signal that the policy they dislike is gaining momentum.

Take the recent liberal apoplexy over reducing the size and scope of government, often summarized as "austerity." People in nations around the world, from Greece to Spain to the U.S., are bearing the brunt of massive over-spending by those they have elected. Reducing this spending and the dependency on government it has created — even by the most passive means, such as reducing the growth rate of government outflow — is giving liberal writers the vapors.

Joel Brinkley, formerly of The New York Times and now a journalism professor at Stanford, tells us that "imposing austerity now is utterly foolhardy — in fact, just plain stupid."

Nobel-Prize winner Paul Krugman writes that while "Fortunately ... there was some 'passive' fiscal tightening as the Obama stimulus faded out, but no wholesale shift to austerity."

And Robert Reich, former secretary of labor in the Clinton Administration, and now a professor of public policy at the University of California-Berkeley, calls for "rejecting austerity economics for now, while at the same time demanding that corporations and the rich pay their fair share of the cost of keeping everyone else afloat."

To summarize, in the words of Stanford economist John Taylor, "The proposals called 'austerity' are characterized (by the left) as going back to the Stone Age, with the connotation of drastic, draconian, sharp, sudden reductions in spending."

Why these hysterical and near-panicked characterizations? Because left-leaning economists recognize, as even Reich admits, "America has a long-term budget deficit that's scary. So does Europe." They know that policymakers and those who elect them are at last grappling with the hard choices needed to rein in Washington's spending.

The consequences of continued fiscal proflig-

Other Opinions

• Rob Schwarzwald Family Research Council

gacy are profound. Michael Cembalest, chairman of market and investment strategy for J.P. Morgan Asset Management, wrote recently in Forbes, "Financial markets remain concerned about the ability and willingness of the U.S. and Europe to tackle their respective fiscal challenges Downgrades, government shutdown rumors and political impasse on deficit reduction have not lost their ability to negatively affect equity markets, business activity and confidence."

In layman's language, this means that unless Western governments — led by our own — take steps to curb the growth rate of spending and reduce outlays in areas where calamitous over-spending is obvious (such as archaically formulated entitlement programs), the nascent recovery will collapse.

Shawn Tully, a senior editor-at-large at Fortune magazine, argues that "lowering spending right now — as long as the downward slope is gradual — will do nothing to choke economic growth, and could even enhance it. And the anti-austerity solution, raising spending immediately, then reversing course at some future date, will not lift gross domestic product, even temporarily, and threatens to further hobble deeply indebted nations."

"The distinguished crowd that condemns austerity champions more spending instead. Once again, the extra dollars need to come from somewhere else. If they're borrowed at home, they lower private investment. If they're borrowed from abroad, they lower exports or raise imports."

Increasing federal spending and raising tax-

es on any person or business doing even modestly well is a sure-fire way of forestalling the growth America's economy and her families so urgently need.

To foster growth, we can lower the rate of federal spending, modernize entitlement programs, provide appropriate tax incentives for firms to expand and hire and liberate business from undue regulation. Most importantly, we can and must strengthen that most significant engine of economic productivity, the family.

Family dissolution erodes economic growth, and the sharp decline in population growth has a negative affect on productivity.

"Human capital and labor, combined with physical capital, each contribute roughly equal parts to growth," write Drs. Pat Fagan and Henry Potrykus of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute. "Increasingly it has been hoped by many that physical capital may substitute for any decline in population's and human capital's contribution to growth. However, this has not been attained historically."

Elsewhere, they have written, "Government revenues come from the taxation of our economy. Our economic growth is and will continue to be a fraction of that of the pre-1960's era because of the breakdown in marriage. All the while, more citizens are pushed into dependency on this government, again because of marriage breakdown."

Marriage. Children. Family. Economic growth. Fiscal discipline and spending reduction. All are indispensable ingredients to the professed goal of both right and left: prosperity.

Rob Schwarzwald, executive vice president of the Family Research Council, has served as chief of staff for two members of Congress, a communications aide in both the House and Senate and as director of communications and writer at the National Association of Manufacturers. In 2001, President George W. Bush appointed him senior speechwriter at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

