

Airlines fight regulations about pricing

Airlines are asking Congress to overturn a regulation requiring them to quote the full cost of a ticket, rather than just the fare, in advertising or when people go online.

In an over regulated world, it'd be nice to think that shedding at least one set of regulations would be a good thing. But we have to ask, why do the airlines want to deceive people into thinking their fare will be lower than it really is?

The carriers want to be able to advertise, or quote, just the fare for a ticket, which might be, say, \$400. However, the actual bill may be closer to \$495 with taxes and fees; the consumer won't know until they get to the last page of a website sale or read the fine print at the bottom of the page.

This is not something every airline did, even when regulations allowed it. Some independent websites showed both prices up front, while some made you wait to see the full bill. It was the same with airlines until the current regulations went into effect.

The airlines fought the regulation before the Department of Transportation issued it two years ago, but having lost that battle, took their fight to Congress. A House committee passed the bill out on a voice vote — no record of who supported or opposed it — after a reported nine minutes of discussion.

One representative called it “a gift to the airlines.” “It's misleading to the consumer,” Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., said to an Associated Press reporter. “It's just dishonest.”

The airlines' hope, apparently, is that, in an era of rising ticket prices, people will be comfortable enough with the basic fare to commit to a sale, and won't be inclined to back out later when they see the full price.

The airlines argue that they should be able to advertise prices the same way hotels, rental car companies and even grocery stores do — sans taxes.

“Consumers are better served when they can buy airfares like they buy any other product,” said Sharon Pinkerton, senior vice president of the group Airlines for America, which represents the carriers. “I think what's confusing is to have airfares treated differently.”

Maybe that's true, though it seems more honest to disclose the entire price of a ticket, room or other service up front.

We wouldn't back a law to require groceries or department stores to post their prices “including sales tax,” but it might be nice if they did so. It'd be nice if we felt the airlines weren't trying to trick us as they continually hike their prices, too. We'd prefer them to give us the bad news up front.

Most people don't travel by air that often, and many may not know what to expect. But if the airlines get the law changed, they'll certainly do whatever they think will be best for sales, not consumers.

Our advice is, “buyer beware.” Anyone who goes to buy an airline ticket, especially on a website, should know it'll cost a bunch more than the advertised price.

— Steve Haynes



Youth seek asylum from home country

In recent weeks, we have seen a wave of Central American children trying to get into the United States. Parents, determined for their offspring to have opportunities for jobs and a life they themselves have never known, are sending them out to face the dangers of the desert and snakes of another breed. Some are seeking a life free of violence and gang activity; for others it is a desire for an education. Whatever the reason, these children and parents have shown an endurance and courage far above mine.

In 2008, then President George W. Bush signed a bill in hopes of protecting children from sex trafficking. This law is at the core of what allows these children into the U.S. Any youngster, seeking asylum from countries other than Mexico or Canada, must be granted a full immigration hearing. This hearing to establish the validity of their claim is often delayed by years because of court backlog. Many, if not most, already have family in this country and are placed with them. The swell of migrant children has grown from the recent 39,000 a year to an expected 90,000 this year. Even with

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



this increase, the total number of undocumented migrants seeking refuge annually is still far below the levels of 2000-06.

Some lawmakers, mostly Republican, but some Democrats too, want to repeal the law preventing the Central American exodus of children. The reaction around the country is varied, but one cannot deny the humanitarian aspect of this dire situation. It is costly to embrace and integrate them into our society, but there is a long term price to pay if we don't. These children are not prisoners. They are fleeing to avoid threatening lifestyles.

The United States should be concentrating on building rapport with other countries and establishing a relationship with future generations. Instead,

some want to force migrant children to go back to a situation where violence reigns and their survival is dependent upon conforming to gangster laws. We have an opportunity to provide these children with those things we deem as our God given right...freedom.

Children grow up with memories. These particular children have traveled miles for freedom and left behind loved ones. They have tolerated the heat and the undesirables along the way and, if after all of this, they are sent back... they will remember and they will grow up.

Is it not better to build a bridge of empathy and understanding? Is it not better to mold and form these children and educate them to build a better life? Most of us cannot even imagine the fear these children experience on a day to day basis in their homeland. If we plant seeds of hope and are willing to share our prosperity, we will harvest strength in allies.

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me and do not refuse them, because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these.” mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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A heartbreaking story of a child's pain

A while back I read a list of ways to tell if someone is lying. The only one I remember is: When a person says “I would never.....” They are lying.

I'm getting older (for sure) and wiser (maybe). Routinely I promise myself: I will always be kind. I will stop this or that annoying habit. You know it's an annoying habit when you start annoying yourself!

I tell myself to forgive and forget. Forgetting is getting easier.

I cannot remember everything I've said on these pages over the years. I am not going to say: “I have never” or “I will never”.

But I have shied away from telling someone else's story. This column is my opinion not reporting.

Today? Be forewarned. This is someone else's story.

My friend, Joni Berry, was the first new friend I made when we moved to Lenora in 1982. You could not ask for a better friend, but this is not about Joni. When we moved to Lenora, Elizabeth was a newborn baby. Joni's daughter Amanda was exactly two months older.

This story is about Amanda who grew up, got married and had two children. It is about her first child Chase, now four. He was born with cancer.

And it is about Congressman Tim Huelskamp.

Amanda and her husband Robert Gray are valiant in their fight for Chase. During the time when their struggles were the greatest she wrote a beautiful blog. I am a voyeur into their lives. This is why I am reluctant to write about them. She has written it articulately and unfiltered.

Chase's tumor was removed, in part because his parents realized the treat-

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



ments given were not helping. They took on their insurance and went out of network so he could have the surgery.

The tumor was located on Chase's spine. When it was removed so were parts of 8 vertebrae, 6 ribs and a lot of muscle. To compensate for this, two rods were placed at each side of his spine. As he grows the rods must be replaced, currently every 4-6 months.

Recently Amanda reported on Facebook after watching a commercial for Icy Hot Smart Relief Patches, Chase said to her: “Mom, I really need those bad. My back hurts every day. Don't you know that?”

Amanda said “Shatters my heart!”

But good things have happened, also. Chase has been off Chemo for three years. His scans are clear. Childhood Cancer has two dedicated advocates for better treatments: Robert and Amanda.

Early this summer they visited Washington D.C. to meet with legislators and urged them expand and extend Pediatric Cancer Research.

Immediately, Amanda posted this on Facebook: Finished up with our meetings, with the exception of Rep. Huelskamp, it was a very successful day!

Later she explained that Huelskamp seemed to think this was something his wife would be interested in assisting in raising money for but not something

the government should do. He also said he would not support legislation that had a person's name attached to it. Robert and Amanda were specifically asking for his support of the “Caroline Pryce Walker Reauthorization Act”, named for a child who had cancer.

Huelskamp proceeded to put a photo of himself, Robert, and Amanda in his newsletter. The caption: Last week the Alliance for Childhood Cancer came by the office. We visited about the Childhood Cancer Reauthorization Act and funding for the National Cancer Institute.

Well, it seems he really is sincere in his stance about using someone's name in legislation. He renamed the Caroline Pryce Walker Reauthorization Act.

Huelskamp may have valid reasons for not supporting funding and research for pediatric cancer. We aren't here to debate the merits of his position.

I'm just telling a story. But I wonder; if he is not supportive of the Robert and Amanda's efforts why would he put that picture in his newsletter?

Maybe he needs some help with his spine. It must hurt terribly to try to twist around, keeping the part that people see in the best possible light.

Now how could we relieve him of the pain?

I would never tell anyone how to vote, but let's all remember this story come primary day.

The story of a four year old whose back hurts every day! The story of a politician who uses him and his parents to make himself look good!

It shatters my heart. And that's the truth!