

Looking at the future of Medicaid in Kansas

In my last article, I mentioned that there would be changes coming to the Kansas Medicaid program. This past Wednesday, Governor Brownback announced his plan to help our state work with the increased costs of this program.

What is Medicaid? It is a forty-six years old care program for the very poor, elderly, and disabled. It is jointly funded by the federal and state governments, but managed by the states. In 2011, Medicaid served over sixty-five million Americans.

Medicaid is the largest source of health care for children. It also serves close to nine million non-elderly people with disabilities, among them four million children with mental illness. There are also eight million low income seniors (who also qualify for Medicare) included. Also covered are low income pregnant women through the duration of their pregnancy.

The controversial Affordable Care Act (Obama Care—which the Kansas Legislature passed a resolution last session to join other states in protesting) calls for the federal government to pick up all medical costs for newly eligible Medicaid enrollees for three years, beginning in 2014. Kansas will be required to pay for a share of the costs after that, topping out at ten percent by 2020. We will also be required to pay for the “matching rate,” which ranges from twenty to fifty percent of medical costs.

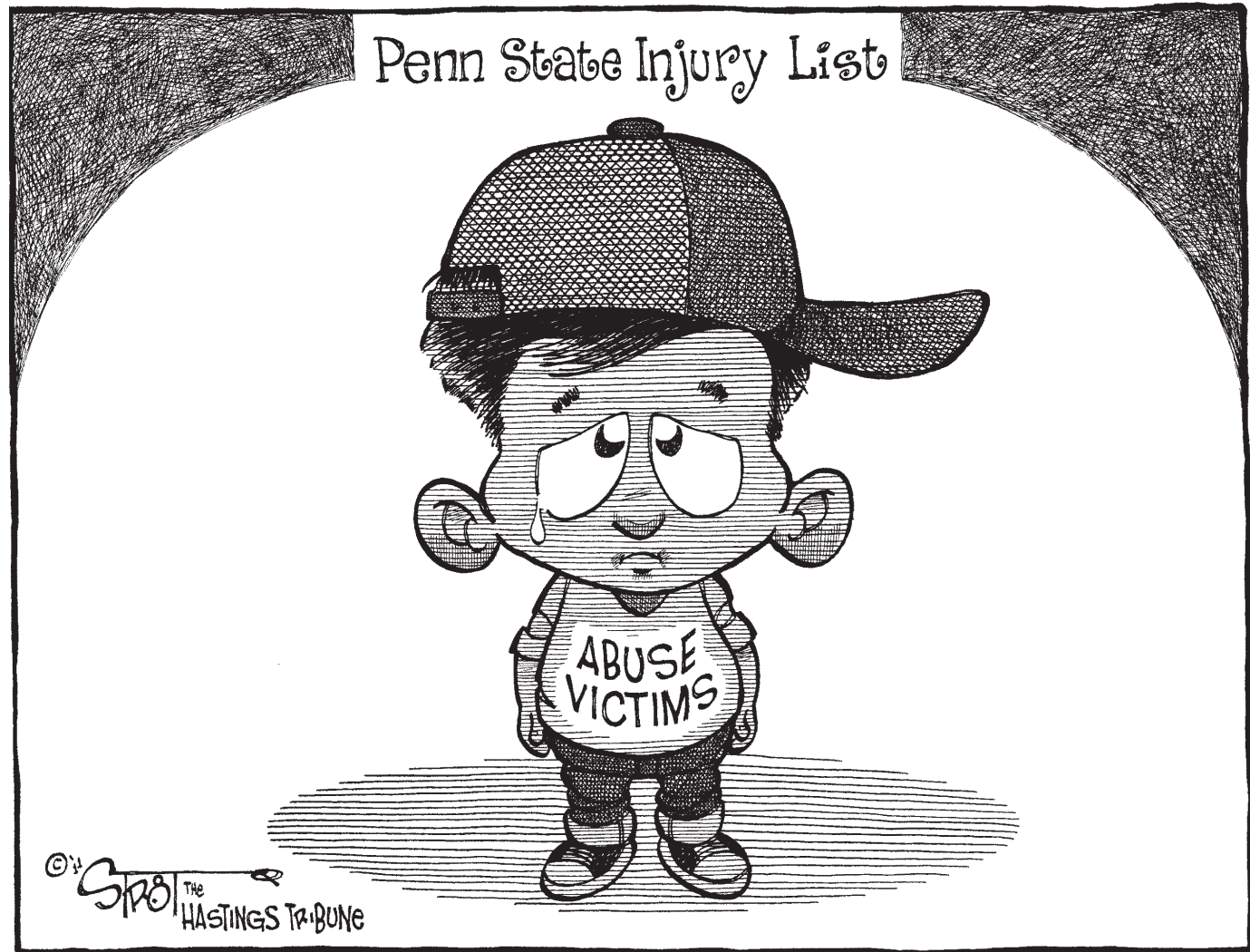
Beginning January 1, 2014, all uninsured Americans with incomes up to 133 per cent of federal poverty guidelines will qualify for Medicaid. Using the law’s required method to calculate income, a family of four who have an income of \$30,800 or less will qualify.

Because our economy is struggling, it will only add more people to the Medicaid rolls. This will hurt our state budget even more. As it is, Medicaid has grown at an average of seven percent a year for the last ten years.

I have been to meetings the past few weeks on Immigration, school funding, the problems of electrical power in Kansas, over-crowded prisons, and KPERS. I will keep our area up-to-date on these critical issues as I learn more.

I appreciate all the positive comments people have given me about my efforts to represent Northwest Kansas and working to keep people informed. Send e-mails to ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov.

News from
your
legislator
Ward Cassidy



Taking on almost more than I could do

When will I learn? My mouth keeps making promises my body has to keep.

Every year on the opening weekend of pheasant hunting season there is a craft fair in a neighboring town. Hundreds of shoppers flood the town and I got the bright (?) idea to sell my homemade caramel corn as a fundraiser for the house we help operate for inmates’ families. My family has enjoyed it for years and I was sure others would too. How hard could it be to “whip out” a couple hundred gallons of caramel corn. Well, I found out how hard it is.

I obtained permission to use our church’s kitchen with its six ovens. I started popping corn, melting butter and measuring brown sugar, salt and corn syrup. In an hour I had three ovens going with roaster pans full of caramel corn. Each batch had to be stirred every 15 minutes and soon I was getting confused as to which pan had been stirred, which needed to be and which was ready to come out of the oven. Not to mention that I was trying to start a fourth batch, keep an eye on the clock and wash dishes as I went. I am a multi-tasker, but this was ridiculous.

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



When the preacher turned out the lights and said he was locking me in, I knew it was time to shut down for the day. The final tally: six batches done. The yield: about 13 gallons. A long way from the downgraded goal of 100 gallons which I had set as a final number.

Next, I moved operations to our kitchen at home. Surely, I thought, I could make caramel corn while going about my daily chores. Pop corn, make a bed, cook caramel sauce, throw a load in the washer, pour sauce on corn, run vacuum, stir corn in oven, wash kernels, pop dishes, sew a sauce, button a brown sugar. Oh, dear, where was I?

The day of the craft fair arrived and I was as ready as I would ever be. One last batch came out of the oven ten minutes before I left the house. Final total was about 30 gallons. I set up my

display table with a dish of samples. Remembering my mother’s advice, “You have to give something away before you can sell it.” Two hours later I was sold out and taking orders. So, I’m not done yet.

The caramel corn was a hit and I might do it again next year. But I will recruit some volunteers. Any takers? I promise to share the old family recipe with anyone who steps forward.

A side bar to the caramel corn story is a personal one. Jim has not had a decent meal since I began this project. I caught him eating caramel corn for breakfast. It’s good, but I’m not sure you can live on it.

The otherside effect is the “crunching” sound you make when walking across my kitchen floor. Popped corn, unpopped kernels and caramel corn is everywhere. Where is a good dog when you need one? Cats, unfortunately, are too picky to resort to eating crumbs off the floor. The sad part is, I’m too tired to care. So, until Tuesday, it will just have to stay. If company drops by, I’ll tell them the corn popper exploded. But not to worry. No one got hurt.

Do you remember when pennies were worth something

Insight
John Schlageck

Until recently, I would often stop by the corner convenience store after work to treat my sweet tooth. From the time I was four-years-old and walked barefoot down to Vern Wagner’s little general store, I’ve always been forced to satisfy my craving for chocolate.

Today, I wind up plunking down a buck plus tax for my favorite candy – either Reese’s peanut butter cups or their mouthwatering chocolate sticks. While this chocolate treat is every bit as good as any “Denver Sandwich” or “Cherry Mash” I ate as a boy, today’s bar appears to be about half the size I paid one nickel for 45 years ago.

Now that I think about it, a dollar is much easier to come by today than a nickel was when I was a youngster growing up in the northwestern Kansas farm community of Seguin. Back then, men worked 12 and 14-hour days on the farm for as little as \$1 an hour. Dad talked about men working for 50 cents a day during the Great Depression when you could buy an acre of ground for about the same price you would pay for a five-stick pack of Juicy Fruit

gum.

For most people in this part of the country, times were rough in those days, and most people were ready and willing to work for darn near any price, just to keep bread on the family table.

A buck for a day’s wages went a long way toward buying food before World War II, my dad used to say. Recalling those days some 70 years ago, Dad talked about bacon selling for 15 cents a pound, eggs were a dime a dozen, Ivory soap sold at five bars for less than a quarter, butter cost 20 cents a pound and a large loaf of bread was two pennies – remember pennies? They’re something some people toss away today because they won’t buy anything.

Whether we want to admit it, or even realize it, food still remains a good buy. Today, the average wage earner spends a much smaller percentage of his/her

paycheck (approximately 11 percent) to buy food for the family. The average family in the United States probably eats better today than was the case 60 years ago.

Like food, clothing also costs little by today’s standards. Seventy years ago, shoes sold for two bucks a pair, and you could buy a pretty nifty “goin’-to-church-suit” for less than \$5.

Dad had a brother and brother-in-law who owned a car dealership back in the days of my youth. I can remember them talking about a Model T with a sticker price of \$300 about the time their parents ushered in the “Roaring ‘20s.” A full tank of gas (10 gallons) sold for less than two dollars, a quart of oil cost three bits and air for the tires was free.

You bet these prices seem unreal. When you think about it, a dollar just doesn’t seem to go nearly as far as it used to. But then, very few folks will do as much, or work as hard, for the dollar as they used to either.



To the Editor:

Social Security or Stealing Savings?

A local (only) stamp should be cheaper! What is cost of hauling mail off (to Wichita), for jobs there and hauling it back? Then closing small post offices, devastating rural people!

T’would be more efficient to build a refinery there, for Alaska, Canada and North Dakota oil, than pipe the profit to Texas.

In all of Social Security – whose money was ever saved for, and returned too – plus interest? If anybody but Congress had foisted this pyramid, Ponzi, chain letter scheme on the people of U.S.A., they would be punished for fraud. Abolish retirement (\$) for every elected official; if budget is not balanced, dock their pay, by the same percent!

“Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your soul. – Jeremiah 6:16.

Frank Sowers
Benkelman, Neb.

PS: Where doth the Constitution permit taxing everybody to benefit anyone?



Thumbs up to the Northern Valley KAYS, the music department and Darel Boston for the Veterans Day Program. It was fantastic. Called in.

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ISSN 1063-701X
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654
Published each Tuesday and Friday by
Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave.,
Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage
paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.
Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton
Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton
County. Member of the Kansas Press Association,
National Newspaper Association, and the
Nebraska Press Association

Nor’West Newspapers
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002



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