



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Health care battle not a done deal yet

Congress has passed two versions of health care reform, and as the year ends will be working to find a compromise to get through both houses and be signed by the president.

The country spent the spring and early summer watching the House work to pass its version of health care. Then we spent the fall watching the Senate work to pass its version.

Lots of stories have been published about what is in each version, but until they are combined and both houses agree to final passage, it is not a done deal.

Republican senators, who unanimously opposed the bill, have vowed to find a way to derail the final passage. They failed to get a single one of the 60 Democrats to fall out, but will do their best to find one when the final version comes back to the Senate.

Time will tell if the health care bill will make it to President Obama to become law in the new year.

The Democrats have the votes at this time, but if the final version gets defeated, it will be probably another generation before the power exists to pass such a bill.

Republicans had the power to stop anything from becoming law until the election in 2008, and by doing everything it can to stop health care, the GOP hopes to regain that edge in November by defeating some Democrats.

Tens of millions of dollars have been spent by all sides of the health care debate, and more will be spent in the next few weeks while negotiations continue. — Tom Betz

### 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 143-N, 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 128-S., 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We do not publish anonymous letters.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.

### COLBY FREE PRESS

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

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansas.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

**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

#### ADVERTISING

**Heather Woofter - Advertising Representative**  
hwoofter@nwkansas.com

**Andrea Miller - Advertising Representative**  
a.miller@nwkansas.com

**Shaly Niemeyer - Advertising Representative**  
sniemeyer@nwkansas.com

**Kathryn Ballard - Graphic Design**  
kballard@nwkansas.com

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

**Robin Tubbs - Office Manager**  
rtubbs@nwkansas.com

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**  
support@nwkansas.com

#### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**

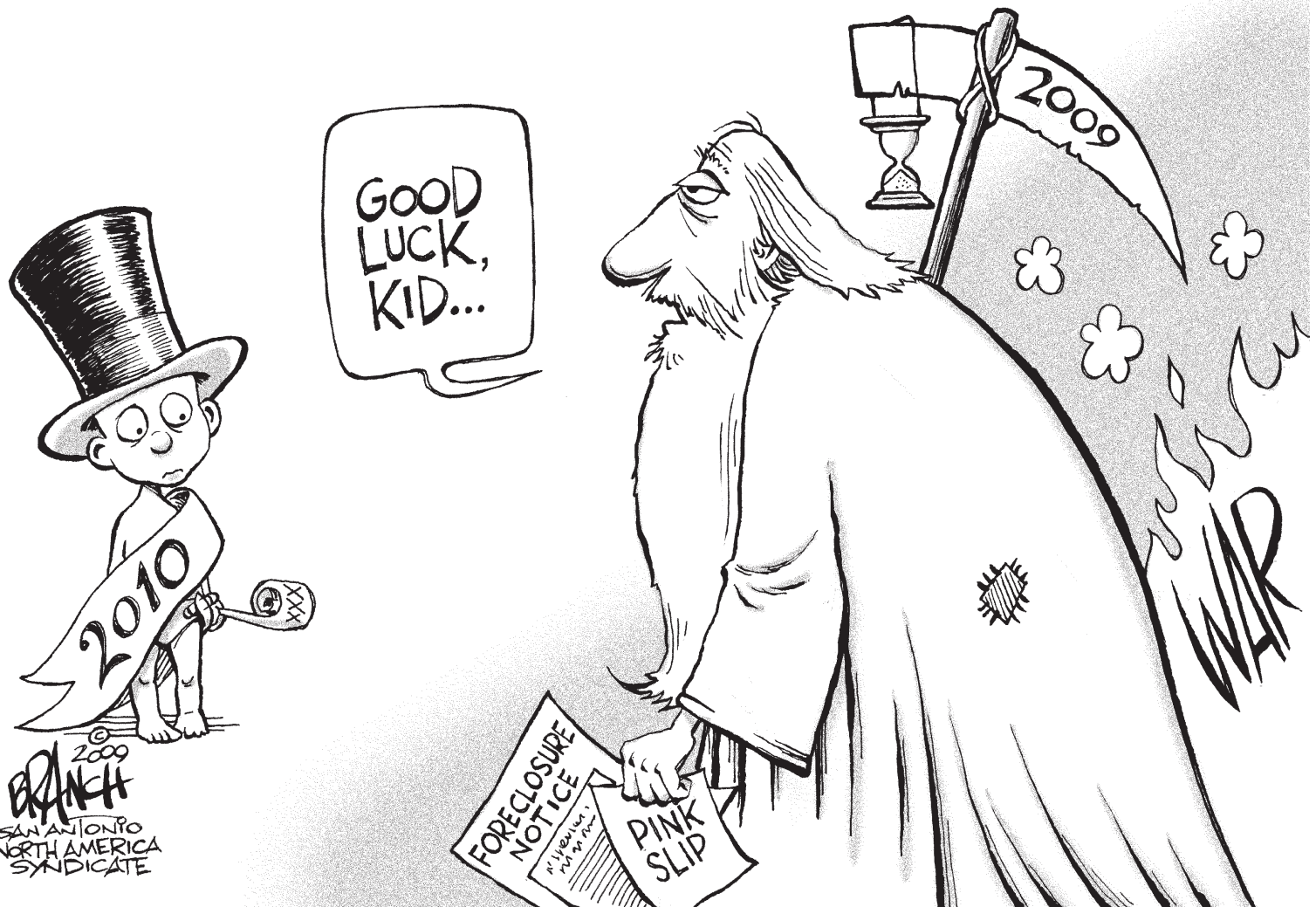
Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Betty Morris, Jim Bowker, Judy McKnight, Barbara Ornelas, Tasha Shores, Kris McCool

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan. 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72



### She resolves to get organized

I had an unaccountable itch for sorting and organizing this weekend.

It's an affliction I get from time to time. Mostly it's prompted by reaching a critical mass of detritus in my personal space, but I think it's also a disease that's peculiarly tied to the New Year.

Much is made about New Year's resolutions, and these come in a wide variety of types. Some are simple and obvious, such as resolving not to make resolutions. Some are wide-ranging and elaborate, such as resolving to climb Mount Everest, write the Great American Novel and lose 20 pounds while getting in shape to run a marathon.

I never really got the hang of making resolutions, though. Mine have gravitated more to the style of a weekly "to do" list - get laundry done, get ironing done (actually a worthy resolution, since ironing baskets can easily become archeological sites), get grocery shopping done, sort spice rack. Worthy goals, but



**Marian Ballard**

• Collection Connections

hardly anything earthshaking.

It always made me feel a bit guilty to start a whole year with such paltry destinations in mind for a 12-month journey. Yet I console myself with the trite-but-true statement that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," attributed to either Confucius or Lao-tzu, or Chairman Mao. So, while I may plan to learn to cook vichyssoise, my first step is to put "buy fish" on the shopping list.

My resolutions and my organizing urges both seek to impose structure on time and space. It's got something to do with hanging

up a brand-new unsullied calendar, looking forward to a clean slate on the year, and the hope that THIS year, deadlines will be met, goals will be achieved in a blaze of glory and timeliness and dreams will come true before drowning in trivia. These are worthy goals, though by next week they will fade in the tangle of daily complications.

Organizing, after all, is a first step in accomplishing great things. To cook a great recipe, you start by organizing all the ingredients and utensils. To write that novel, you get paper, or open a new file on your computer at least. To get in shape, you join a health club. The next step, of course, is less obvious, more open to interpretation, and easily postponable.

So, I'm all organized. Now for those resolutions...

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

### Safe food is top ag priority

Today's consumers are bombarded with scads of conflicting food-safety information. Before today's shoppers believe all the stories and headlines, they should consider the farmers' and ranchers' side.

Few celebrity spokespeople, activist leaders or reporters from the urban press seek out farmers, ranchers or agricultural leaders when they champion food safety causes. Contrary to what some consumers and media may think, growing and selling safe, nutritious food is a farmer's No. 1 goal.

Farmers are in business to provide products for their customers. They care what consumers think about their milk, oats, wheat, beef and other products. When consumers asked for leaner meats and low-fat dairy products, the beef, pork and dairy industries responded.

A clean, healthy environment is important to everyone, but probably most important to farmers. A farmer's well being and livelihood depend on his natural resources. While buildings and farm machinery are important tools, a farmer's most precious assets are his land, soil and water. If a farmer destroys his resources, he won't be in business long.

Environmental stewardship has always been important to farmers. It always will be.

Quality and safety of food are as much a concern to farmers as they are to consumers. Farmers shop at the supermarket like everyone else. They eat the same foods everyone else does. Farmers are consumers. They not only care about the health and safety of their fami-



**John Schlageck**

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

lies, but of all consumers.

Farmers use technology responsibly. They learn new methods and practices by attending training sessions and courses.

New farm technology is expensive. It is in the best interest of farmers to use it carefully and sparingly. Misuse - spraying too much chemical, say - would add to the cost of production, which would result in an even lower return on their investment.

Farmers use agricultural chemicals only when necessary. When they use chemicals, farmers follow label directions designed for public health and safety. When a rancher uses antibiotics and other animal health products for their stock, they follow proper practices. When new advances in biotechnology are discovered, farmers must abide by stringent testing and monitoring practices that ensure only safe products enter the marketplace.

Food produced in the United States is safe. More than three decades of Food and Drug Administration testing has shown most of our fruits and vegetables have no detectable pesticide residues. This underscores that American

farmers use pesticides properly.

Each year, federal agencies spend millions of dollars to support food and agricultural safety and quality inspection. The Food and Drug Administration spends millions to inspect and to check processors of "high-risk" foods. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention monitor and trace outbreaks of food-borne illness, from its many labs nationwide.

Farmers and ranchers fully support efforts to evaluate and enhance the current regulatory and food-monitoring system. They fully understand that Americans should be able to feel confident that the food on their tables is the healthiest, safest anywhere in the world.

Agriculture is committed to working with all parties toward maintaining safe food. Decisions affecting the course of agricultural production into the next century must continue to be based on sound science and never on fear or false information.

Farmers and ranchers must remain engaged in helping shape long-term policies. They must continue to maximize their production capacity with an ever-watchful eye on food safety, quality and the environment.

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.

### Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

