



## Other Viewpoints

# Unhealthy leaders stall affordable care

Republican officeholders in Missouri and Kansas are vowing to stall progress on the Affordable Care Act, despite the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that upholds its constitutionality. Their intransigence will shortchange citizens and economies. Both states are far behind on creating insurance exchanges. In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback foolishly gave back \$32 million in federal money aimed at starting a computer infrastructure. Missouri has also passed up start-up money, and lawmakers actually authorized a statewide vote in November to prohibit the governor from moving forward on an exchange without legislative approval.

Unless leaders in both states quickly come to their senses, they're likely to have the "dreaded" federal government design exchanges for them.

And even if the Affordable Care Act is dismantled politically, what's not to like about an online marketplace where consumers can easily learn what kinds of insurance policies are available and at what price? The reluctance to get started is folly.

Hesitation about raising state Medicaid eligibility limits is more understandable.

Though the new law requires states to include families making up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level in their Medicaid programs, the Supreme Court said states can't be coerced into doing so.

Washington would pay for 100 percent of the expanded coverage for three years, and not less than 90 percent after that. But states will ultimately pay more in Medicaid costs.

In Missouri, which currently cuts off Medicaid eligibility at a deplorable 19 percent of the poverty level, or \$4,104 a year for a family of four, complying with the new law would add about 300,000 persons to the Medicaid program. Estimates put the additional annual cost to the state at \$100 million a year.

That obligation would be offset, however, by the economic benefits of compliance. Missouri would receive about \$8 billion in federal Medicaid funds in the first five years of the law's implementation.

The expanded coverage would create thousands of jobs for medical providers, suppliers and others. Hospitals would be less burdened. Employers might see insurance costs level off.

Affordable health care is good public policy. Missouri and Kansas will pay a heavy price for the refusal of Republican leaders to acknowledge that reality.

— The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press

## Where to write, call

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774  
roberts.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

## 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.

**Sharon Friedlander - Publisher**  
sfriedlander @ nwkansas.com

### NEWS

**News Editor**

colby.editor @ nwkansas.com

**Kayla Cornett - Sports Editor**

colby.sports @ nwkansas.com

**Marian Ballard - Copy Editor**

mballard @ nwkansas.com

**Sam Dieter - News Reporter**

sdieter @ nwkansas.com

**Christina Beringer - Society Reporter**

colby.society @ nwkansas.com

### ADVERTISING

colby.ads @ nwkansas.com

**Kathryn Ballard**

**Advertising Representative**

kballard @ nwkansas.com

**Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design**

khunter @ nwkansas.com

### BUSINESS OFFICE

**Ray Schindler - Office Manager**

rschindler @ nwkansas.com

**Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator**

support @ nwkansas.com

### NOR'WEST PRESS

**Richard Westfahl - General Manager**

Jim Jackson, Jim Bowker, Gary Meyer, Pressmen

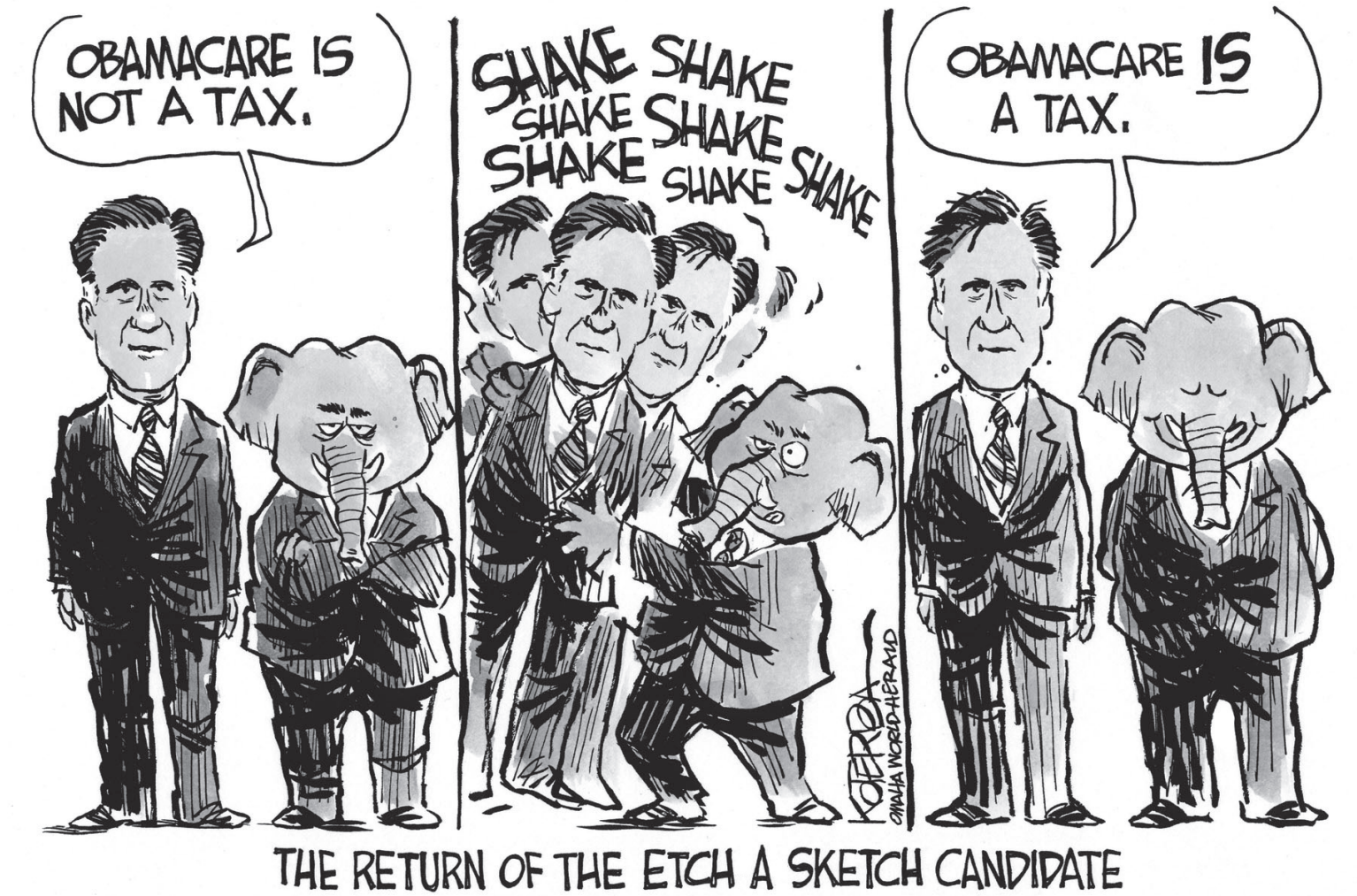
Lana Westfahl, Judy McKnight, Kris McCool, Stacy Brashear, Tracy Traxel, Mailing

**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.



# Response to Obamacare inconsistent

The Supreme Court's decision to uphold the constitutionality of the Obama administration's health-care reform bill — ominously known as Obamacare in conservative quarters — in a 5-4 vote is bound to stoke outrage among the conservative base.

Some conservatives have already inveighed against the decision with over-the-top rhetoric.

"The individual mandate violates basic freedoms and personal liberty in a way no Congress has before attempted in the 225-year history of the Republic," Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, quailed in an opinion column for the conservative magazine *National Review*.

Now there is nothing wrong with opposing the Affordable Care Act, but to call the individual mandate — a provision in the law that imposes a tax on anyone who chooses not to buy health insurance — the biggest violation of basic freedoms and personal liberty in American history is absurd. One can think of many decisions — slavery, Jim Crow, Japanese internment camps, denying women the right to vote — that were far worse than Obama's relatively modest health-care proposal.

The fury the individual mandate evokes from conservative activists is tinged with more than a hint of irony when you consider the fact that the mandate's origins can be directly traced to the conservative Heritage Foundation. Stuart Butler, the man who proposed the individual mandate on behalf of Heritage in the '90s, has conveniently switched his position and come out strongly against the mandate — much like



**Andy Heintz**

• Wildcat Ramblings

former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. However, this doesn't alter the fact that his think tank was one of the first groups to push for a mandate.

Heritage was not alone among conservatives in its early support for an individual mandate. According to Ezra Klein of *The Washington Post*, more than 20 Senate Republicans — including sitting politicians like Grassley and U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, — signed on to one individual mandate or another in 1995. At that time, the individual mandate was viewed as a preferred alternative to the employee mandate included in the Clinton administration's health-care proposal.

Of course, the veritable godfather of the Affordable Care Act, Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate for president, is perhaps the most famous proponent of the individual mandate. Romney — who has vowed to repeal the Affordable Care Act if he is elected — even wrote an article for *USA Today* in 2009 that advised the president to use the health care bill he signed into law as governor of Massachusetts as a model for the nation.

# Hard decisions come from drought

Across the state, Kansas farmers are looking skyward, praying for rain and some relief from the record heat and drought.

An early spring and ideal planting season had row-crop producers feeling optimistic about the potential yield for this year's crop.

That enthusiasm has faded as we now realize the harvest for many Kansas farm families will be limited — or nonexistent. Kansas recorded one of the driest Junes ever and one of the hottest months in this state's history. While the western third of Kansas is blessed with irrigated crops, farmers there are already feeling the brunt of the hot, dry weather, and the rest of the state is being devastated by this brutal heat.

While most farmers have some crop insurance and will recover part of their economic losses, they must remain proactive and begin working with their insurance agents immediately. This will ensure they receive the indemnities they are entitled to.

Kansas row-crop farmers are already making hard decisions based on the likelihood this drought will continue and grow: is it time to take this crop out and salvage something? Is the crop already too far gone and should I leave what remains as residue? Should I hay what remains of my corn or milo? Do I need to divert some of my irrigation and choose which fields I believe will still yield a crop?

Hard choices? You bet, but the key is to begin talking with your agent about your individual situation.

"Make sure you're getting all your i's dotted and your t's crossed regarding your crop insurance policy," says Mark Nelson, Kansas Farm Bureau commodities director, "and remember, if you do decide to harvest your crops early,



**John Schlageck**

• Insights  
Kansas Farm Bureau

beware of prussic acid."

Prussic acid can cause livestock deaths. Ruminant animals such as cattle and sheep are more susceptible to prussic acid poisoning than nonruminants because the ruminal microorganisms have enzymes which will release prussic acid in the animal's digestive tract.

Once plants containing prussic acid have been consumed by an animal, the toxin rapidly enters the blood stream and is transported throughout its body. Prussic acid inhibits oxygen utilization by the cells in an animal's body. In essence, the animal suffocates.

With conditions shaping up like they are in Kansas, any number of common plants may accumulate large quantities of prussic acid, or cyanogenic compounds. Corn, sorghums and related species readily accumulate these compounds.

Another potential problem that may be facing row-crop producers is aflatoxins. Aflatoxins are chemicals produced by certain molds. They're often associated with drought conditions during grain fill. The accompanying high daytime and warm nighttime temperatures are conducive to fungal invasion and aflatoxin production, Nelson says.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has established strict limits for the presence of aflatoxins which can impact the deliverability,

use, price and insurance indemnities that farmers may receive for aflatoxin-contaminated grain.

"For crop insurance claims, aflatoxin tests must be done by a Risk Management Agency approved testing facility," Nelson said. "Make sure to keep in touch with crop insurance agents. Let them know what your plans are before you take action if possible, and definitely before you cut, so an accurate appraisal can be made."

A farmer's biggest risk remains the weather. This fact is being hammered home in a big way again this year.

*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.*

## 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.

## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

