



## Other Viewpoints

# Health care law can't be ignored

Kansas cannot afford to take a head-in-the-sand approach to the Affordable Care Act.

Having already returned \$31.5 million in federal money that would have been used to help Kansas tailor its own health insurance exchanges to comply with the new health care law, Gov. Sam Brownback now says he wants to delay any action on the exchanges until after the November presidential election, in hopes former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney will be elected and lead efforts to repeal the health care act. Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer has indicated he hopes the U.S. Senate will try to kill the law using its reconciliation rules, but that action also would have to occur after the November elections and would depend on Republicans boosting their numbers in the U.S. Senate so they could garner the 51 votes needed to overturn the law.

The repeal of the Affordable Care Act is far from certain regardless of the outcome of November's elections. Supporters of the act acknowledge that some aspects of it need work. Opponents concede that many Americans support some aspects of the law, such as coverage for people with pre-existing conditions and allowing children to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26. There likely will be changes to the law, but it's simply unwise for Kansas not to be ready for its implementation.

Despite the opposition of fellow state officials, Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger has tried to make sure the state won't be left out in the cold when the care act provisions kick in. However, time is growing short. The federal law requires states to submit their plans for setting up health insurance exchanges by Nov. 16. The exchanges will offer consumers a system, which can be accessed online and through other means, where they can comparison shop for health insurance.

Praeger said it's already too late for Kansas to set up a state-run exchange, but it could still work with the federal government to assist Kansas consumers and determine which companies could participate in the state's exchange. The state needs to move quickly, though, if it wants to help build its exchanges to meet Kansas' needs rather than allow the federal government to dictate those decisions. "It's a significant giving up of state authority if we don't move forward," Praeger said.

It certainly is possible that the November elections somehow will doom the Affordable Care Act, but it's also entirely possible that the act will continue to move toward implementation after the elections are past. It's better to be prepared for something that doesn't happen than to be caught unprepared for something that does. The Kansas insurance commissioner is advocating a prudent approach to this issue. The governor and other state officials need to listen to her.

— *The Lawrence Journal-World, via the Associated Press*

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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.

# NEWS ITEM: LACK OF HIRING REFLECTS DOUBT...



# Prayers answered: health care upheld

God answered our prayers! The Supreme Court upheld the health care bill.

Say what? Yes, there were many Christians (Democrats and progressives) praying to the same God as the one the religious right and conservative Republicans seem to think is in their political camp.

Isn't it amazing how we determine whether it is God or the Devil who makes things happen? If it is what we want, it is God. If it isn't our choice, then it is the Devil. If it directly benefits us, it is God inspired, or God intervening. If it goes against us or harms us, it was the Devil working his evil.

In a comment following a *New York Times* article, Didi Paano, contributed the following, and I think she did a good job of outlining the bill.

- "For those who don't understand what the (Affordable Care Act) is about ... here's a synopsis of the bill:
- Lets millions of young adults stay on parent's insurance until age 26.
- Ends insurance company power to cap the amount of care a person can receive in their lifetime.
- Stops insurance companies from canceling coverage when someone gets sick.
- Lowers the cost of care of those on Medicare and helps seniors save money on their medication.
- Requires insurance companies to cover preventive services like mammograms free of



**Ken Poland**

## • Ken's World

- charge.
- Strengthens and protects Medicare by increasing penalties for fraud.
- Stops insurance companies from denying coverage to children with pre-existing conditions.
- Ends insurance company power to jack up rates without justification.
- Provides Americans with rebates from insurers who spend too much on bonuses and ads.
- Gives tax credits to small business owners so they can afford to offer quality health care for their employees.
- Builds and improves hundreds of community health centers.
- Gives hard-working Americans tax credits so they can afford insurance premiums in 2014.
- Ends discrimination against adults with pre-existing conditions beginning in 2014.
- Prevents insurance companies from charging women more than men and overcharging those who need care the most beginning in 2014.

"It all looks like a win-win situation to me," she said. "Too bad most people don't see it that way."

It appears to me that Mitt Romney's idea for making insurance more affordable for low-income people and the chronically ill is that he would encourage states to experiment with high-risk pools, offering subsidies to the poor and insurance-buying exchanges — in essence, harnessing the purchasing power of large groups. He seems to have forgotten that he backed and signed the health-care bill for Massachusetts. The bill that the Supreme Court just upheld is nearly identical.

My hope is that the 2010 health-care law will evolve into universal health care. Do you actually think that the for-profit system of care providers and insurance companies is more accountable to you than elected government officials? If you do, either you favor buying your politicians or don't think your vote counts.

I keep hearing how "Obamacare" has already caused a big increase in insurance rates and employers are dropping insurance benefits. You haven't noticed that your insurance premiums have been increasing every year for several years? Are you unaware that employees have been covering more and more of their premiums every year?

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at [rcwinc@cheerful.com](mailto:rcwinc@cheerful.com).

# Remember identification when you vote

Because this is going to be a big election year, I wanted to let everyone know about changes in Kansas election law that went into effect Jan. 1.

During the 2011 Legislative session, a bill was passed called the Secure and Fair Elections Act. This law is intended to ensure that all voters are qualified and make it more difficult to cast an illegal vote.

All voters will be required to provide a government-issued photo ID at each election, regardless of whether they are voting early at the courthouse, by advance ballot or in person at the polls on Election Day. The following may be used:

- Driver's license or ID card issued in Kansas or another state.
- U.S. passport.
- Concealed carry of handgun license issued by a state.
- Employee badge or identification document issued by a government agency.
- U.S. military identification.
- Student ID card issued by a recognized Kansas college.
- Public assistance ID card.
- Voters age 65 or older who do not drive may use an expired license.

There is an exception to the ID requirement for permanent advance voters (voters with illness or disabilities), overseas military voters and their spouses and dependents, and voters with religious objections who sign a declaration.

Any person registered to vote who does not possess a valid photo ID may obtain a free identification card from the Division of Motor Vehicles by signing an affidavit and providing proof they are registered.

The second part of the law addresses the se-



## Other Opinions

## • Shelly Harms County Clerk

curity of advance ballots sent by mail. Voters requesting an advance ballot by mail must personally sign the application and provide either their driver's license number or a copy of their photo ID document.

After the voter has marked the ballot, he or she must personally sign the return envelope and mail or deliver the ballot to the county election office, or designate in writing another person to mail or deliver their ballot. The designated delivery person must sign a statement stating they did not unduly influence the voter's decisions and they have delivered or mailed the ballot according to the voter's directions.

The final section of the law, slated to take effect Jan. 1, requires each person registering to vote for the first time in Kansas to provide proof of U.S. citizenship. The following is a partial list of documents that may be used:

- Birth certificate
- U.S. passport
- U.S. naturalization documents or the number of a naturalization certificate
- U.S. military record of service showing the applicant's place of birth in the U.S.
- Final adoption decree showing the applicant's name and U.S. birthplace
- Consular report of birth abroad of a U.S. citizen.

• Driver's license or ID card issued by a state, if it has a notation indicating that the person has provided proof of U.S. citizenship

• Extract from a U.S. hospital record of birth created at the time of the applicant's birth.

Hopefully, this information will help everyone be prepared for the upcoming election cycle. If anyone has questions on their voter registration or elections in general, please call the Thomas County clerk's office at (785) 460-4500 or the secretary of state's office at (785) 296-3488.

Shelly Harms of Colby is the Thomas County clerk and election officer

## 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/](http://roberts.senate.gov/public/)

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

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

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 [ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

## Mallard Fillmore

## • Bruce Tinsley

