



Other Viewpoints

Obesity burdens states with illnesses

Missouri’s weight problem is the public’s business. Ditto for Kansas. Dealing with it head-on could save billions of dollars for taxpayers in both states.

A report released last week showed the two states creeping close to the top 10 in the nation’s obesity rankings. Researchers projected Kansas would be tied with Louisiana as the seventh most obese state by 2030, with Missouri in ninth place.

Right now, Missouri is the 12th most obese state, and Kansas is tied with Ohio for 13th.

The report, by Trust for America’s Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, projects that two-thirds of adults in both Kansas and Missouri will be obese by 2030 unless people make substantial changes in food and lifestyle patterns.

That is a frightening forecast. Obesity is a cause of diabetes, heart disease, strokes, depression, multiple types of cancer and other afflictions. It also is a leading factor in state Medicaid costs, and those will accelerate unless something is done.

The obesity question made for a rare moment of agreement Friday between Democrat Claire McCaskill and Republican Todd Akin, who are running for the U.S. Senate seat from Missouri now held by McCaskill.

Both said government had no business telling Americans what and how to eat.

Of course no one wants Uncle Sam roving the supermarket aisles, shoos shoppers away from the potato chips and toward the broccoli. But officials make a mistake by ignoring the obesity problem, or trying to pack it into a “big brother” box.

The financial and physical health of states and their populations depends on getting obesity under control. As the report pointed out, Missouri could save \$5 billion between now and 2030 by reducing its overall body mass index by 5 percent and preventing 180,000 cases of diabetes. Kansas could prevent 77,000 cases of diabetes and save \$2.4 billion in health care.

One leader who gets it is Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback. A few weeks ago he called together more than 200 state officials, health workers and members of the Governor’s Council of Fitness for a day-long summit on obesity.

By the end of the session, Brownback had assigned the secretary of the state’s Department of Health and Environment to assess how to get healthier foods and more opportunities for activity into all state cafeterias and residential facilities. Brownback also pledged to pull together a friendly competition to encourage “walking teams” around the state.

Participants came up with other ideas to influence food and lifestyle choices in a positive way. A sample:

- Encourage more physical activity in child care centers, perhaps through licensing incentives.
- Promote wellness programs in workplaces.
- Work with retailers to encourage healthier food in underserved areas.

These aren’t huge, intrusive steps, but efforts elsewhere have shown positive results. Kansas leaders should be commended for addressing the problem.

Missouri should take a lead from its neighbor. Though scattered anti-obesity efforts exist in the state, some coordinated by the Missouri Council for Activity and Nutrition, there has been no concerted campaign to tackle this problem.

Missouri cannot afford to be in denial. Top leaders should get out in front of a campaign for healthier lifestyles.

– The Kansas City Star, via the Associated Press

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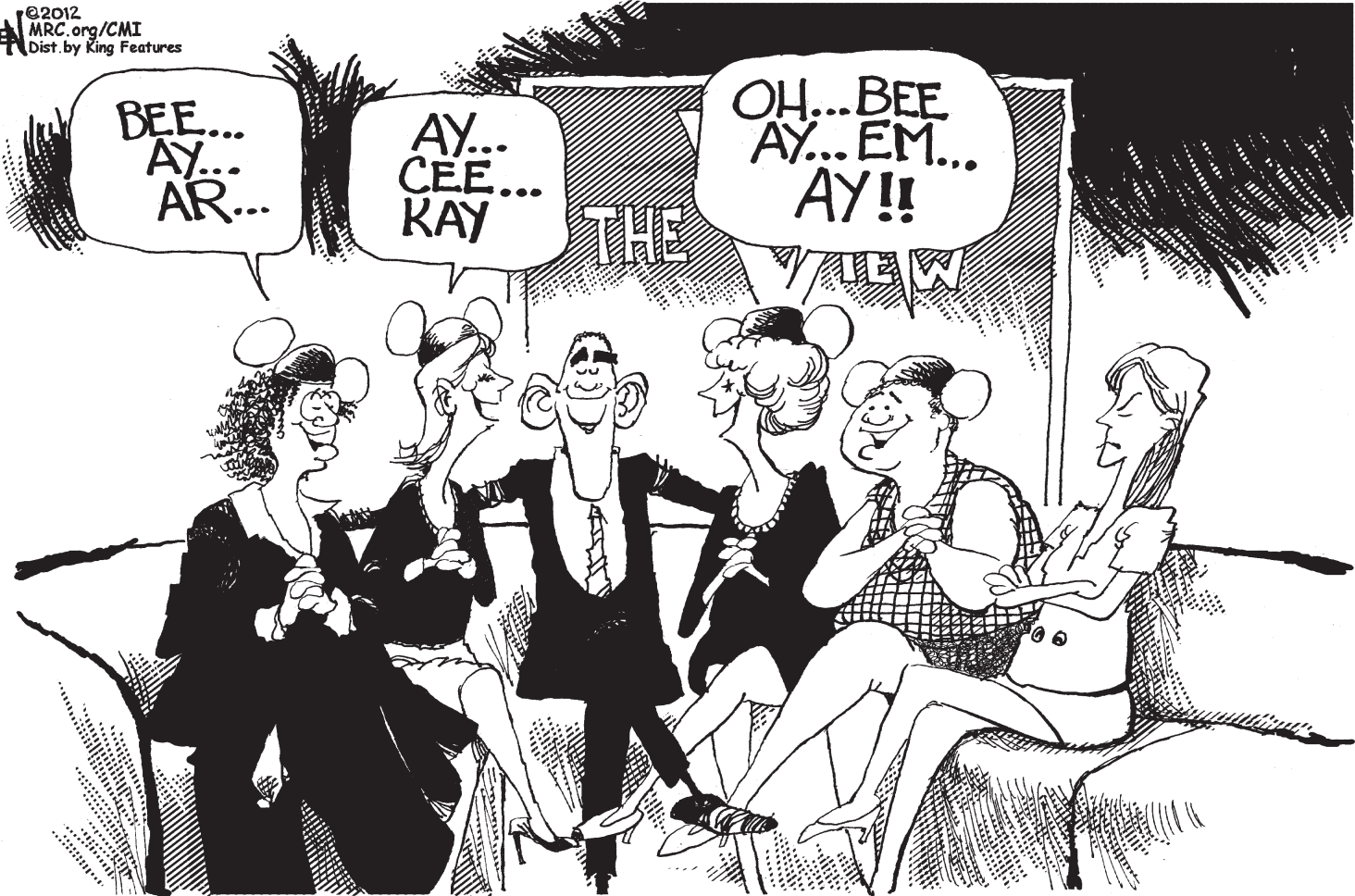
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THE NEW MICKEY MOUSE CLUB

Sometimes great fishing close at hand

I went fishing last week with my friend Harrison.

That’s a bit like saying you went to church with the bishop. You’re pretty sure the bishop is on a higher plane.

So you may be going to church, but the bishop is going to CHURCH.

And Harrison, well, he’s going FISHING. You might say he’s into fishing.

All his gear is that light olive favored by tony fishing outfitters, whether it came from Cabela’s or Bass Pro Shops or one of the big catalog outfits back east. His Subaru Outback is the same color, though he claims that’s a coincidence. It’s the L.L. Bean edition, though.

So, you might say Harrison likes fishing. He’s been fishing all over, and I’ve been lucky enough to go with him a few places. The first place we fished together, in fact, was Lake Arenal in Costa Rica.

Lake Arenal is in the mountains in the central part of the country, about 15 miles long. Created by a hydroelectric dam, nestled into the rain forest, a towering volcano at either end, it may be one of the most beautiful places in the world. Especially when the water is glass-smooth at 6 a.m.

The jungle comes right down to the road, and the howler monkeys screaming in the trees take on an eerie tone. You almost have to see it to believe it, but the computer ate all my pictures, I swear.

The lake was full of two kinds of fish, the machaca, a perch-like fish with a mouth full of teeth that look like a piranha’s, and rainbow bass. These look like largemouth bass in our country, only green (males) or brown (females). The males have a rainbow stripe.



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

After a string of small ones, a lunker appeared under the bridge.



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

We caught some machaca, handling them carefully. With gloves. We finally caught some bass, too, and took a couple back to the lodge to eat. The cooks fried them for us and we ate them at 3 p.m. in the dining hall as all the non-fishermen came to ooh and ah. They were delicious.

Our guide that time was one of the few people I’ve met who might like fishing more than Harrison. He showed up in a Toyota 4Runner, pulling a 24-foot bass boat. All his gear was

from Bass Pro, and it filled the back end. He told us he had three boats – one for the lakes, one for the rivers and one for the ocean. And gear for each kind of fishing.

“You must like to fish,” I said innocently enough.

“Señor,” he said, “I live to fish.”

But back to Colorado. My friend who’s a river guide said the fishing has slowed down early, but any part of the Rio Grande in the area was as good as the next. State regulations are designed to produce big fish, but it’s mostly catch and release.

The first day on the river, Harrison caught a couple of small ones and I practiced my long casting. We tried one of my favorite creeks, where I caught a few and he got one.

The next day, we tried the river right below our house. If one place was as good as the next, we figured, it was close. Harrison loaned me a wet fly and I caught a small brown trout. Later, I heard him shout, looked down the river and saw him trying to land a fish.

“How big?” I yelled.

“Looks about 21 inches,” he replied.

I took pictures to prove it, with his camera. He was right under the county road bridge near my house, too.

I think he went home happy. He’s threatening to come back next year, but he’s said he was coming every year for the last five. We’ll see. But I think he’s had a taste.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor’West Newspapers. When he has the time, he’d rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Nutrition nannies invade cafeterias

Our commander-in-chief and agriculture secretary are apparently moonlighting as Nutrition Nannies.

From our farms to our businesses to our doctors’ offices, one would think that the Obama administration should have run out of places to invade.

But, as school children and their parents learned as the kids headed back to the classrooms this fall, the administration has found one more place over which to exercise domination: the school cafeteria.

In the final weeks of 2010, as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi prepared to pass the gavel to Republicans, House Democrats got a bill to President Obama’s desk that empowered the U.S. Department of Agriculture to completely rewrite school lunch standards.

With a title like “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act,” one would think such a law would have a goal of making sure kids have full stomachs.

But, as school administrators and cooks, students and parents have told me, the department’s rules that resulted from this “Hunger-Free Act” are having the opposite effect.

Calorie limits are leaving student athletes undernourished ahead of intense practices. Three hours of practice after a 750 to 850 calo-



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

- Capitol Notes

rie lunch with limited protein at noon?

An emphasis on what goes on the plate – rather than into the body – has only increased the amount of food that goes into the trash can.

And, now that kids are not getting the food they need and want, many are going off campus for even less healthy alternatives, fast food or convenience-store fare, undermining altogether the whole purpose of the school lunch program.

The last Congress was wrong to pass the law that led to these new regulations but, the current Congress can make it right by exercising our oversight function. Earlier this month, my colleague Steve King and I introduced the “No Hungry Kids Act” to repeal these school-lunch guidelines.

In the same way that one-size-fits-all does not work for what we teach in our classrooms, this legislation recognizes that no single set of cafeteria standards should apply to every single school across the nation – let alone every single student. By lifting the calorie caps and protecting the rights of parents to make decisions for their children, our bill will ensure that children get the food they need in order to stay alert in the classroom and healthy on the athletic fields.

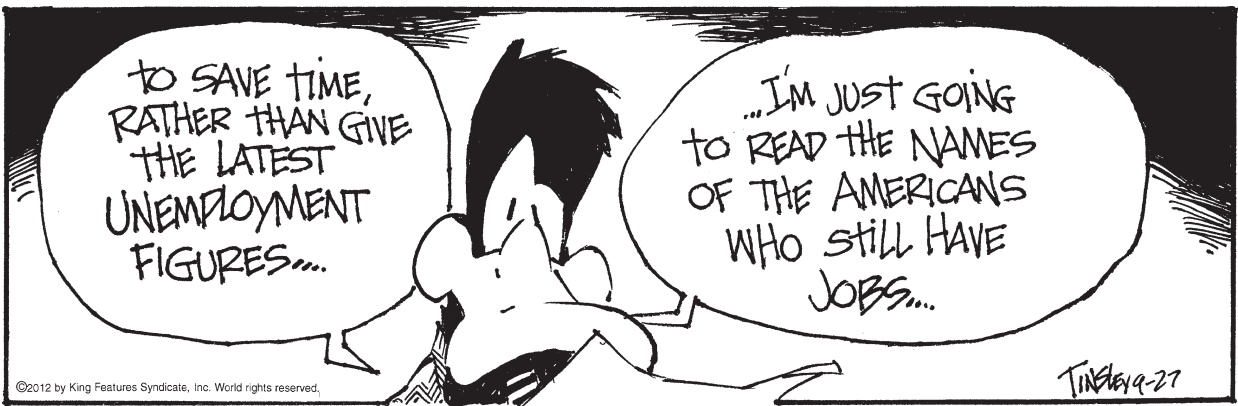
The school lunch program was created to combat hunger. That should still be the goal. But, when calories have been curtailed, less appealing food is on the plate and students are filling the cafeteria trash cans rather than their stomachs, the goal of overcoming hunger and obesity is defeated.

To learn more about the “No Hungry Kids Act” and to share your own family’s experiences with the school lunch program, go to the website www.facebook.com/nutritionnannies.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp, a Fowler Republican, represents the 1st District of Kansas. He serves on the House Agriculture, Budget, and Veterans’ Affairs committees.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley



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