



Other Viewpoints

Is Kansas ready for KanCare’s start?

Here’s hoping that KanCare will work as promised – because the well-being of more than 375,000 low-income Kansans, as well as doctors and hospitals, depends on it.

Kansas received the federal go-ahead last week to launch its reform of Medicaid. Starting Jan. 1, three out-of-state insurance companies will manage the health care program. The Brownback administration contends that by better coordinating care, the state will save money while promoting better health.

In announcing the approval, Gov. Sam Brownback said he thinks KanCare is “truly what Kansans want and need.”

The program may be what the state needs to help control costs, but whether it is what Kansans “want” is debatable.

Public comments posted online and made during a conference call last month sponsored by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services were overwhelmingly critical of the reform. And because of strong opposition, the Brownback administration agreed not to include Kansans with developmental disabilities in the plan until 2014.

A key concern is that the insurance companies could have an incentive to limit or discourage care, because they make money when the state spends less. When case managers work for the insurance companies, whose interests will be their priority: the clients or their employer?

People who will be covered by KanCare also have raised concerns about the limited number of doctors and hospitals that have signed up thus far for the program.

Another concern is that other states with similar programs have had problems with insurance companies committing fraud and not promptly reimbursing doctors and hospitals.

Kansas officials say that they have learned from this and created safeguards and incentives to protect against such problems. But doubts remain.

Can the state really save \$1 billion over five years, as the Brownback administration projected, without cutting provider rates, eligibility or services?

And does the administration really have the management expertise to prevent major problems? Frankly, its track record doesn’t inspire much confidence.

Despite these doubts, KanCare is happening – in less than three weeks. Ready or not.

– *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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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

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Blizzard warning – just for other guy?

Blame it on cell phones.

Blame it on the fact that our first winter storm normally arrives sometime in September. This year, our first snowfall was a whole half inch on Oct. 5 – followed by over two months of mostly dry heat.

Blame it on the fact that this isn’t the Yukon, or even Montana, where blizzard warnings are taken seriously.

But Wednesday’s storm clearly demonstrated that there are two distinct groups of people operating in and around western Kansas.

Group One is boring, predictable and prepared. They have gloves – and windshield scrapers – and boots – and full gas tanks – and snow tires – and spare tires – and....

Group Two has one goal in life: to provide entertainment for Group One.

They hear school’s been closed, look out the window at sunshine and decide they don’t need to worry.

They hear travel warnings and think they are for everyone else.

They rely on being rescued if they do wind up in trouble because, after all, they charged their cell phone before they started off. And really, it wasn’t snowing this hard 10 minutes ago.

To be fair, we must take into consideration force of habit. The drought we’re in has lasted long enough and kept temperatures high enough that we can’t really imagine getting cold. Sure, it’s chilly in the morning, and if there’s fog, you may have a tiny bit of frost on the car, but it really hasn’t felt like winter.

Technically, of course, it hasn’t been winter until today. You don’t go around singing



Marian Ballard

• Collection Connections

about a white Christmas though, and expect to go from short-sleeve weather to a foot of fresh powder between Dec. 23 and Dec. 25. It can happen, but it doesn’t usually. You build up to it.

Slowly.

Anyway, all of this is a slow buildup to the real story of the Blizzard of 2012.

The missing boots, gloves and ice scrapers all happened right here at the *Free Press*, along with “Where’s the snow shovel?” and “We need to get some more Ice Melt.” Interspersed with, “Whoa! Have you looked out the window in the last few minutes?”

Background music came from the scanner, where we heard from the Kansas Highway Patrol, the Thomas County Sheriff’s Office, the Colby Police and road crews from state to city.

The first hint that the forecasted blizzard was moving in came in a report on a semi having trouble staying on the road.

Then the accident reports started coming. A lot of people out there on the highways, and more than a few in town, were thankful they at least had a cell phone. Most of them apparently don’t know you’re supposed to slow down when the road gets slick.

Along with the accident reports, we got a good sample of the down side of a job in law enforcement. Apparently, the same people who don’t understand they should stay off the roads when there’s zero visibility are the ones who expect an officer and a tow truck to be able to reach them and render assistance, regardless of the conditions.

I’ve got news for you out there. Cops are ordinary humans with uniforms and some specialized training. They get cold and tired and have trouble seeing when the visibility is zero. Their vehicles get damaged when someone else who can’t see runs into them.

A blizzard is no place to be running around trying to find someone who should have stayed at home. That friendly officer will be all polite to you when he gives you a ride after you ran out of gas in a blizzard, so maybe he needs a voice from the bleachers to say this: give them a break. Wear your hat and your gloves and your boots and fill up your gas tank. Check the air in your tires – all five of them. And stay home if you can’t get where you’re going safely.

If you must drive in the snow, slow down. Way down.

Merry Christmas, and safe travels over the holidays.

P.S. Of course, that’s probably the last real storm we’ll have between now and April.

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.

Many Christians accept evolution

On Nov. 27, televangelist Pat Robertson shook up many viewers when he asserted that young-earth creationists were wrong.

In response to a viewer’s question, he responded, “Look, I know that people will probably try to lynch me when I say this, but Bishop Ussher wasn’t inspired by the Lord when he said that it all took 6,000 years. It just didn’t. You go back in time, you’ve got radiocarbon dating. You got all these things, and you’ve got the carcasses of dinosaurs frozen in time out in the Dakotas.”

Reported widely in the press, Robertson said he believes science is correct about dinosaurs being ancient and “... if you fight science, you’re going to lose your children.” (www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/28/pat-robertson-creationism-earth-is-not-6000-years-old_n_2207275.html)

This may not sit well with some literalists who believe that evolution is the root of all that is wrong with modern society. Some contend that evolution undercuts a person’s special status as a product of a creator. They assert that without a divine creation and purpose, life has no meaning or accountability.

What is not generally recognized is that the large majority of Christian denominations have no problem with stellar or biological evolution. Robertson is actually in full agreement with most major denominations.

As far back as 1998, Molleen Matsumura, then at the National Center for Science Education, found “of Americans in the 12 largest Christian denominations, 89.6 percent belong to churches that support evolution education.”

This official position of support for evolu-



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

tion was taken from three sources. Leaders of some denominations contributed pro-evolution statements to the 1995 Voices for Evolution. Some denominations endorsed “Religion in Public Schools: a Joint Statement of Current Law.” And finally some were plaintiffs in the McLean v. Arkansas case where they opposed a law requiring the teaching of “creation science.”

Non-literalist churches that have no problem with evolution include: The United Methodist Church, National Baptist Convention USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), National Baptist Convention of America, African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church and others. (See: ncse.com/book/export/html/2410)

However, many members of these denominations (and sometimes their ministers) are unaware of the official position of their church on evolution. Robertson’s proclamation may help many people discover that their church has no quarrel with a concept that is as central to biology as atoms are to chemistry.

Matsumura’s 89 percent evolution-friendly figure that addresses only the top 12 denominations is probably an over estimation. The

much smaller or independent churches not surveyed are often not big enough to issue any public position statement on evolution but are more likely to be literalist.

The next time you are on a college or university campus, you might walk down the science hallway and ask at each science professor’s door: “Where are you on Sunday morning?” You will find that a sizable number will be in church.

Many scientists are Christian and see absolutely no conflict between their religious beliefs and their research on how the physical and biological world works. And many are genuinely and pleasantly surprised that Robertson has let the secret out: for a large majority of Christians, there is no conflict between evolution and their religion.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher’s college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

Write us

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

