



Other Viewpoints

Carve disabilities out of KanCare

Three months and one week into KanCare, Kansans can be cautiously hopeful that the massive Medicaid overhaul eventually will realize state leaders' goals without compromising people's health. But it's hard to believe that the Brownback administration, with the tacit approval of the Legislature, still intends to let the program take over long-term care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities next year. Where is the support to forge ahead? It isn't within the disabilities community, which argues that long-term services such as community employment, targeted case management and residential assistance don't fit the medical-services model of KanCare and that the three insurance companies now running KanCare lack the experience to serve that vulnerable population. Advocates and providers also doubt the estimate that excluding intellectual and developmental disabilities long-term services from KanCare would cost the state \$100 million over four years. (The administration says the savings will come from better care and outcomes.)

It only fueled distrust when state senators recently flirted with a bill to bar community developmental disability organizations from providing both case management and disabilities services. The bill has been set aside. But advocates and relatives are right to see it as breaking the administration's promise that individuals could keep case managers under KanCare.

The disabilities community also has experienced the turbulence of the KanCare transformation in medical care.

The anecdotes across KanCare have been disheartening, including hassles over primary care assignments, prescription drugs and newly-required preapprovals. Slow payments to some providers have resulted in cash-flow problems. The provider network also has been spotty, especially in rural areas and for specialty and dental care.

In some cases, advocates say, the managed-care organizations have refused to talk to case managers for individuals whose disabilities make communication challenging or impossible. All the changes have caused stress for people whose health is fragile.

"It came. It's here. It's a problem. And people are feeling it," Colin McKenney, president of Starkey Inc. in Wichita, recently told the *Eagle* editorial board.

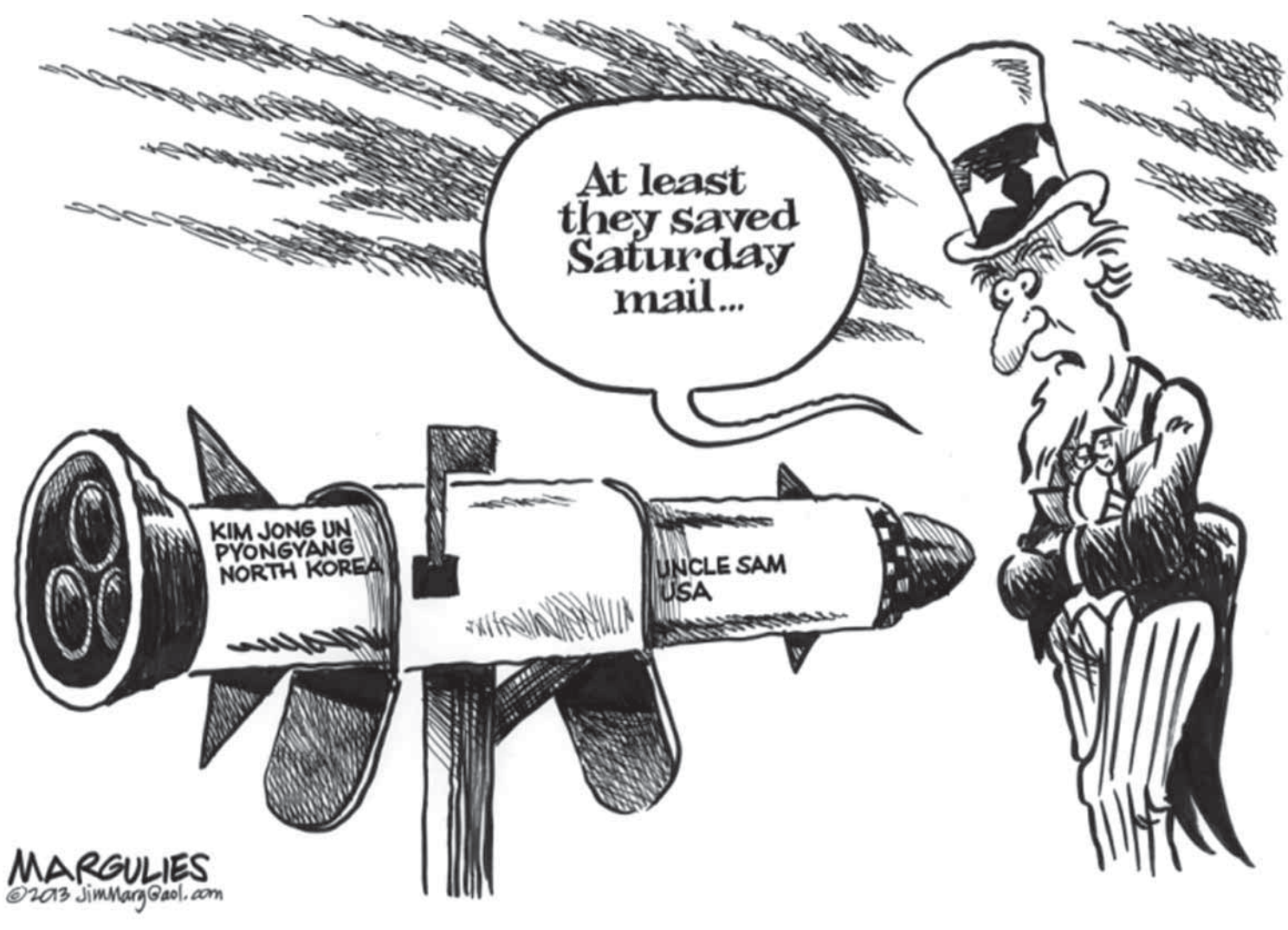
The entire reform is here to stay, though, serving 380,000 low-income and disabled Kansans. KanCare has added some dental benefits, heart transplants and obesity care, and still aims to save \$1 billion over the next five years without cutting rates or services.

To their credit, state officials seem committed to working through the transitional issues. They hold regular phone conferences with providers to hear concerns, and an ombudsman helps with troubleshooting. Meanwhile, lawmakers have worked this session to create a KanCare legislative oversight committee.

Asked by the editorial board recently why it was a necessity to add the long-term care of the disabilities population to KanCare, Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer said, "Because we want to get better results and better outcomes for them."

For the good of the state's budget as well as its health, KanCare needs to succeed. But with the administration unwilling to carve out the long-term care of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the Legislature should act.

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*



American Exceptionalism a tragedy

The widespread disparity in opinion between people in the United States and people in Muslim-majority countries regarding the appropriate ways to conduct the war on terror could be lessened if Americans would try to put themselves in the shoes of the people in these countries.



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

The act of putting oneself in someone else's shoes is always difficult; especially when that person isn't from one's own tribe. From childhood, we are, in overt and subtle ways, taught to internalize certain cultural assumptions and beliefs that tend to portray our country — or religion or tribe or gender or race — as superior to all others. So, without knowing it, we see our group's superiority — and, by extension, other group's second-rate status — to be the objective truth.

This internalized view of the greatness of one's own tribe has hindered the way Americans, and most of the press that covers this country's foreign policy decisions, view U.S. foreign policy.

The term used, by both proponents and detractors, to describe Americans' internalized belief in their country's innate goodness is American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism, at its core, is the idea that the U.S. has always been — and will always be — a force for good. So when U.S. air strikes kill dozens of people in an Afghan village or when there is a catastrophic rise in birth defects and abnormalities in Fallujah, Iraq, that is possibly connected to a U.S. bombing campaign in 2004, Americans can rest easy in knowing these in-

cidents were for the greater good.

The fact that the media rarely tell us the names of the victims of U.S. violence only amplifies citizens' indifference to these deaths. This is why, if reporters are going to be embedded with U.S. soldiers, there should also be reporters embedded in Iraqi hospitals or Yemeni villages. Because when the media, through lack of coverage, renders victims of U.S. violence invisible — their names aren't mentioned, their family and friends aren't interviewed, Muslims from drone-targeted villages aren't given time to share their opinions of U.S. policies — it prevents Americans from understanding why some Muslims are so hostile to the United States.

Of course U.S. violence doesn't provide justification for terrorism — causation and justification are two different animals. Any violent act that knowingly targets innocent people — or is carried out with the knowledge that the crux of the victims might not be terrorists — is inexcusable.

Furthermore, putting oneself in the shoes of those who have suffered because of U.S. policies doesn't have to lead to a condemnation of

the U.S. or an urge to repent for one's sins — a person can support the basic framework of the war on terror while simultaneously having sympathy for those who died because of this framework — it just has to serve as a reminder that those outside our own tribe are people too, with emotions, dreams and fears not so different from our own.

Obviously, the put-yourself-in-someone-else's-shoes strategy isn't going to ease all the tensions between America, the Middle East and other Muslim-majority countries.

Moderate Muslims also must do their part by condemning the illogical hatred of Jews and Christians prevalent in certain Islamist circles. While some Muslim anger towards America is based on U.S. actions, our country isn't to blame for the toxic religious intolerance espoused by radical Islamists who seem determined to force everyone to live according to the dictates of their own medieval world views.

I firmly believe, for all its contradictions, the U.S. is a morally sound country. But American exceptionalism is an albatross that shields citizens from the pain suffered by those outside their cultural bubble.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate and former Colby Free Press sports editor now living in Ottumwa, Iowa, loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing. You can find his blog at www.orble.com/just-one-mans-vision, or find him on Twitter: @heintz23.

California agriculture 'mind-blowing big'

Huge and nearly impossible to comprehend are words that best describe the economic impact of California agriculture as viewed through the eyes of nine Kansas farm families who toured the state beginning March 25.

Each year, families from each Farm Bureau district in Kansas tour California farms as Farm Family of the Year designees. This year, the Kansans touched down in Los Angeles. The state's 81,500 farms and ranches received a record \$43.5 billion for their output last year.

California's agricultural abundance includes more than 400 commodities. The state produces nearly half of U.S.-grown fruits, nuts and vegetables. Across the nation, U.S. consumers regularly purchase several crops produced solely in California.

An avocado and lemon ranch in Ventura County was the first stop on this year's trip. Leaven Fairview Ranch is owned by David Schwabauer. Schwabauer is neighbors with nearly 900,000 people. The top five crops include strawberries, raspberries, lemons, celery and tomatoes.

In addition to the ever-encroaching urban sprawl, the biggest challenges Schwabauer faces are pests and diseases that threaten his avocado and lemon crops, including the citrus psyllid and the boring beetle.

Applying enough water during the critical growing season and finding enough labor to harvest crops is another challenge. Produce growers often cannot find enough help to harvest fruits and vegetables.

Lemons imported from Chile and Mexico are over-supplying the market and causing the price to tank for U.S. growers.

Phil McGrath has carved out an "organic" niche in Camarillo, several miles north of



John Schlageck

• Insights Kansas Farm Bureau

Leaven Fairview Ranch. The McGrath family farm takes pride in supplying its customers with the freshest organic fruits and vegetables, he said. Their products are picked the same day as delivered with a guarantee that nothing is more than 24 hours old.

A few years ago, McGrath said, he couldn't sell his fruits and vegetables because most of his customers were looking to buy organic.

"They directed me to organic farming," he says. "My goal is to grow as many things as possible in their season."

The McGrath family farm grows everything from strawberries and baby vegetables to legumes and flowers. These work with sustainable diversity and rotation.

Pyramid Flowers, on the coast near Oxnard, offers premium, specialty-cut flowers for wholesale markets. Seventy percent of these flowers wind up in supermarkets.

Owner Fred Van Wingerden opened his 50 acres of fertile fields and 20 acres of greenhouses to the Kansas visitors. A first-generation grower from the Netherlands, Van Wingerden began his flower business in 1979.

For Van Wingerden, harvesting his flowers when they reach maturity is critical.

"You have one day to harvest them at that point," he says. "One day later, and the plants suffer and so does my business."

The trend at Pyramid Flowers has been to steer away from chemical pest control. Cost of chemicals has rocketed, so Van Wingerden uses steam sterilization to control weeds.

Another fascinating stop on the California trip included Associates Insectary. This cooperative provides its fruit and vegetable growing members with pest control advice and beneficial bugs. This sustainable farming program began in the 1920s when citrus mealy bug infestations threatened to wipe out the industry in and around Santa Paula.

Associates Insectary was established by farmers to help fight this pest by raising and releasing millions of mealy bug destroyer beetles in their groves. An average of 800 million beneficial organisms are raised 365 days each year. They are released in the 8,500 acres of groves that are members of this cooperative throughout the year.

One other farm stop was Kallisto Greenhouses. Located in Fontana, this family-owned business was established in 1976 on a 10-acre parcel with 257,000 square feet of covered greenhouses. Kallisto sells tropical foliage plants for use indoors.

"This means there cannot be damage on the visible leaves and the plant must be artistically presented," said owner Jim Rietkerk.

The current economic downturn continues to challenge the operation. Input costs and regulatory burdens increase, but the owners believe in their product and say they will continue to produce plants that they believe will enhance and improve the human quality of life.

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

