

Other Viewpoints

Flexibility could help ease care rules

Businesses celebrated July 4 two days early this year, not with fireworks but instead a health-care reprieve from the Obama administration.

A decision by the president postpones until 2015 a provision of the Affordable Care Act that large- and medium-sized businesses offer workers health insurance coverage or pay penalties. Some business groups have told the administration they still are uncertain about implementation.

One of the chief complaints centers on understanding the complex reporting rules and other cumbersome mandates.

Indeed, businesses and individuals have a few things to sort out.

For individuals, the delay announced last week does not affect the Jan. 1 starting date that requires most Americans to have health care coverage or face tax penalties.

For businesses, some health industry experts say it would be cheaper for most companies to drop health care benefits and pay the penalties. That is just one of many aspects of the new law that left businesses scratching their collective head and pleading for a delay in implementing this provision. And reason enough for the administration to agree to the delay.

Though the reprieve came as a welcomed surprise to business, which claimed it could not implement the rule by 2014, the Obama administration needs to tread lightly when it comes to altering health-care reform.

This particular decision allows companies the necessary time to adjust, but businesses cannot – and should not – expect delays each time they cry wolf. There will be a point when the administration clearly needs to remind companies that they were given adequate time to implement provisions of the law.

For now, it is good to see Obama so amenable to meeting the needs of companies charged with providing health-care insurance to their employees. The president previously has been accused of being strident and unmoving in his approach, especially when it involves the business sector.

But Obama in this particular case understands that change is difficult, especially when businesses sometimes go out of their way to avoid paying health insurance for their employees. They've often relied on working employees just under 40 hours a week to avoid paying health insurance costs.

So there is plenty of blame to share – businesses that for years skirted the benefits issue for their employees and the Obama administration for pushing too soon and too fast an unwieldy health insurance mandate.

The president showed his flexibility this week. Now it's time for the business sector to meet its new deadline.

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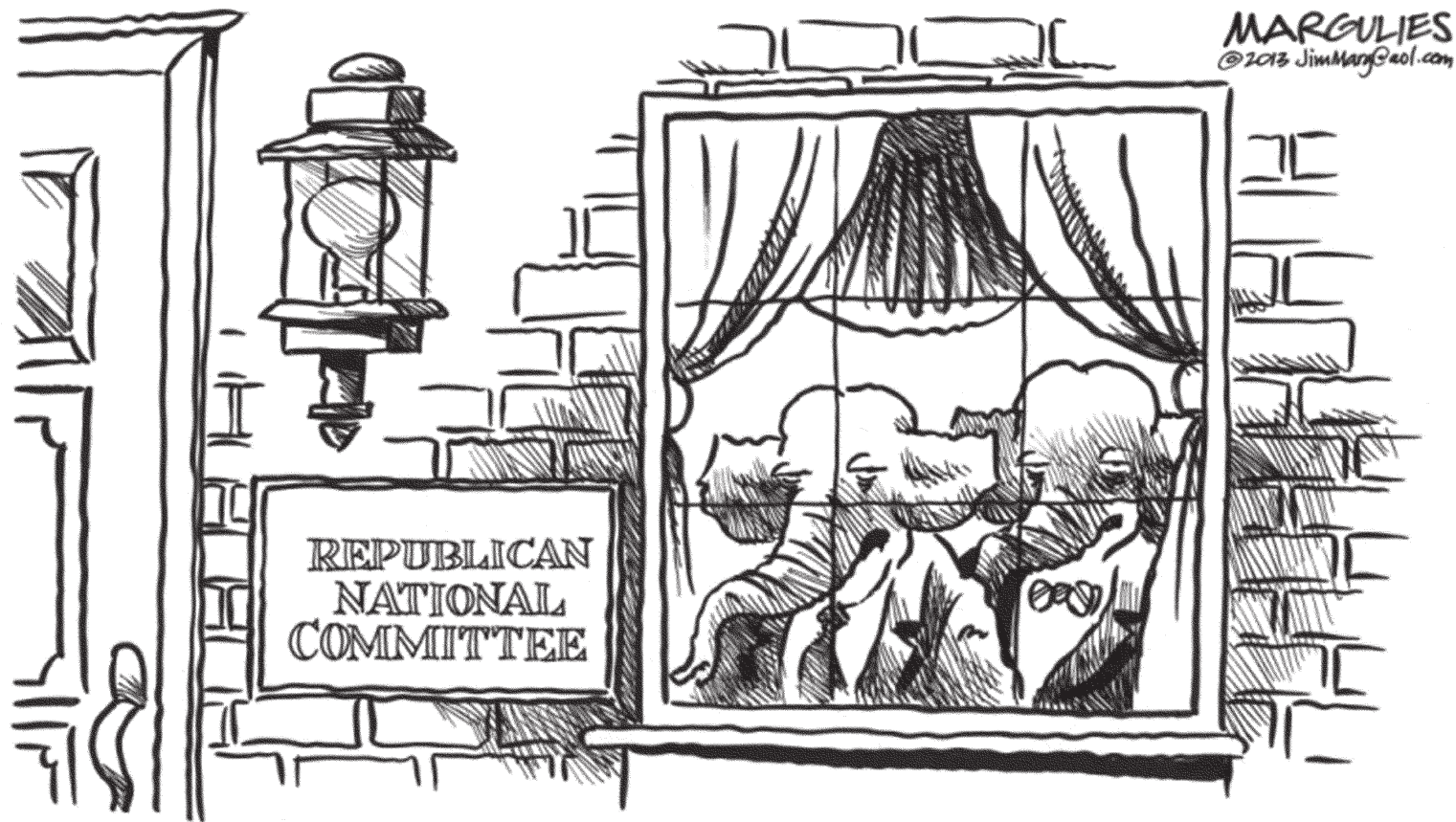
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"Never mind repealing Obamacare... the surest way to irk Obama is granting Snowden asylum here..."

Fetid lake became town's park

This is the second article in my series on the history of Fike Park. Information comes from research done by Opal Linville at the Prairie Museum of Art and History.



Marj Brown

• Marj's Snippets

After the town of Colby became a reality, several businesses were started in the downtown area along what is now Franklin Avenue. The lake had been laid out in lots, and some lots were sold. The Opelt Hotel, one of the first buildings in town, already sat on one of the lots at the southwest corner. It was higher ground there.

It became a habit of the people who ran the three or four livery stables to haul their manure to the old buffalo wallow and dump it.

Soon, young boys in town discovered that if they blocked up the areas where the wallow drained, it would become a nice lake. The town's people began to call it Carp Lake, even though it never had any fish in it. Toads and frogs at the lake could be heard for miles, according to an early resident, Vern Dimmit, who supplied much of the early history of Colby. They sang people to sleep at night.

Small articles soon began to appear in Colby's paper, *The Thomas County Cat*, about the enjoyment the residents were having at the lake. On July 30, 1885, one of the articles read, "John W. Irwin is putting up the Carp Lake

windmill." On Aug. 20, 1885, the newspaper reported, "The Town Pump has been out of order several times last week. The Carp Lake well will soon be in good working order." On Nov., 26 that same year, an article read, "There is some talk of flooding the carp pond and converting it into a skating rink."

In 1890, a May edition of *The Cat* reported, "The favorite occupation of the young people during the pleasant spring evenings is boating on Carp Lake and strolling along its shores."

No one seemed to complain about the smell or the numerous mosquitoes.

In the spring and fall, ducks often landed on the lake. According to Opal's information from one of the Thomas County Historical Society's *Yesterday and Today* booklets printed by Prairie Printers Publishing, "Mrs. Sinsbaugh, a real good shot, would pull on her rubber boots and grab her shotgun and go down to the lake and get a mess of ducks."

An early Colby citizen, Clyde Chelf, who was born here in 1896, but later moved to California, wrote back to the paper about his memories of Colby. He said that bulrushes eventually grew up in the lake, causing it to be quite an eyesore.

According to another *Yesterday and Today* booklet, in 1907 the people of Colby began to talk about draining the lake and turning it into a park with trees and making it into a nice recreation area. At that time, the lake area was said to consist of 12 acres. An article in *The Colby Free Press-Tribune* reported, "The lots in Carp Lake will be bought by the City. These lots are worthless to the owners, as they are covered by water much of the time." The Opelt Hotel remained, however.

Several Colby leaders discussed the possibility of making a park, but it wasn't until 1908 that Mayer J.N. Fike actually had the park drained and plowed and trees planted by city workers and volunteers.

I will continue Fike Park history in my next column. Please look for it.

Marj Brown has lived in Colby for 62 years and has spent a good deal of that time writing about people and places here. She says it's one of her favorite things to do.

Party needs to stand by principles

By Rob Schwarzwald

Other Opinions

• What others say in Kansas, elsewhere

The future of the Republican Party is much in the news. Should the GOP (a) become more supportive of "open and avowed" homosexuals and homosexual "marriage," and/or (b) appeal more thoughtfully and articulately to racial minorities, and/or (c) place social issues in some near-invisible tier of irrelevance and focus, instead, on economic growth?

These are but three of the options under discussion by a gleeful commentariat and furrow-browed Republican "strategists." (A Republican "strategist" often is someone who had a good idea in about 1985, got a reputation for it, and has lived off it without saying anything compelling or doing anything noteworthy since.)

Demographics, ideological shifts, public perceptions, how much money is raised and how much is spent, and the like are all important questions. But the most salient question should be: Why does a political party exist in the first place?

The Republican Party was founded on the basis of three principles: Free men (the abolition of slavery), free soil (the opening of the vast western regions to homesteaders who could own the property they farmed), and free labor (work as a dignified enterprise engaged upon by individuals bringing their own merit to the marketplace). Those convictions clashed with the then-Democratic Party, whose allegiance to slavery, anarchic state sovereignty and social class as a means of rigid civic differentiation could not have been more distinct.

A political party exists as a means of developing and enacting policies commensurate with the shared principles of a group of people. While it is not a denomination whose membership demands include exhaustive catechism about the obscure or debatable (how much of Bangladesh's debt should the World Bank for-

give?), it should be about fixed and essential beliefs concerning human dignity, liberty, economic opportunity and mutual security.

Unanimity in politics is neither possible nor desirable; agreement on every point only means the absence of intellectual creativity and the imposition of "group think." However, a shared worldview and common set of basic convictions form the core of any political entity.

The issue for the Republican Party is less about marketing (how can we appeal to second-generation Latinos in the border states?) than about beliefs: What does the GOP stand for? How these beliefs are applied to public policy and communicated to the electorate and its various components are follow-up questions.

Those who would reduce the debate about the future of the Republican Party to matters of electoral appeal, public relations, focus groups, etc., seemingly view politics as a sports contest: You pick (pretty arbitrarily) your favorite team and hope it wins. This view is premised on an understanding of national political structures as being morally equivalent: Team A (the GOP) sometimes beats Team B (the Dems), and sometimes not. But we're all Americans and, after all, politics is just politics.

When the lives of the unborn and the well being of their mothers are at stake; when marriage as a viable relational covenant is at risk, when personal virtue is demeaned as little

more than comic, when religious liberty is trivialized into privatized faith and when national security is measured less by the robustness of our military than our international likeability, it should be evident that not all political options are, in ethical content or practical effect, the same.

Let's grant that the Republican Party needs to communicate more effectively, articulate its principles with greater care, change the way it speaks to our fellow citizens of Latino, African and Asian heritage, and deflate the mythical conservative "war on women" used so artfully (and dishonestly) by the Left. First, though, the GOP needs to confirm what it is for and stay with it. The current party platform is a pretty good starting place with its call for social conservatism, economic growth, personal opportunity and military strength.

This confirmation will fulfill the charge of the greatest Republican president, Abraham Lincoln. "Let us have faith that right makes might," said Lincoln, "and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."

Standing, fighting, and, if need be, losing for what's right is just where the GOP needs to be.

Rob Schwarzwald is senior vice president of the Family Research Council. A presidential appointee in the George W. Bush administration, he also served as chief-of-staff to two members of Congress.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

