



Other Viewpoints

Rank of shame: our education cuts

Here's a national ranking that should embarrass our state: Kansas has cut funding for public schools more than all but two states.

In inflation-adjusted dollars, state aid is \$950 per pupil less now than it was in 2008, according to a study by the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington. Only Alabama and Wisconsin cut more funding per pupil.

As a percentage, Kansas' education spending is down 16.5 percent since 2008. That's the fourth-highest drop, behind only Oklahoma at 22.8 percent, Alabama at 20.1 percent and Arizona at 17.2 percent.

The Great Recession caused most of the cutting, which was understandable. But unlike many other states, Kansas has not moved to restore funding as the economy has improved, deciding instead to cut taxes.

A three-judge panel ruled earlier this year that school funding was unconstitutionally low and that the state needed to increase it by more than \$400 million. The Kansas Supreme Court likely will reach the same conclusion later this year.

Is it any wonder why the state loses these lawsuits?

— *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

Where to write, call

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966.
Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

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

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 136-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov

State Rep. Ward Cassidy, (120th District) State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 151-S, Topeka, Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7616 ward.cassidy@house.ks.gov

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Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

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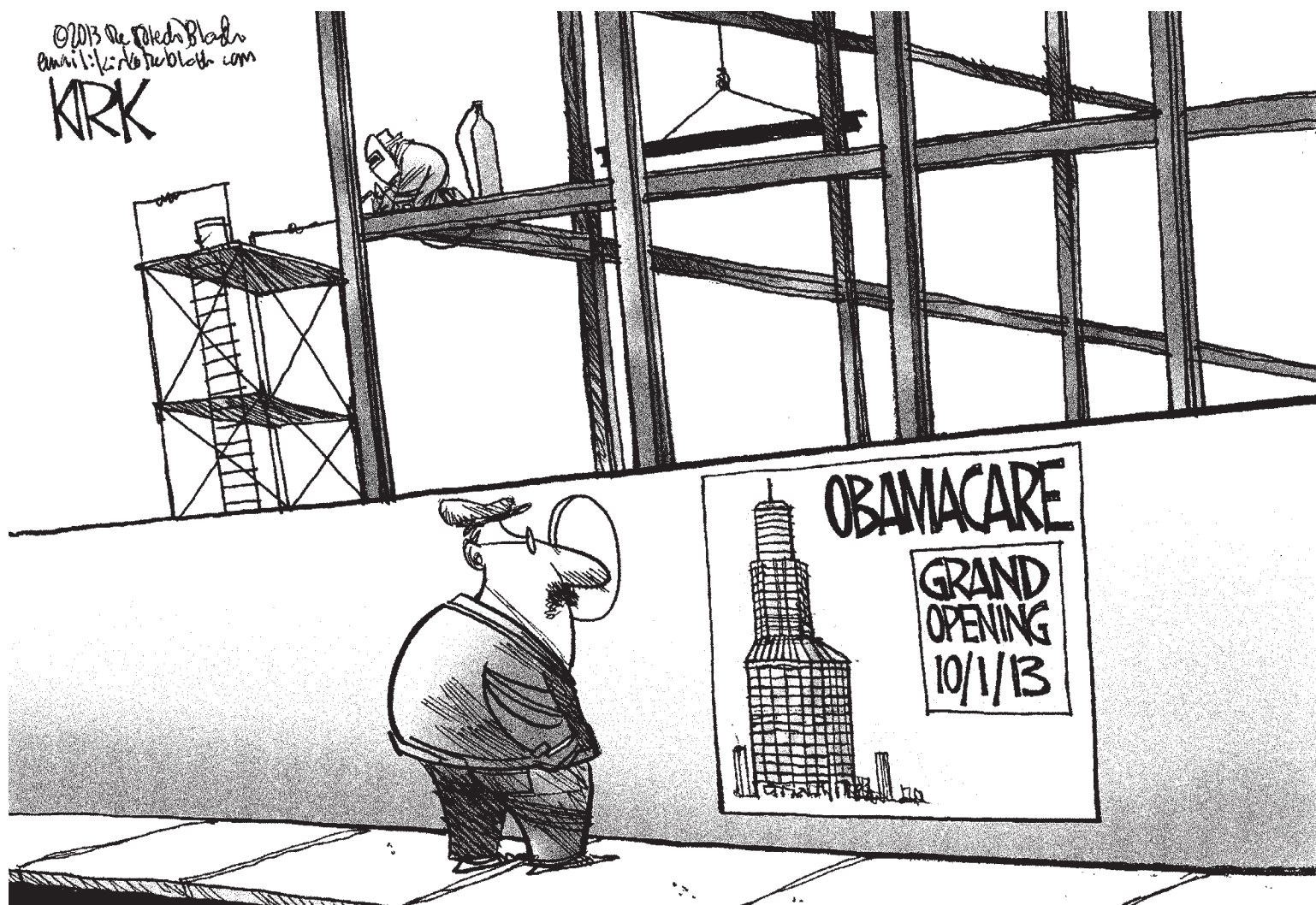
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Alzheimer's a defining challenge

Every 68 seconds someone in America develops Alzheimer's disease — a devastating and irreversible brain disease that slowly destroys an individual's cognitive functioning, including memory and thought.

Kansas City physician Dr. Richard Padula and his wife, Marta, had been married for 51 years when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2006. It is difficult to imagine the anguish Dick, Marta and their family and friends experienced as he deteriorated from a leading heart surgeon into someone unable to comprehend a newspaper article. Unfortunately, these heart-wrenching stories have become all too common.

Alzheimer's currently affects 5.2 million people in the U.S. and more than 35.6 million worldwide. As the population ages, the number of people with Alzheimer's after age 65 will double every five years, while the number of individuals 85 years and older with this disease will triple by 2050. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. and there is currently no cure, no diagnostic test and no treatment for this terrible disease.

As a nation, we must commit to defeating one of the greatest threats to the health and financial well-being of our country. In 1962, President Kennedy called our nation to action to reach the moon by the end of that decade. We need to commit ourselves to a goal no more ambitious, and just as imperative. We must strive to achieve not only an effective treatment, but a cure for Alzheimer's over the next decade.

As the baby boomer generation ages and Alzheimer's disease becomes more prevalent, the need to confront the pending health care crisis has become ever more urgent. The fi-



U.S. Senator Jerry Moran

• Moran's Memo

Financial costs alone can no longer be ignored. Caring for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias is expected to cost \$203 billion this year, with \$142 billion covered by the federal government through Medicare and Medicaid. A recent study by the RAND Corporation stated that the cost of dementia care is projected to double over the next 30 years, surpassing health care expenses for both heart disease and cancer. Without a way to prevent, cure or effectively treat Alzheimer's, it will be difficult — if not impossible — to rein in our nation's health care costs. Alzheimer's has become a disease to define a generation, but if we focus and prioritize our research capacity, it does not need to continue as an inevitable part of aging.

It is time to truly commit to defeating this disease in the next decade — a goal no more ambitious than the goal set forth for the Apollo space program. For every \$27 Medicare and Medicaid spends caring for individuals with Alzheimer's, the federal government spends only \$1 on Alzheimer's research. Yet, research suggests that more progress could be made if given more support. One study found that a breakthrough against Alzheimer's that delays the onset of the disease by five years would mean an annual savings of \$362 billion by 2050. A sustained federal commitment to research for Alzheimer's will lower costs and

improve health outcomes for people living with the disease today and in the future.

As ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the National Institutes of Health, the focal point for our nation's medical research infrastructure, I am committed to prioritizing funding for Alzheimer's research. This year, the Senate Subcommittee increased funding for the National Institute on Aging by \$84 million, and supported the initial year of funding for the new presidential initiative to map the human brain. Both projects will increase our understanding of the underlying causes of Alzheimer's, unlock the mysteries of the brain, and bring us closer to effective treatments and one day, hopefully, a cure.

Alzheimer's is a defining challenge of our generation. We must commit to a national goal to defeat this devastating disease over the next decade by supporting the critical research carried out by the scientists and researchers across our nation.

The health and financial future of our nation are at stake and the U.S. cannot afford to ignore such a threat. Together, we can make a sustained commitment to Alzheimer's research that will benefit our nation and bring hope to families like the Padulas, as well as future generations of Americans. The challenge is ours and the moment to act is now.

Jerry Moran of Manhattan, the junior U.S. senator from Kansas, is a member of the Senate Banking Committee and serves as the ranking member of the Subcommittee for Housing, Transportation and Community Development. He is the sponsor of the Financial Institutions Examination Fairness and Reform Act.

Advanced study critically needed

Police departments, prosecuting attorneys and judges across the country are worried.

Newspaper headlines in West Virginia, Texas and other states tell the story: fake data, "expert" conclusions that were not supported by the evidence, crime lab fraud, wrongful convictions. Some crime scene investigators and lab technicians have been found to have failed their science. This results in overturned convictions. Some cases have the potential to reverse literally thousands of prior court cases.

While the televised *CSI* program has motivated many students to enter this field, the program stresses the few minutes of adrenalin and ignores the many long hours of tedious work. Such evidence officers are occupied with photographing crime scenes. They must ensure the evidence is secured from the time it leaves the scene to when it is finally presented in court. And most laboratory procedures and analyses that are shown in minutes in reality take days to run.

The televised glamour and bravado cover up the actual extent of real laboratory skill, command of statistics, clarity of reasoning and communication, and personal integrity that are essential in this job.

When the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals investigated one crime lab worker two decades ago, they found fraudulent data in every case examined. This included overstating results, misreporting the frequency of genetic matches, stating many items had been tested when only one was examined, altering



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

lab results and stating that inconclusive results were conclusive. As a result, that high court ruled all testimony and evidence provided by that crime lab worker over a decade "should be deemed invalid."

Such incompetence casts a shadow on hundreds if not thousands of convictions. That is why police, judges and prosecutors have major concerns that their crime lab specialists are solidly trained. And when tainted convictions are overturned and result in the release of bona fide criminals, the public needs to be just as concerned with the educational integrity of programs that train evidence officers.

Professionals in this field are concerned too. You can read their concerns for depth-of-training and rigor-of-program at the Council on Forensic Science Education website (coFse.org): "Forensic science is a unique scientific discipline requiring its practitioners to have in addition to technical skills and knowledge, also critical, analytical thinking skills, communication skills and an ethical awareness of the role of the scientist in our criminal justice system. A complete educational program should there-

fore create forensic science professionals."

They continue with the following critical assessment: "Recently there has been a marked increase in the number of forensic science programs at colleges and universities. Many programs have been established despite very limited resources, insufficient personnel, lab space and support for these programs. Students completing these programs expect to find employment in crime labs but are surprised to learn that lab management is not impressed by the curriculum."

Police, prosecutors and judges all know that their work is futile unless these new technicians are well-trained. It takes real lab work with cadavers and hi-tech equipment to develop hands-on skills and technical competency. It takes mathematical depth to understand statistical significance. It takes speaking practice under pressure to develop the verbal reasoning to clearly explain and defend evidence in the courtroom. And it takes direct face-to-face course interaction for faculty to make judgments on personal integrity before recommending their graduates forward.

This is one specialty that we cannot afford to "half train" — or the felon whose conviction is overturned due to sloppy labwork may move in next door.

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.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

