

from other pens...

Cancer on its way to being top killer

"You have cancer."
More likely than not, you have heard these words spoken to you, a loved one or a friend.

Cancer is on its way to being the No. 1 killer in the United States. The disease continues to make a devastating impact on our lives, especially here in the Heartland. Our death rate in Kansas is only dropping at half the rate of the national average.

Nearly 13,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer in our state this year alone, and it will cost us \$1.7 billion in medical expenses and lost productivity, not to mention cancer's destructive impact on families.

As it stands now, our cancer incidence and mortality figures will double over the next 20 years, due primarily to aging demographics. As if that weren't enough, we are facing unprecedented federal budget cuts to the National Cancer Institute's funding. This is unacceptable.

I believe that one death from cancer is one too many, and that is what led me back to this great state to spearhead the University of Kansas Medical Center's quest to obtain National Cancer Institute designation as a Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Having helped the Vanderbilt-Ingram Comprehensive Cancer Center in Nashville, Tenn., obtain this designation, I have firsthand knowledge of what it will take to earn this designation at the University of Kansas. Preparing the application is a laborious process and typically takes years. But I can assure you that the gains we will reap from becoming a world-class Comprehensive Cancer Center are priceless.

Federal designation will bring access to more treatments and clinical trials for patients, and it will give researchers the support they need as they search to eliminate suffering and death from this disease. This is not a quest we can take on alone. Our only hope of obtaining this prestigious designation is through collaboration with others in our region.

It will take courage to break down traditional barriers and unselfish cooperation of cancer-care professionals, health care providers, public health practitioners, private industry and patient advocates throughout Kansas and western Missouri to make this happen. Collaboration is vital to our success — do not think for a minute that we can or should "go it alone."

In July, we will launch the Midwest Cancer Alliance, which will create a network of oncologists, health care providers, hospitals and cancer care organizations throughout the state and region to work together and provide the best cancer care available to patients in their hometowns.

All patients and families know that receiving cutting-edge treatment close to home is a huge advantage that sadly, many Kansans have not been able to experience, if they had to travel to M.D. Anderson in Houston or the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for cancer care.

The University of Kansas has declared obtaining this designation as its top priority. We are committed to providing the leadership needed for such an initiative, and with the help of everyone in Kansas and western Missouri, we can change the face of cancer care.

Dr. Roy Jensen, director of the University of Kansas Cancer Center at the medical center in Kansas City, is leading KU's effort to obtain National Cancer Institute designation as a Comprehensive Cancer Center, allowing patients throughout Kansas to have access to more advanced care and the newest clinical trials offered through designated hospitals.

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
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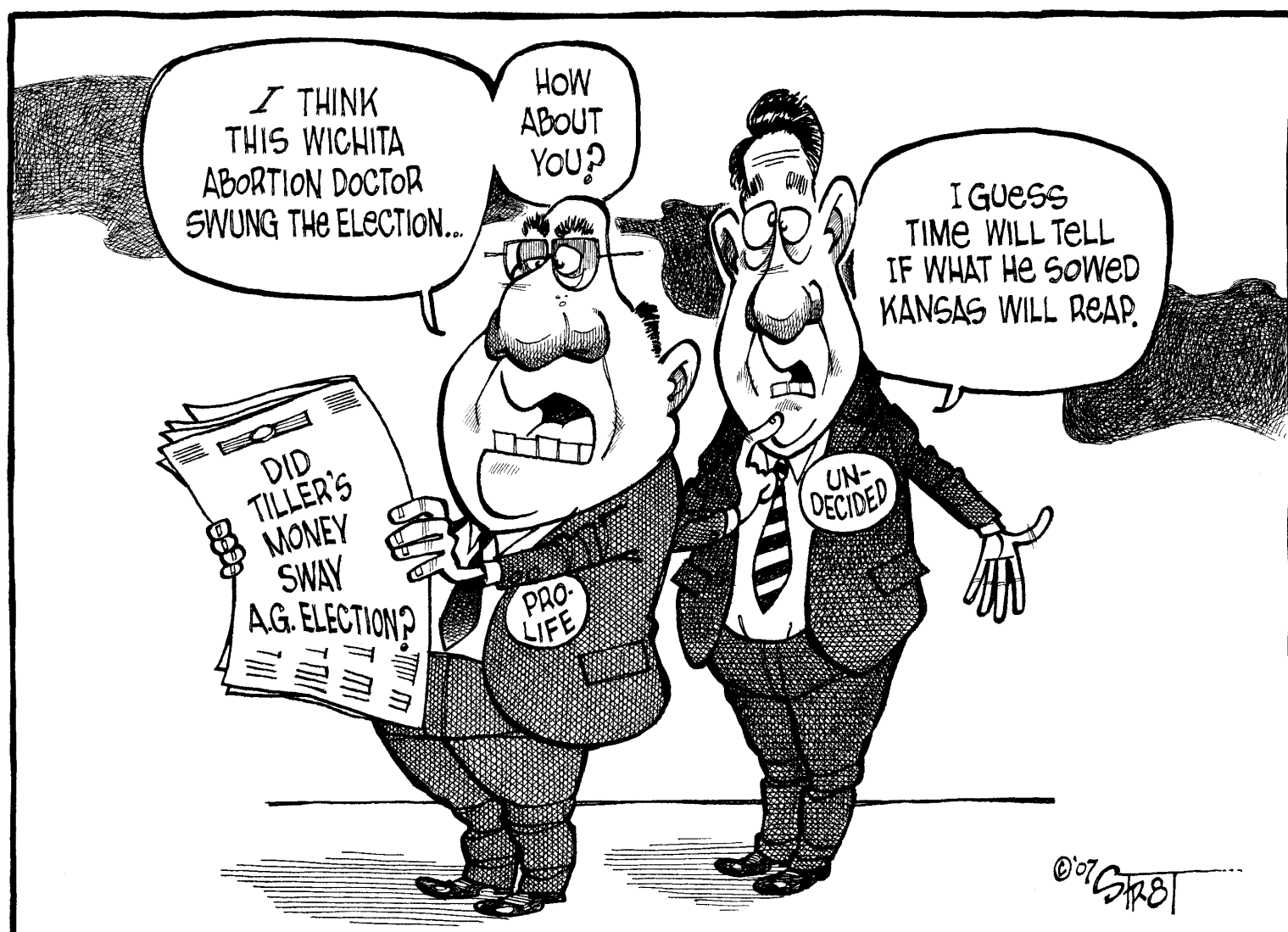
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Getting in to Iraq easy, getting out tricky

So how does the U.S. get out of Iraq?

Like the gazelle that wakes up among a pride of sleeping lions, carefully. Very carefully.

It'd be fair to say that nearly everyone in the Arab world thinks we made a mistake getting into Iran. It'd also be fair to say that hardly anyone wants us to just pull out.

Mohammed Hussain Al Shaali is minister of state for foreign affairs for the United Arab Emirates, with the title of foreign minister. A career diplomat who has spent much of his life in the U.S., Mr. Al Shaali is convinced the U.S. must leave Iraq, less certain how that can happen.

"The most devastating situation in the region is in Iraq," he tells a group of American editors. "Nobody knows how it can be resolved in the foreseeable future. Nobody has a plan.

"Hundreds of people are killed every day... The more prolonged the war, the more who are killed, but so far, nobody knows how to get out."

Like many U.S. allies in the region, he said, the U.A.E. tried to advise America not to invade Iraq. No one wanted to listen to our friends, he said.

"We have to have a plan," the minister said. "These people deserve peace."

Continued warfare can only encourage the extremists, he said, inviting them to move into other countries, "exactly like what is happening in Lebanon today."

It's tough to administer a large and diverse country like Iraq, he said, but the U.S. made a mistake when it decided to try without the help



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of existing institutions.

"They didn't just occupy Iraq," he said. "They dismantled the country. How can you administer a country after that?"

He said the U.S. needs to have a clear plan, not just cut and run.

"A sudden pullout would create chaos," he said. "I would like the U.S. to believe its first priority is bringing peace to the region.

"Most of these issues will disappear then."

He added that the U.S. should give regional institutions some role in whatever plan it comes up with. A plan which divides Iraq along ethnic lines won't work, he said, because nearly every Mideastern nation has similar divisions.

"If you divide Iraq," he said, "you would have to divide every country in the region. Instead of 200 members in the United Nations, you would have maybe 600.

"Would Turkey agree to a Kurdish state in Iraq? How long would it take before the Turkish army would move into that area?"

He suggested an Islamic force to stabilize the area.

"I think if it has a clear plan, it will work," he said. "The U.S. needs to make a clear statement that it does not want to stay.

"The countries of the region are ready to play a role."

At the Gulf Research Center, a think tank in Dubai, Dr. Mustafa Alani worries about what happens after Iraq.

"Iraq is now an importer of terrorists," he said. "One day those people are going to leave Iraq... Iraq has become a university for terrorists, graduating a new generation."

The U.S. is in the fifth month of its new strategy, he said, with no sign of any improvement in the situation.

"There is nothing encouraging," he said. "Nothing is happening. Only three of 60 Iraqi units are capable of independent operations."

What can the U.S. do?

"You have very few options," he said. "Either cut and run, or a gradual redeployment. In all these scenarios, what you are going to face is civil war. It could lead to a regional war.

"Iran and other countries will not stand by and allow Iraq to dissolve. ... Turkey will not allow a Kurdish entity to form on its border."

Is there any hope?

"American pressure should force the Iraqi government to change the structure of the government," he said. "The mistake was to neglect the Arab Sunni community."

In short, it's a long way from the current morass to any kind of stable regional solution, and Iran waits in the wings to take advantage of any void left by the U.S. More about that next week.

Crying at work



tom
purcell

• commentary

The Wall Street Journal article nearly brought me to tears: Crying has become acceptable in the workplace.

A growing number of workers, especially those in their 20s and 30s, no longer see crying at work as a bad thing. They think it's bad to conceal their emotions.

Jean Twenge, a professor at San Diego State University, said they were raised by parents who encouraged them to express their feelings — parents who continually told them how smart and talented and perfect they are.

Now that these runts are in the workplace — now that they're in reality — they can't handle the pressure. Their meany bosses — greedy fellows who care about turning profits — are demanding and critical. No wonder everybody is crying.

One woman — an accountant in her early 30s — broke into tears when her boss asked her to install software on her computer. When the boss asked her why she was blubbering, the woman said, "You scare me!"

It's not just women who are crying. Though they are more likely to cry than men, it has become more socially acceptable for both men and women to cry, according to Stephanie Shields, a Penn State psychology professor.

A female communications specialist in Boston gave an example. She said a male co-worker in his 20s had to fight "back tears while telling her about a chewing-out he'd gotten from a colleague." She said that a guy less in touch with his feelings might have expressed

anger or pounded the table.

How Neanderthal that would have been.

Some bosses are getting in touch with their feelings, too. A CEO of a credit-counseling service said he can't expect his employees to be compassionate and caring with clients, then turn off their feelings like a switch. He said he knows how upsetting things can get. If they cry, he said, there is "no apology needed."

I'll tell you what is needed: some backbone. We've gotten way too sensitive — way too eager to give into our feelings and weaknesses. We've gone soft.

Here's another softy trend. Napping is now acceptable in the workplace. Now I'm a big proponent of napping. It definitely boosts my productivity. But when I used to work in a corporate office, I napped the way an effective employee is supposed to.

I took a late lunch and sneaked out to my car. I flipped on some classical music and reclined the seat. I had some incredible naps in the parking garage and nobody knew about it but me.

But today's napping employees?

Companies are erecting tents in large napping rooms. Employees are curling up with the

company dog — a dog makes them feel happy — for a nice snooze. Nobody is embarrassed about it.

Nobody is embarrassed about anything anymore.

Look, there is a time and a place for everything. There is a time and a place for a man to nap. There is a time and a place for a man to cry: the birth of his child, the death of a loved one and when a late pass results in his team winning the Super Bowl.

There is a time and a place for a man to reveal his emotions, too. The time is usually in the evening and the place is usually a pub. Only a man's bartender should know his innermost feelings.

But that isn't the case anymore, and that is why I worry. While tough-guy terrorists are plotting to blow us up, our fellows are misting up as they whine about their boss to co-workers.

We need to turn things back. We need to get our civilization back on track. Here's a good way to start: There shall be no more crying in the workplace, especially by men. There shall be no more napping, either (unless you sneak out to your car).

God forbid that the terrorists attack us again. But if they do, it's better that we are stoically working at our desks rather than curled up with the company dog, sobbing over something our meany boss said to us.

Tom Purcell is a nationally syndicated humor columnist. For comments to Tom, please email him at Purcell@caglecartoons.com.

Letter Policy

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