

from our viewpoint...

Can government fix health care system?

It's been fashionable to trash the U.S. health care system the last couple of years, especially since the appearance of the Michael Moore movie "Sicko."

The agenda for Moore and other leftists is pretty clear, of course: they want a government-run medical care system to make things "equal," and by that we presume they mean equally bad.

And while the American health-care system is, in many ways, a mess, it works better than most. It produces cutting-edge research, top technology and a broad application of medical knowledge.

It's the medical payment system that's wrong, and though most of the problems have been caused by government involvement, the leftists want even more. There is a certain plausible illogic to that: What we've been doing the last 30 years has only screwed things up, so let's do more.

Supposedly, the Canadian system works well — if you don't count the overburdened system which has to ration care among users and the flight of many top doctors to the U.S., where they can make a lot more money. Britain has faced legendary problems trying to get its system into line.

The World Health Organization put the U.S. 37th out of 191 United Nations members in health-care services — between Costa Rica and Slovenia and just ahead of Cuba, the article says, but it fails to list any criteria.

But if you've seen the hospitals in Costa Rica, you'd have to wonder who did the ranking. They're adequate, but just that, no comparison to American hospitals.

That's not the way our system is perfect. It's bloated and wasteful, and government intervention often makes things worse. The government on one hand gives out money to build and equip hospitals and on the other tries to limit their scope and function and tells them what they can charge. It offers to pay for welfare clients and the elderly, but not enough to keep the lights on.

It makes rules that often make no sense: One requires hospitals and other providers to use the same price list for all customers, but allows deep discounts for insurance companies and, of course, government programs.

The result: "private-pay" patients, the 46 million uninsured Americans, are expected to pay more than anyone else because they have no one to bargain for them. How much sense does that make?

The uninsured often can't pay, of course, so the insured and the government make up the difference in the end. Private-pay patients eventually leave the system with their pocketbooks empty, their credit ruined, paying nothing, many 10 cents on the dollar at most.

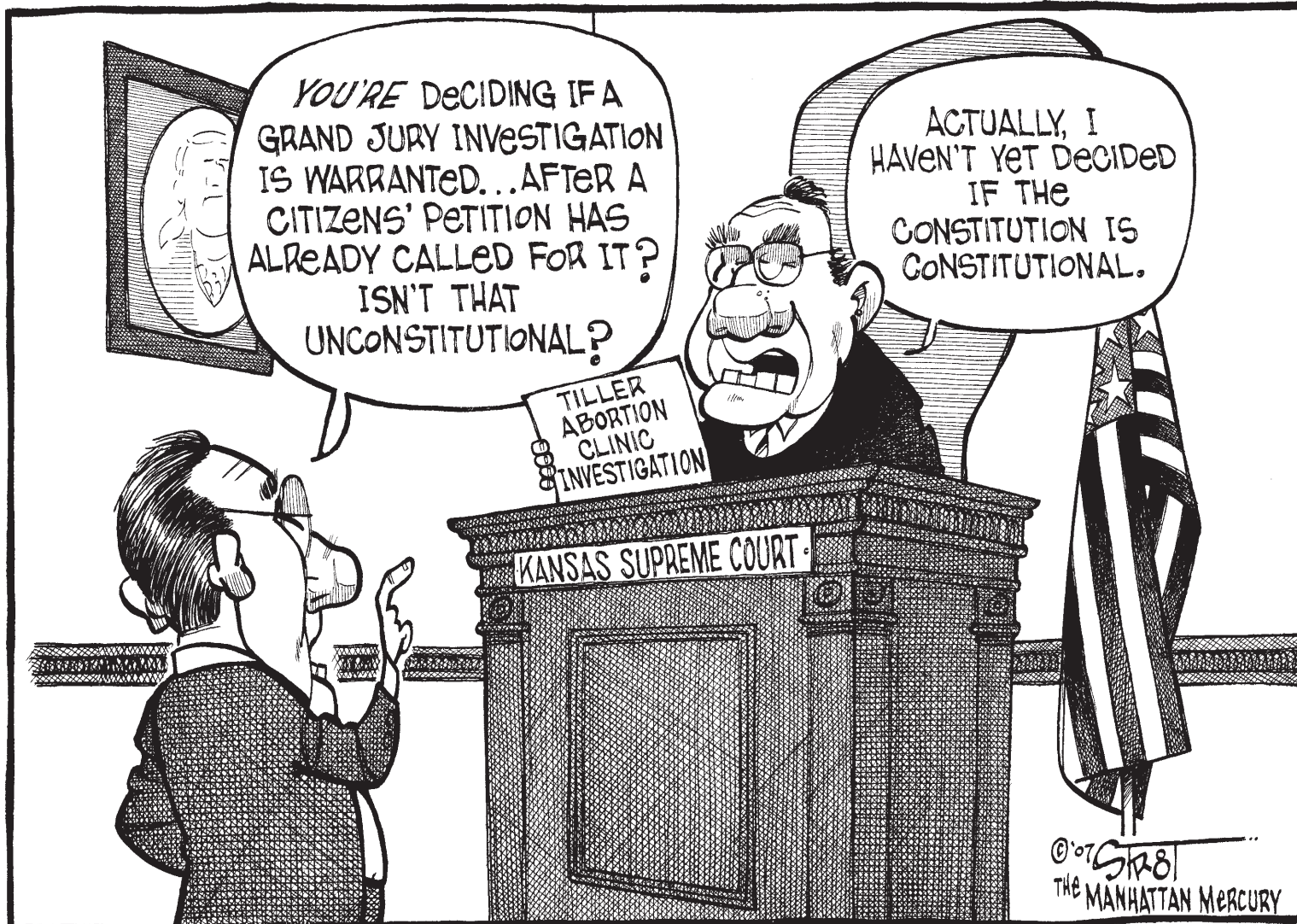
Yeah, the system is pretty crazy. It used to work better before the government got involved. Hospitals were run as charities, never expecting to make money. Doctors made house calls. That was a simpler time, a different era. Medical care was more primitive and less expensive. City and county hospitals and charity wards took care of the poor.

Today? If you can figure out the system, more power to you. If a political candidate could deliver a solution, he or she'd be elected in a flash.

So far, no one has found that grail. And while medical care keeps getting better, the payment system keeps getting worse.

Care keeps getting better, but the payment system is coagulating. Medicare, the government-run system for the elderly, is said to be nearly bankrupt. No one is doing anything, though everyone thinks the government should do something.

But is that the answer, as Mr. Moore and his buddies would have us believe? Or is it the problem? — *Steve Haynes*



Good, evil and Christmas

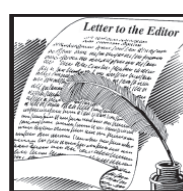
To the Editor:

Christmas is the time when people are cheerful, do good deeds and pass on joyful and peaceful greetings. It is also a time marred by evil acts and tragic events.

Scientists have been studying human acts of good and evil. The question is why are people capable of both, at times seconds apart. The answer is in the mind of the individual as a moral matter. In the mind, there are control centers that act and react to outside stimuli and control acts in given situations: In calm, everyday events, the mind in an interacting mode, determines a good or evil response. In times of crises or emergency, never encountered before, the mind can become confused and send mixed signals, which place the individual in a dilemma.

After reading this information, a connotation of Emmanuel Kant's question came to mind: What if apriori facts existed? What if that truth was vested in a power that was creative and eternal, and had knowledge way beyond scientific facts of how and why people act the way they do? That power would be God, who created humans with an innate morality.

If God is in the picture of morality, it is cast into a different light. God created people in his own image. The image is a relationship of the human soul to God, who is spirit. He gave our ancestors one of his own attributes, freedom of choice. He also gave them the knowledge of only the good, meaning a full-communion



from our readers

to the editor

relationship with him.

The knowledge of evil, known to God, was also available to them. They were tempted and choose to become like God, knowing both good and evil. As a result of their choice, the good-only relationship was broken and the knowledge of evil also became a part of their innate moral nature. Furthermore, they passed on to all yet to come the dual awareness: The Apostle Paul states in effect that God consigned "all" (Greek olos) yet to be born to an innate good/evil morality because He would not take away the freedom He had given them. The freedom would give our ancestors and all to follow an opportunity to repent and turn to him. The broken relationship, moral good and evil, and freedom of choice have been on display in human history down through the centuries.

Hopefully, scientific research will lead to moderate if not complete control of all destructive, thoughts, words, and actions that create hurt and division.

Many say that if there were a God, evil would not exist. God did not create evil but permits it as a judgment against sin. He gives his ac-

cepted love and forgiveness, the opportunity to unite the members of his human family with him.

Christmas is the time to remind ourselves of the moral goodness born in a manger and put on display in the life, teachings and loving death of Jesus Christ. He brings peace, joy and goodwill to all, which extends the possibility for a reconciled new life with heaven's Father now and the promise of a shining future for all who will have it so.

Earl Martell
Retired Lutheran minister
Goodland

To the Editor:

Can you explain to me how, when Kansas is supposed to have some of the most influential representatives in Congress, Goodland could lose a new veterans' outreach clinic to Colorado?

The Goodland location supposedly had the support of Sens. Pat Roberts and Sam Brownback and our own Rep. Jerry Moran, but Colorado got the clinic. How can that be?

There certainly was enough support from veterans and others in Goodland. Was someone too busy running for president? What happened to our influence?

Doug Jackson
Goodland

Sunflower Electric and effects of CO2

As a member of the western Kansas Legislative delegation, I feel I must address the controversy surrounding the Sunflower Electric Power Corporation's desire to expand its electricity plant in Holcomb. This column focuses on the effects of CO2 on crops, and the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere.

I currently serve as Vice-Chairman of the Agriculture, Environment and Energy Committee of the National Conference of State Legislators. I have the honor to sit on the Executive Committee of the Energy Council, based in Dallas, Texas and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Task Force of the American Legislative Exchange Council. By serving on these national committees and task forces, I have heard many environmental and energy experts explain and read a lot of material concerning global warming and CO2 in the atmosphere.

First, I would like to talk about something I have tried, many times, to get the answer to — and most speakers didn't know or didn't want to answer the question: what are the effects of increased levels of CO2 in the atmosphere on crop yields?

Finally found the answer in a report by Craig and Keith Idso — "Forecasting World Food Supplies: The Impact of Rising Atmospheric CO2 Concentration."

The Idso's of the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change, are world-recognized leaders on carbon dioxide research. They calculate that over the next 50 years, aerial fertilization effect of atmospheric CO2 enrich-



from other pens

commentary

ment will boost world agricultural output by about 50 percent - as much as the expected advances because of technology and expertise.

There is evidence this is really happening. National Atmospheric and Space Administration reported that during the period 1980-2000 satellite data clearly showed a marked greening in parts of the northern hemisphere which they attribute to CO2 fertilization and warming.

Mean percentage yield increase produced by 300 parts per million increase in atmospheric CO2 concentration: Wheat 48 percent; Soybeans 46 percent; Barley 66 percent; and Woody Plants 51 percent.

One of the really good things about CO2 is that plants perform better under stress (drought, etc.) with increased levels of CO2.

The second point I wish to address is the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere.

As most people know, the greenhouse effect is a phenomenon by which solar radiation

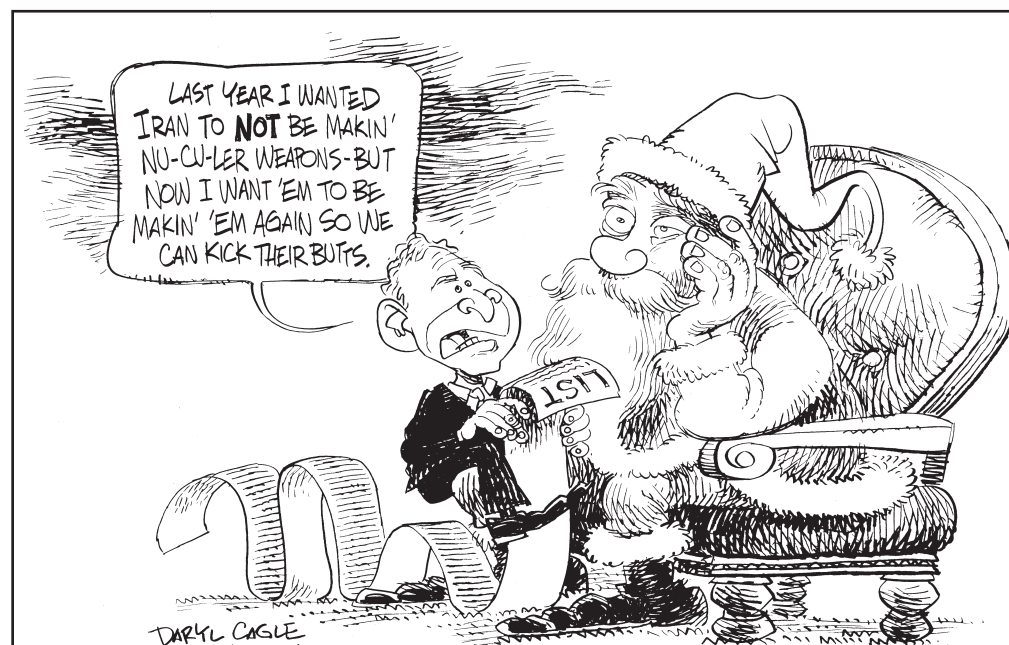
passes through our atmosphere, is absorbed by the earth, and then re-emitted as heat which is trapped by what are called "greenhouse gases." Without this phenomenon, the earth would be far too cold to support life.

What many people may not know is the makeup of "greenhouse gases." They include water vapor, CO2, methane (CH4) and several minor gases. Carbon dioxide makes up just 1.9 percent of the total. Water vapor is 96.9 percent of the total, and the others make up the balance.

The important question is: If CO2 makes up just 1.9 percent of the gases, just how important can it be, compared to water vapor, which makes up 97 percent of the total and is constantly fluctuating?

I believe KDHE Secretary Roderick Bremby was wrong to deny Sunflower's air quality permit for the two proposed 700-megawatt generators. I will be working during the upcoming legislative session to reverse this decision and to help our great state establish an energy policy based on sound scientific and economic analyses.

Representative Larry Powell (R)
117th District
Garden City



Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: <star-news@nw-kansas.com>.

The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Pat Schiefen, Society Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Repoter

Ramona C. Sanders, Reporter

Jordie Mann, Jessica Corbin, Advertising Sales

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Betty Morris, James Jackson

Lana Westfahl, Rebecca Foster, James Ornelas,

Amanda Campbell, Mike Jackson



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

(ntbetz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day, July 4th and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: star-news@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: goodlandads@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$29; six months, \$46; 12 months, \$81. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$39; six months, \$54; 12 months, \$89 (All tax included). Mailed individually each day: (call for a price).

Incorporating:

The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company