

from our viewpoint...

Elderly numbers raise care issues

With all the problems this country is facing — including the teetering economy now officially in a deep recession — one of the most urgent problems has to be the cost of caring for our elderly population.

President FDR once said a country is judged by how it takes care of its children and the elderly. Today our country faces a growing crisis in both those areas as the number of uninsured grows and the cost of getting care for our parents and grandparents climbs higher and faster than we can cover it.

We recently traveled to visit our 82-year-old father in Arizona and our 86-year-old mother-in-law in New Orleans. At both places we found they were struggling with medical costs.

The 82-year-old has Alzheimer's and has been under hospice care for several months. We were glad he knew who we were and could carry on a short conversation, but his physical condition is deteriorating and that is why he had to be put in a home about eight months ago.

The home costs are about \$3,000 a month, and while part of that is covered by his Social Security and Medicare there are expenses that are not and without someone to help pay these, the quality and amount of care would disappear.

What makes health care an immediate crisis is that the recession has hurt a lot of retired people already. With Baby Boomers now entering retirement age the numbers are going to grow rapidly beyond what the system can handle. It has been estimated by the National Health Institute that in the next 10 to 20 years those with Alzheimer's will explode into millions of cases.

One recent example in our experience of economic conditions having an unexpected effect on the health care was when the hospice group that was handling a lot of cases at the home in Casa Grande, Ariz., suddenly announced it was closing its service. Almost overnight people who care for elderly parents and relatives had to scramble to find an alternative hospice to help them.

During the transition period the nurses working for the hospice had to sort through and confirm all of the prescription orders from the doctors. Not only is the search to find another hospice difficult, but if one is found a confusing shuffle in medical care can take place because each hospice has its own doctors, and some patients still have appointments with their family doctors. Keeping medications and medical care going in such a shifting situation is a challenge.

In the case of the 86-year-old mother-in-law, her problem is the medical bills that are piling up despite having Social Security and Medicare. She said her uncovered expenses for oxygen and prescriptions is over \$300 a month.

She has moved in with a daughter to have a place to live and her children are selling off some of her furniture and other belongings to help cover the medical bills.

These are but two examples of situations the elderly are facing, and we know there are more out there.

President-elect Barack Obama will be faced with the economic problems of a recession the deepest we have seen in nearly 40 years. That complicates the exploding need to find ways to help our elderly population cope with getting old and frail.

This is no longer a problem just for the poor. Getting proper care is becoming too expensive for many who have lived their lives in the "middle class." At the same time the numbers of people heading into the age where they need more health care is beginning to really boom.

We hope the incoming President and Congress can find a way to improve the availability of health care for both the children and the elderly so our country lives up to the challenge of FDR's motto. — Tom Betz



People should be part of selection process

Choosing a "CEO" is no easy task. The Colby School Board has just set lose one principal and will be looking for another, and it would be easy to sit on the sidelines and pick at their choices.

The truth is, though, that there's just know way to know what's in a person's heart.

Anyone who's made these hiring decisions can attest to that. The track record of most people in top jobs bears testimony to it.

City managers, police chiefs, pastors, school superintendents and principals, county administrators, top leaders in any business — if a person lasts more than two years, they're exceptional.

If a board or an employer finds someone who takes a job and runs with it, they're fortunate indeed.

In the process, candidates are interviewed, backgrounds checked, references called. For a lot of reasons, problems that later seem obvious never come up.

Candidates tend to talk a good game. Everyone wants to put his best foot forward in an interview, in their resume, in the references they choose.

And most of use are not trained to be experts at hiring. Most board members, most people in business know how to do many things well. Human resources isn't part of the curriculum for most, though.



steve haynes

• along the sappa

When references are called, often former employers fear giving a bad recommendation. Sometimes they have agreed never to reveal why a candidate left his or her last job. Sometimes they fear a lawsuit. It's common.

Candidates may not admit to past sins, preferring to talk about their strong points. Employers public and private often allow a leader to resign, rather than making the problems public. Investigation may or may not bring things out.

Even candidates without a skeleton in the closet may be ineffective in a given job, due to temperament or interest or circumstances unknown even to them.

And all things being equal, there's no way to accurately predict the dynamic that will develop in a given town among a board, the employees and the chief executive.

Some will last a decade or two, even longer. Many will last five years or more and make a positive contribution.

As many will be two years and out. And in the end, after all the enquiries are

made, it still comes down to something of a guessing game. Each board member has his or her hunch about who will work out.

So we don't judge any board — or business — strictly solely on the results of its hiring, especially on one hire. Over the long run, you hope a town, a district, a business has more good hires than bad and collects a bunch of good and faithful employees.

Usually, that's the case. Remember that the board members are volunteers trying to do a difficult job, and trying to do what's best.

There have been decisions in the past we've questioned. Hiring, like anything else, is an issue that reasonable people can and will disagree on. But the board members themselves have to make the decision in the end. They will reap the rewards or suffer the consequences, and all for little or no pay.

The only thing we'd ask, and this in itself is no guarantee of a good hire, is that the process always be as open and transparent to the citizens and taxpayers as possible and that the public at large be considered a partner in each public hire.

Those who are paying the bills may not get to vote on the decision, but they will share in the benefits or losses. They deserve a place at the table.

Blame Replicrats



from our readers

• to the editor

To the Editor:
Inflation is a tax on savings.
In 1933 FDR's New Deal (Change) to fix the Depression legalized owning gold!
Not tied to value, lo... the green backs float!
When wages were \$1 an hour, bread was 10 cents a loaf. Had you banked it for interest, what can it buy now?

Government is to set standards, not redistribute wealth. (Where does the Constitution permit taxing everybody to benefit anyone?)

Name anyone overlooked by church charity, the compassion of God, unworthy of thy personal help, entitled to tax dollars? Nary anyone's Social Security tax was ever saved and returned to them plus interest?

If anyone else foisted this pyramid, ponzi, chain letter scheme, they would be incarcerated! If family and the church cannot take care for their own, how can they support everybody else's kin?

Would even Karl Marx cringe at this utopian nightmare of welfare gifts, subsidies exceeding the legal exemption for a taxpayer?

In 1957, a German farmer plowing with a cow and a horse, told me America made a big mistake helping Russia! Had the U.S.A. stayed out, Germany would have conquered the U.S.S.R. and collapsed trying to police that huge mass of land.

Sending troops out to save the world while illegals are flooding the U.S.A. is national suicide!

The Replicrats (A Replicrat is a Democrat faking Republican, or a Republican faking Democrat) only twice balanced the budget since FDR. Their wars for false prosperity cost all the dead corpses.

Irresponsible bailouts — Who is next? Who will bail out the U.S.A. Trillions of debt bur-

dening generations to come is taxation without representation and morally wrong!

If \$700 billion is about \$2,300 per member of every family, what is the total debt prorated to every citizen?

Abolish retirement dollars for every elected official! Dock their pay by the same percent as the deficit!

"But if any provide not for his own family, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." — I Timothy 5:8.

Frank Sowers
Benkelman, Neb.



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