

from our viewpoint...

## Historic votes pass health care reform

More than 14 months of argument, hundreds of hours of rhetoric and millions of dollars spent lobbying on both sides came full circle as the U.S. House of Representatives voted 219 to 212 to pass the U.S. Senate health care bill Sunday evening.

The action sends the Senate bill to President Barack Obama to sign health care reform into law. It was not without heated argument and emotional passion on both sides of the House chamber on Saturday and Sunday.

Democrats worked over the past week to get the majority to pass the Senate bill and work out the reconciliation bill to “fix” the Senate bill that takes back room deals out of the bill and makes changes sought to improve the Senate bill.

Lots of questions about the process were raised as the majority party sought ways to get the bill passed and to give party members ways to show they improved the final product. The reconciliation bill has to be passed by the Senate, and House members who have not seen much action out of the other chamber have been skeptical this will be approved.

As expected not one Republican voted in favor of the bill while 34 Democrats voted against the Senate bill.

The House sidestepped a motion to recommit the reconciliation bill on a vote of 231 to 200, which was the Republicans final effort to stop the process. The vote on the reconciliation bill passed 220 to 211.

Debate was held in the House Rules Committee on setting the debate for health care on Saturday, and at the same time the House took up several resolutions of a more routine nature including one to recognize aviators who were shot down in hostile territory and evaded capture.

Democrats spoke in favor and said many servicemen from wars going back to World War II, Korea and Vietnam were shot down and evaded capture some even joining resistance efforts before they were able to rejoin American forces. These men were not honored with any recognition for these efforts and there was no award for such bravery.

The Republican floor leader said he was in favor of the resolution honoring these servicemen for their valiant efforts. However, he and all of his subsequent speakers spoke more in opposition to the health care bill than adding anything to the resolution to honor the aviators. The same action by the Republicans followed on resolutions to support American troops with a moment of silence on March 26, honoring those who served during the Cold War and celebrating the anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima in World War II.

On Sunday between the debate on the House rule establishing the debate on the health care bill, a vote was taken on the resolution recognizing the valor of the aviators who were shot down but evaded capture. That recorded vote found 426 in favor and none in opposition. Votes on the other resolutions had similar results with not one vote against.

America has health care reform. It took more than 14 months to get to this point, but it does not mean the fight is over. More words will pour out in the months to come as Republicans try to use health care to chop down the size of the Democrats majority.

The Democrats can claim victory today, and let the American people decide if this was the right thing to do in November.

The protestors in Washington on Sunday were both for and against the health care bill. The bill has passed, but the work has just begun. — *Tom Betz*

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e-mail: [star.news@nwkansas.com](mailto:star.news@nwkansas.com)

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N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services  
([nt.betz@nwkansas.com](mailto:nt.betz@nwkansas.com))

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.([support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com))

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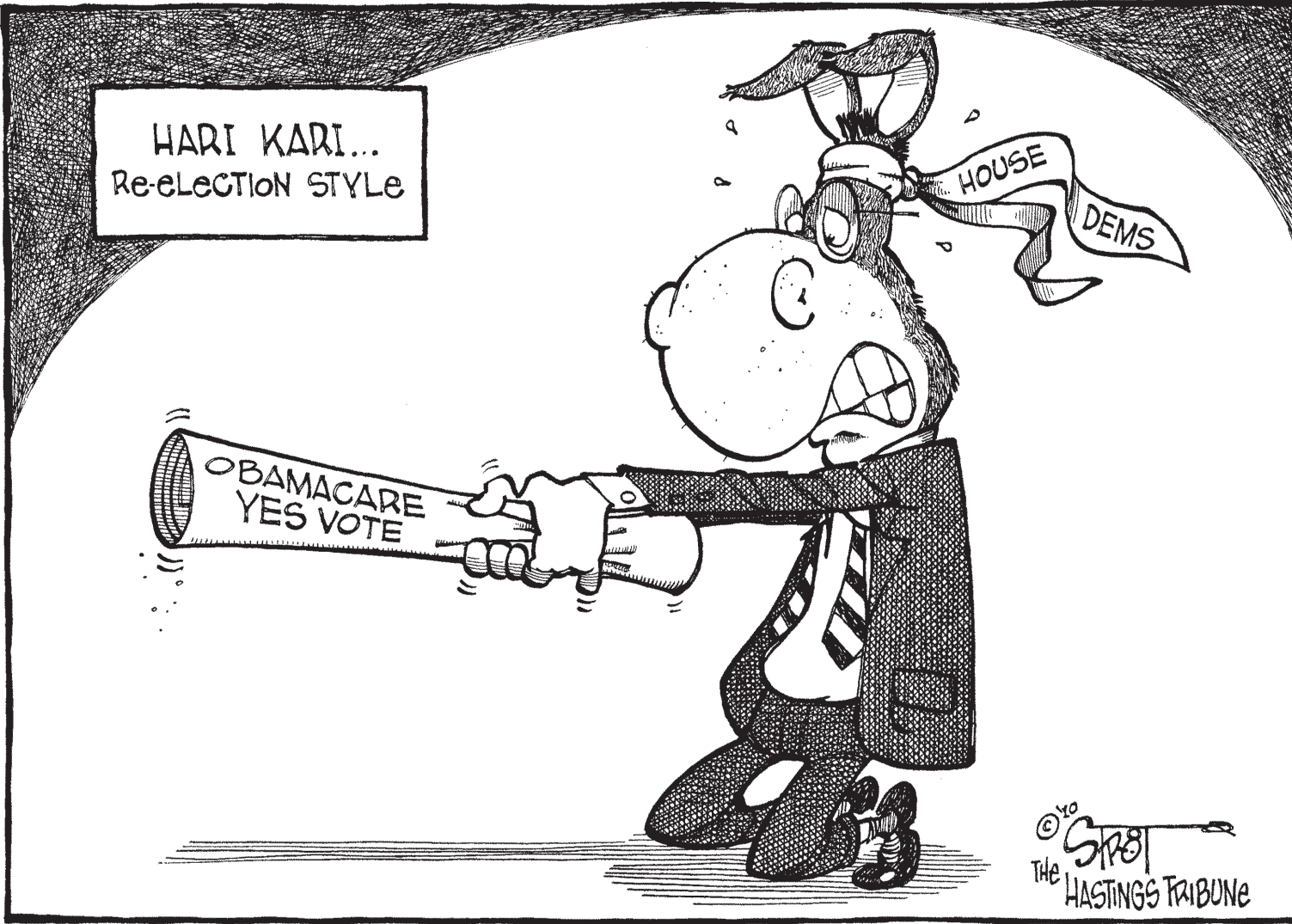
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## Local poll resounding ‘NO’ to health care

The little poll on health care reform among readers of this column turned out much as expected — No! The total vote was 66, with 44 voting no and 22 voting yes. This was a good turnout for a straw poll and I thank all who took part.

Most respondents limited their vote to either yes or no, although a handful decided to comment. Those comments pretty much mirrored the comments heard on television by leaders of both the Republican and Democratic parties.

I hope a lot of you took advantage of C-SPAN's Sunday coverage. It outsmarted all other coverage on television which allowed for slanting, depending on the network you watched. C-SPAN covers these events with cameras rolling and no commentary by its own staff. What you see is what is happening.

What now for health care since President Obama's plan squeezed through? It'll be interesting to see if what was being sold to the public will be delivered.

Now with health care reform out of the way — will it ever really be out of the way — Congress can get down to the business of the people in other areas just as important as health care reform.

It will be interesting to see how long it takes both the House and Senate to get back to normal — whatever that is — and carry on with the people's business.

Again, thanks for your interest in the poll.



### tom dreiling

- time out with td

Sorry, but I received zero Thumbs Up; maybe the poll had something to do with that. But please send your thumbs up to me at [tad1@st-tel.net](mailto:tad1@st-tel.net), or call 890-2475 or drop them off at the Star-News office. Thanks in advance.

Watching the U.S. House of Representatives in session this past week, and at other times this session, I can't understand why the speaker has to gavel the House in order so often and tell the members to take their seats or move their conversations out of the chamber. They act like youngsters who haven't quite understood proper behavior. Shame on them — not the kids but the congressmen!

I am still in a state of shock over KU's loss Saturday to Northern Iowa of the Missouri Valley Conference. For some reason, the Jayhawks just didn't look like the Jayhawks we were used to seeing during the regular season. Something amiss there. However, I was elated with K-State's victory Saturday advancing them to the Sweet 16. They looked mighty

good. Let's hope they keep it going for all of us proud Kansans!

Yes, that thing you see accompanying me is a cane. Never thought it'd come to that, but it sure has. I suffered a fall this past week and X-rays showed inflammation on the right side near the hip. So my good doctor administered a pain-relieving shot. The cane is supposed to help me relieve the pressure on that side. Takes a little while getting used to one of those things. The fall, unfortunately, occurred on stair steps, and thank heaven for hand railings.

Why don't we just call this season of the year Springer — spring-winter combination. It happens without fail every year that March will give us warm temperatures and then toss in a mix of winter, such as we experienced last week and might experience again this week. It's nothing new. There's one television weatherman at Wichita that seems to delight in telling us the good and then injecting the otherwise. And all of the television weather guys and gals make their forecasts sound gospel-true: It "will" do this and it "will" do that. But we viewers know better: It "might" do this or it "might" do that.

Have a good evening! And, again, it's been nice chatting with you. ([tad1@st-tel.net](mailto:tad1@st-tel.net))

## Ecology and economy



### Insight this week

- john schlageck

and nutrient content.

Do the math. If the average sale price for cattle is \$1 per pound and Kansas brings in approximately 500,000 head of stocker cattle (that spend the spring and summer on this Flint Hills grass), that adds an additional \$16-million to the regional and state economy.

Burning of the Flint Hills region is also vital to maintain the prairie ecosystem. Burning promotes a diversity of grass and other broadleaf species, but more importantly prevents the invasion of woody plants and tree species from encroaching on the grass landscape.

In turn, maintaining these acres in a prairie ecosystem supports the many grassland dependent species, like greater prairie chickens and Henslow's sparrow. Ranchers also understand the importance of allowing the grasses to grow at the end of the season so there is adequate cover and refuge for wildlife during winter but also to maintain the health of the native ecosystem.

While agriculture remains the number one contributor to the Flint Hills economy, tourism and recreation also bolster the local and state coffers.

A healthy Flint Hills region provides addi-

tional benefits including soil erosion control, carbon sequestration, water quality, recreation opportunities and wildlife diversity.

"Farmers and ranchers understand and use these fires wisely," Swaffar says. "They have a long history of managing the prairie for economic and ecological purposes. They also understand the health issues associated with pollutants produced from range burning and they're committed to look for solutions to alleviate as many of these concerns as possible."

Livestock producers hope for a workable plan for mitigating smoke during future burn periods. It is essential any form of smoke management plan should not reduce the number of acres already preserved by fire management and cannot create a system unworkable for ranchers.

For generations, farmers and ranchers have lived in harmony with the prairie ecosystem within the Flint Hills. These livestock producers have been good to the Flint Hills and in turn the grassland has returned the favor. They look forward to working in harmony with their urban neighbors who may be impacted by this proven land management tool.

*John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for more than 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.*

## where to write

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — [roberts.senate.gov](http://roberts.senate.gov)

**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — [brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me](mailto:brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me)

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 web address — [www.jerrymoran.house.gov](http://www.jerrymoran.house.gov)

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 247W, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org)

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Rm. 225-E, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399; e-mail address — [ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

**Kansas Attorney General**, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767