

from our viewpoint...

Healthcare is law; now deal with it!

Healthcare reform is now the law of the land, and cries to repeal are not going to happen. The hype of the GOP is they will campaign on the plan to “repeal and replace” the healthcare reform act President Obama signed into law in March.

There is no way for repeal to succeed even if the GOP were to win big in November. Realistically the Dems will lose tight control of the House and probably a few of the 59 Senators, but Obama will still be president and be in position to veto any repeal attempt.

The same can be expected with the state lawsuits to declare the law unconstitutional. Constitutional experts say this law will pass the court test, and the lawsuit challenges in most cases are being made for political capital in this Primary Election season rather than really expecting the courts to overturn the law.

In Kansas Rep. Jerry Moran, who is running to replace Sen. Sam Brownback (who is running for governor), has put out his plan to repeal the healthcare law. One of the GOP candidates to replace Moran is State Sen. Jim Barnett from Emporia, who is pushing to have Kansas Attorney General Stephen Six join the lawsuits on healthcare. So far Six has said he felt it would be a waste of taxpayers money to join the lawsuit.

The Republicans continue to blast the healthcare law, but others such as Kansas Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger are facing the future and working to make sure Kansas citizens get the benefits and protection of the federal law.

With healthcare now law the Democrats have turned victory at the polls in November 08 into a success showing the majority does rule. It took 14 months and loads of rhetoric and a total effort by the GOP to thwart the healthcare bills — not because they did not believe healthcare was important — to defeat the top priority for President Obama.

Watching and researching the details of the House and Senate bills over the past year it was interesting to find many of the things included in each had come from Republicans, and had been incorporated by the Democrats. A conscious decision was made by the Republican leadership to oppose healthcare at all costs, and at times it appeared the prospect of passage was dim and the bill was declared dead. The bill was revived more times than a proverbial cat with nine lives, and in the end the Democratic majority was able to throw off the rhetoric and finish the job.

Whether the healthcare reform will be good has yet to be determined, but as Obama said after he signed the Senate bill into law he did not see any evidence of Armageddon.

What is true is the impacts will take time to filter down to the local level, and once the regulations are written it will be the local hospitals, doctors and health related clinics who will have to make it work. The health insurance companies will have a large amount of impact, and time will tell if the expanding of health care to 32 million more Americans will do what the Democrats and Obama claim.

Obama said this was not a perfect law so one can expect to see various bills in the next months and years to tweak various sections similar to what the House had to do to “fix” the Senate bill.

Anyone wanting to know how healthcare is going to affect them can search the Internet for “how is healthcare going to affect me” and there are about five million sites with various explanations in their view how the law will work. One of the best we found was on About.com, and another was on the Washington Post web site.

It would be a great relief to most people to see the efforts in Washington being turned to working together to get people back to work rather than perpetuating the party of “No” obstruction of everything. — *Tom Betz*

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I remember that day long years ago...

She’s so tiny.

Miniature fingers and toes, with sharp little nails.

A head you can hold in your palm, a rear that fits in the other, just made to be held.

I think I remember now, though it’s been nearly 36 years, the evening after, when the nurse brought our daughter from the nursery to the room. It was the first time we’d had a chance to get to know her, even though Cynthia lay exhausted from 14 hours of labor.

She, too, was tiny, with lots of fine chestnut hair, but a perfectly formed head from what may have been the last natural breech birth in Kansas City.

We looked at her in wonder then, and got ready to take her home and get to know her. It was the start of that strange and wonderful trip we call parenting. I know I wouldn’t trade it for anything, for over those 36 years, Cynthia and I have been blessed.

I’m sure many people feel the same. There’s something special about those we bring into this world and attempt to guide through the signposts of life.

And parenting has never lost its luster. Family is still the source of much joy and wonder, along with some pain and now and then, sorrow.



**steve
haynes**

• along the sappa

Now, though, it’s something new.

We’re grandparents.

That tiny bundle breathing and stretching and making little noises, and OK, sometimes wailing her little head off – she’s not ours to raise. We’re just visitors, here to help out for a while until Brad’s folks come for their turn.

We’ve been holding and watching and changing diapers, of course. And we’ve cooked dinner, done the dishes, cleaned up the house, weeded the garden and the lawn, planted hydrangea and blueberries, raked up gum-tree balls.

Her parents are the ones who have to change their entire lives and stay up all night and sleep when they can, get the blues (or console) and generally deal with a miniature hurricane bent on disrupting their days.

But she’s special to us in a way that, I think, is hard for younger generations to understand. She’s theirs, but in our hearts, just as they are ours, so is she. We waited for her and her future

mates. Now is our time.

Parents may not understand this at first. I don’t think I understood it at all when I first became a parent. You know your folks will love your kids, want to spoil them, disapprove of your child rearing, and give you headway to make all the mistakes they made themselves.

It wasn’t until my mother was gone that I really understood how special grandchildren can be. When we went that day to clean out her house, I started looking around. She had 10 grandchildren by the four of us, and they were on every square foot of every wall. She’d been widowed in her 50s, and in many ways, they were her life.

Those pictures had been collected and hung with care. Right then, I realized, I’d probably never sent enough. No one had.

Nor was she unique. Her sister’s house, finally empty, held the same treasure – photo on photo of three grandsons and their six offspring.

It’s nothing unusual. It’s the way of the world. Maybe it’s always been that way.

So now she’s here, and now we can feel that in our hearts. Just looking at her, the cares of the world melt away for a while.

It’s a good feeling. Well worth waiting for.

Bury the death tax



**Insight
this week**

• john schlageck

The fondest wish of most farmers is to pass their land on to their children. They work a lifetime to leave a legacy for a daughter or son who will one day take over the family farm.

Preservation of farming and ranching operations for future generations is being threatened. Estate taxes are especially harmful to agricultural producers because their businesses are capital-intensive with a high concentration of assets tied up in land, buildings and equipment.

Estate taxes tend to be more burdensome for farms than many small businesses because 80-percent of farm and ranch assets are land based. When estate taxes exceed cash and other liquid assets on hand, surviving family members may be forced to sell land, buildings or equipment needed to keep the business operating.

This has a multiplier effect because rural communities and the businesses they support also suffer when farms and ranches downsize or disappear. Also, farmland close to urban centers is often lost forever to development when estate taxes force farm families to sell off land to pay taxes.

The estate tax expired for one year and one year only on Jan. 1. This coming Jan. 1, 2011, unless Congress acts and does so soon, the estate tax will return and carry an exceedingly

low \$1 million exemption – anything above \$1 million will be taxed at 55-percent. This will harm most family farming and ranching operations.

The talk on Capitol Hill is the Senate will take action on estate tax reform after the Memorial Day recess. Before Christmas, the House passed a permanent extension of the estate tax at 2009 rates. This carries a \$3.5 million exemption for individuals and \$7 million for couples, while taxing the rest of the value of the estate at 45 percent.

The “off again on again nature” of estate tax law makes it difficult, if not impossible, for farmers and ranchers to engage in planning for the transfer of a family business from one generation to the next. While estate tax planning may be able to protect some family farms and ranches from the devastation of estate taxes, planning tools are costly and take money needed to operate and expand businesses. Even with planning, changing asset values and fam-

ily situations make it impossible to guarantee that a well thought out estate plan will protect a family business from estate taxes.

Farmers and ranchers who belong to Farm Bureau back permanent repeal of federal estate taxes. Until permanent repeal is achieved, Farm Bureau calls for an exemption of \$10 million per person, indexed for inflation. The \$10 million exemption may sound high, but it really isn’t when you factor in land costs and other variables, particularly for farms in areas where land values are high.

The estate tax amounts to double taxation, because the income is taxed first when it is earned and again when it is transferred to heirs. Eliminating the estate tax will encourage farmers and ranchers to keep the businesses in the family.

As a result farm families can continue the mission of providing food, fuel and fiber for America and the world. It would be a travesty if the next generation was forced to abandon the farm, just to pay the taxes.

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.

Letter Policy

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