

from our viewpoint...

Health insurance bill being blocked

Here's a nasty little fact: nearly 63 million Americans, almost one-quarter of the population, have no health insurance. Business groups, with the backing of President George Bush, are trying to change that, but they have run into a brick wall in the Senate. An unholy coalition of Democrats and big-money insurance companies are blocking a bill to allow national associations to sponsor health insurance plans.

Why? Well, the insurance companies stand to lose a lot of money, because the national plans would likely force premiums down and take business away from traditional, state-by-state plans. Big among the opponents are "the Blues," state and regional Blue Cross-Blue Shield plans which once were nonprofits, but increasingly have been bought up by profit-making insurance firms. It's easy to see why these companies want to keep some of this business. But it's criminal that they stand in the way of millions of Americans getting reasonably priced insurance. Everyone knows what's happened to health care costs and health insurance costs over the last decade. Increases of 25 percent in a year have not been uncommon, especially from the Blues.

Today, if you work for a national corporation like General Motors, or belong to a national union with its own health insurance plan, your insurance is covered by federal law and regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The Blues and other insurance companies are regulated by state insurance commissioners and state legislators, which have saddled them with lots of expensive mandates, or coverage requirements. Because each state is different, that drives premiums up.

National plans have to meet federal requirements, and since they have only one set of rules, they tend to be less expensive. With national buying power, association plans would make insurance affordable for members of groups ranging from the National Federation of Independent Businesses and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to the National Newspaper Association, all of which have supported this cause.

Opponents say they fear bypassing the state would weaken coverage, but half those 63 million people live in families supported by someone who works for a small businessman. They probably aren't too worried about that.

Both small business owners and employees have felt the pinch of higher medical premiums. The proportion of businesses offering insurance has dropped in recent years from 65 percent to around 61, and many employees of firms that have insurance can no longer afford to buy it.

Public employers often pay for full coverage for employees, and can raise taxes when premiums go up, but small businesses just can't work that way.

It's a shame to see the Democrats — and Kansas' Rep. Dennis Moore is one of them — blocking a bill which could help millions of families in this health-care crisis.

Campaign contributions, of course, explain some of the opposition. So does the fact that the president is for the bill. But it's the American people who are losing this battle. — *Steve Haynes*



People put importance on having money

I don't know about you, but I've noticed people put a lot of importance on money.

Yes, money — "dirty, filthy lucre." [Did you ever notice that "lucre" is very close to "Lucifer" in the dictionary? That's interesting.]

Money. We all want it and usually work hard to get it.

We'd love to inherit it, but probably wouldn't use it wisely if we did.

We give up a lot of more valuable pursuits during our lives, using the excuse "I have to work."

We would be wise to heed these words: "He who loses money, loses much; He who loses a friend, loses more; He who loses faith, loses all" — Unknown.

And sometimes we insist it takes two or three jobs just to keep a household going, when it wouldn't if we just didn't want so many things.

I'm always amazed at people who moan over bills arriving in the mail.



**lorna
gt**

• commentary

Of course we all have a few, like those for electricity, water, telephone, etc. But many of us have excessive bills every month — especially after the Christmas holidays.

I wonder why.

It's always seemed pretty elementary to me. You'll quit getting bills if you stop buying things!

"Like fire, money itself is neither good nor evil. It is neutral, its character determined by the eye of the perceiver, the hand of the user." — Jerrold Mundis, "Making Peace with Money" (Andrews McMeel).

I once went to the hospital to see a wealthy

friend who was dying. It was difficult for him to talk, so I decided to read to him. I opened the Bible almost randomly and began reading. The passage turned out to be the story of how difficult it is for a rich man to enter heaven. I quickly turned to another passage, and then to another and another. They all were about how foolish it is to love money or how money controls a person.

With great embarrassment, I turned to the "safe and comforting" 23rd Psalm, read it and excused myself from the room.

I left the hospital wondering if God had a message for me or for my friend.

Possibly God wanted me to pass on the wisdom that money doesn't buy love or success or peace of mind, and we can't take it with us at the end of life.

Someone has said, and I love to quote it: "You never see a U-Haul behind a hearse." Think about it!

Thanks for getting truck stop cleaned up

To the Editor:

Thank You!!! to whoever is responsible for getting the New Trail Truckstop parking area cleaned up. It's a big improvement for the town.

Also, thank you!!! to the many people involved in the trash pickup Sunday, May 2, from U.S. 24 to 8th street on K-27. It needed done and looks good. We need to get the area from U.S. 24 to I-70 cleaned up so we don't look like something Oscar would be proud of. Oscar the grouch loves trash!! Maybe if more people pitch in and cleaned up, this town could be really neat! We can't just hope the wind will blow it into the next county.

They say we are becoming a nation of obese people! Would this be a way to take care of two problems? The exercise of bending over to pick up trash or clean up your property will help your weight problem and make our community a little cleaner. What about Adopt a Highway or Adopt a Park or Adopt a Neighborhood?? Many communities do this and develop a pride in looking neat. I hate to see people leave our town, whether its visitors, tourists, or our own former residents, with the opinion that, we don't care!

Arlo Hansen
Goodland



**from our
readers**

• to the editor

To the Editor:

Thanks for printing the article and information concerning the Science Olympiad team.

Because they were in our paper, we were able to attend their presentation at the high school.

Thanks, also, to Dennis Friedrichs, Duane Unger and the Science Olympiad team members for an interesting and informative presentation on each of your projects entered in regional and state competition.

It was obvious that hours and hours were spent in preparation, and it was obvious that the kids enjoyed the process. What a wonderful way to incorporate learning into competition by problem solving with real-life applications.

It was inspiring to us as a family, and we are excited to get involved with Science Olympiad. Your team represented Goodland very well!

Way to go!
Dean and Daylene Oharah

Goodland

To the Editor:

Congratulations to the Goodland Carnegie Arts Center for hosting the Smithsonian exhibit "Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Home Front 1941-1945."

The Kansas Humanities Council appreciates the hard work of the staff and volunteers who helped make the exhibition so successful.

Thanks to the High Plains Museum for hosting the exhibit examining home front efforts in Kansas. The Goodland community is fortunate to have such impressive cultural organizations.

The Kansas Humanities Council encourages all Kansans to examine the ideas, history and traditions that shape our lives and our communities. It is clear from your community's response to the exhibit that you value your rich history.

We look forward to working with your community again on future programs.

The Smithsonian exhibition will continue traveling across the state, stopping in El Dorado and Paola.

Julie L. Mulvihill
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Kansas Humanities Council
Topeka

where to write

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The Goodland Star-News

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

Member: Kansas Press Association

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

National Newspaper Association

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Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day 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, \$20; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$30; six months, \$45; 12 months, \$80. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$115. (All tax included.)

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