

from our viewpoint...

# What to do about underage drivers?

It shouldn't happen, but ....  
Underage drivers.  
Over a four-year stretch, 33 drivers age 15 died in car crashes.  
Not passengers, pedestrians or innocent bystanders, but drivers.  
Kids hardly old enough to see over the steering wheel.  
Kids not old enough to drive, even in this state, except to and from school or on a farm errand.  
The statistics don't break it down, but chances are the majority of them were driving illegally, either without a license or in violation of their restrictions.  
It happens mostly because parents allow it.  
It's convenient for them if they don't have to haul their kids to town.  
They think their kids are safe drivers.  
They think it's silly to follow the law.  
Until they see their 15-year-old on a slab.  
It's not pretty, what an accident like that does to a family, a school or a community.  
We've made life a lot safer for our kids, but it could be safer yet.  
Why let 15-year-olds drive at all?  
Kansas is one of the few states left that hand out restricted licenses to kids 14 and 15. Many are cutting back on privileges for kids 16 and 17, making them earn the right to a full license.  
Not Kansas.  
Why not?  
Don't we care about our kids?

Then there is the case of the 16-year-old hit by a train Saturday down by Solomon.  
He was trying to put a coin on the track when the speeding freight clipped him. Luckily, the boy was struck a glancing blow by the steps of the engine and lived.  
Many who get on the tracks are not so lucky.  
Out here, people tend to be careless about railroad crossings. It's a foolish thing to do. Being hit by a train, even one going 20 mph on a weed-covered branch line, almost always kills.  
Along the Union Pacific line from Solomon to Oakley, and in Nebraska just north of us, even freight trains are clipping along at 50-60 mph. They can't stop in less than a mile.  
Get in the way, and you could be the next statistic.  
As the railroads say, "Stop, Look, Listen and Live."  
Just one mistake at a railroad crossing is too many. You won't get a second chance.  
And don't be putting coins in front of a moving train.  
— Steve Haynes

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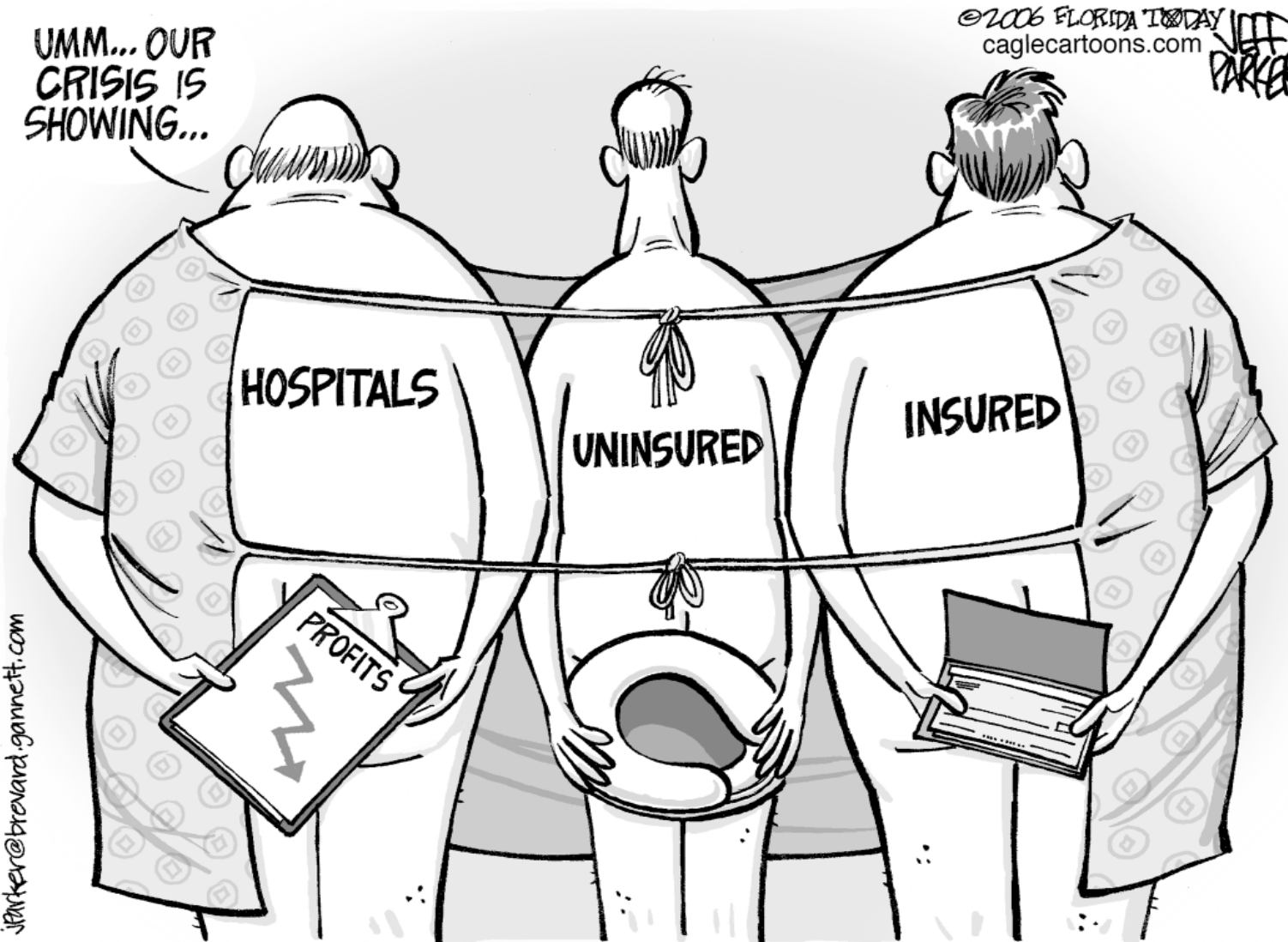
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## Youngest daughter has a fiancée

Yippee, I'm off the hook. Youngest daughter's boyfriend has proposed.

They've been dating for two years now, and I never knew how to refer to him.

People expect you to introduce a person and then explain who they are.

You need to say something like, "This is Fred Gottcha, he works for the IRS, he's auditing us this week," or "I'd like to introduce you to Jane Doe, she's studying the deer population around here this summer."

I've been stuck with, "This is Bradley Blake, he's dating Lindsay," or "This is Brad, he's Lindsay's boyfriend."

To me, the first sounds like we're just thankful that our old-maid daughter has finally found someone with whom to go out, and the second sounds like they're in high school. He's 26 for goodness sakes.

When he came to visit us at Thanksgiving, I took them both to a Rotary meeting and introduced them as our daughter Lindsay and her friend Brad. That got me into all sorts of trouble.

I told them next time I was going to introduce him as Brad, her chief squeeze; Brad, her significant other; or Brad, some guy she dragged



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

along for the ride.

Now I can say, "Please meet our youngest daughter Lindsay and her fiancée, Bradley Blake."

Actually, that pair decided that they belonged together a year or so ago. It's just taken them this long to make it official.

Lindsay seemed more ready than Brad. She was hoping for a declaration and a ring for Christmas, Valentine's Day, her birthday.

He bided his time and, I think, did some talking to a couple of coworkers, including her sister and brother-in-law.

So on a Tuesday, as she was getting off work at the library, a limousine pulled up. There before her and the world, Bradley got down on one knee and offered her his heart, his hand, his name and a beautiful ring. Then he took her home in the limo.

A bit more romantic than most, I'd say, but I

think that's what she wanted.

Now they're deep into the heart of wedding planning — poor Bradley.

So far, we know that the wedding will be in Augusta, Ga., where they both live. We will be expected to contribute the same amount of money we gave her sister, who had a small wedding and then went to Italy on a two-week honeymoon.

Other than that, I think we're expected to show up and shut up.

Of course, I'm the mother of the bride and that isn't going to happen. I don't plan to be a pain, mind you. I'm just hoping to offer some unwanted advice and provide unsolicited suggestions on everything from the cake to the caterers.

It's my job.

Meanwhile, I'm packing up an old dress that's been in my closet for many years. It's long and white. The underskirt is 60 years old and was worn by my mother at her wedding on June 14, 1946. The overskirt was put on in time for me to wear the whole thing on July 31, 1971. The darn thing's barely been used.

Maybe we can get one more day out of it. I hope so.

## Republican Voters back Senate's bill

Now that Felipe Calderón seems to have won and the threat that was embodied by Chavista Andrés Manuel López Obrador has been defeated, it is time for the Republicans in the House to look beyond their own noses and deal generously with our neighbor to the south.

The Mexican people have just rejected a leftist anti-American alternative and embraced free-market capitalism in a dramatic vote. It is one thing for middle-class Americans to do so, but for Mexicans, many of whom are impoverished, to turn away from a candidate who promises a 20 percent pay increase and free gas and electricity and embrace a free-market alternative is a testament to the sense, perspective, balance, wisdom and maturity of the Mexican electorate.

Would that our own political leaders had such gifts.

Respected Republican pollster Lance Tarrance reports that the House Republicans are misreading their own base in their hardened and doctrinaire opposition to an earned-citizenship program and in their efforts to besmirch this alternative by calling it "amnesty."

Tarrance's poll, only of Republican voters, found that the base embraced the idea of an earned path to citizenship, in which illegal immigrants could "earn legal status and eventual citizenship by working, paying taxes, learning English and waiting their turn behind people in their home countries who are already waiting in line for visas." The Republican sample backed this proposal 80-17 percent.

Conversely, the Republicans rejected out of hand the House-passed option, in which "illegal immigrants could earn legal status as a foreign worker but would have no possibility of ever becoming citizens," 25-70.

In all, when the Senate and House versions of the immigration legislation were fairly explained to voters — in some detail — Republicans backed the Senate version 75-17 but only broke even on the House bill, 47-46. Asked if the Senate bill constitutes "amnesty," the dirty word in the immigration debate, 39 percent said yes but 49 percent said no.

The fact is that Republican voters are far ahead of their Neanderthal leaders on the immigration debate. They recognize that, as The New York Times reported, three-quarters of illegal immigrants work for major corporations and have income taxes withheld from their paychecks like other American workers. What is more, this three-quarters contribute to So-



**dick morris**

• commentary

cial Security even though they have no prospect of ever receiving benefits.

In truth, the Republican leaders object to the earned path to citizenship not out of any justifiable sense of concern for those who have not flouted the law to become immigrants but because they do not want the current crop of illegal immigrants to register and vote out of a self-fulfilling prophesy that they will back the Democrats.

But the results of the 2004 elections in the United States and the 2006 elections in Mexico both attest to the fundamental conservatism of the Latino voters.

In the United States, it was the swing in Hispanic support to the Republicans that did much to enable Bush to achieve a three-point margin in the popular vote. Where Gore had carried Latinos by 30 points, Kerry's margin was

under 10.

And, in the most recent Mexican elections, the leftist demagogue, who played on popular resentment against American immigration policies, was only about to win slightly more than one-third of the ultimate vote while the Harvard-educated technocrat, Calderón, was elected by a narrow plurality.

The future of the Republican Party in America depends on its ability to appeal to Hispanic voters. If the newly enfranchised Latino immigrants side with their African-American brethren and bloc-vote for the Democratic Party, it will be a death blow to the GOP as Hispanics cast an ever larger share of the national vote.

President Bush has recognized the importance of outreach, even at the price of increasing the Hispanic electorate. The House leaders should follow the president on this issue. More to the point, they should heed the opinions of their base and reach out to legalize Hispanic illegal immigrants and set them on a path to earned citizenship.

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