

## No one will be happy with health care package

So now a health-care bill, perhaps the biggest single change in U.S. society in the last half century, seems inevitable with the end of Sen. Ben Nelson's holdout.

The Nebraska senator's concern was mostly over the possibility that federal money would somehow be spent for abortions, something that's traditionally been part of federal law. The McCook native held out to the end, wringing concessions for his vital vote.

When Democratic leaders found a way to please him Saturday after hours of tough negotiations, and brought his vote into the fold, they were assured for the time of the 60 senators needed to end debate on the bill, 58 Democrats and the two (former Democrat) independents.

That left just the 40 Republicans standing in the medical-center doorway, as it were, one vote shy of being able to block Senate passage.

Even the powerful American Medical Association, once a bastion of conservative opposition to "socialized medicine," gave in and backed the bill. The president bought off Big Pharma with promises on continued profits. The drug companies even bought ads to push the bill.

President Barack Obama still won't get his Christmas wish, a health-reform bill all tied up in a bow by the new year. Both Senate and House leaders said it was too late to hash out differences between the \$1 trillion House version and the \$871 billion Senate plan in just a week — especially with two holidays.

That means the Democrats will have a lot of work, a lot of negotiations, left before they can claim victory. It seems almost certain now that they will get a bill, however, and even more certain that it will please no one.

Republicans will claim health care will bust the budget, though the president says his plan will save taxpayers something like \$132 bil-

lion over a decade. We'll see.

Liberals will not be happy, despite passage of a bill they've hungered after since the 1950s. Compromise led the leadership to cut out any hint of a "public option," a government-run health plan akin to the "single payer" plan so feared by conservatives.

Abortion backers will try, and fail, to change restrictions in the compromise. They will think, rightly so, perhaps, that they have been sold down the river.

Many liberals will see the bill as, at worst, a failure, at best, only a first step. That means the health-care debate won't go away.

Democrats will claim again that the GOP is "the party of no," and it's true that the Republicans have been too busy fighting this bill to propose much in the way of an alternative.

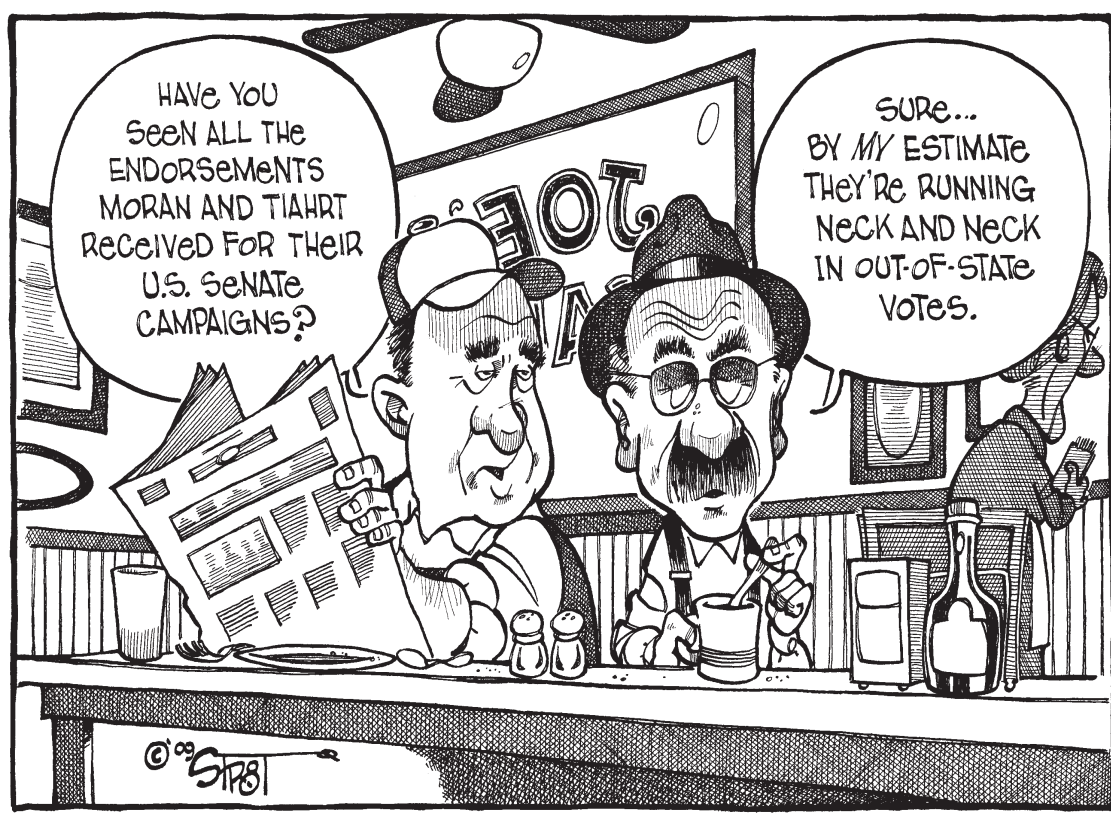
The party has been on the defensive, with its numbers so reduced that it has had little say in shaping health policy. The only good thing about that is the GOP can wash its hands of the bill and blame the Democrats for any and all problems.

Winners and losers aside, what will happen to our health-care system?

It worked pretty well until government got involved in the Great Society era of the 1960s. Our bet is government cannot, by its nature, make it work any better, reduce costs or produce a system that works for everyone. Shortages are likely as doctors lose incentives and see their pay cut.

But only time will tell whether the bill saves the government billions or costs trillions. Whether health care improves or costs continue to soar.

Much of the Democrats' recent gains will hinge on the success — or failure — of this bill. There will be much pressure from the liberal wing to change it before it even takes effect. And the party's future will depend on what happens then. — *Steve Haynes*



## Airlines charge to lose bags

They used to do it for free. Now they charge you \$15 to \$20 a bag.

Once upon a time, just a few months ago, airlines allowed two checked bags and a couple of carry-ons. Now most of them charge you for every bag you check, so you end up looking like a pack animal as you try to cram everything you need for a two-week trip into a single carry-on plus a "personal item" such as a computer case or purse.

You wouldn't believe the size of the purses some women carry onto planes these days. Mine weighed in at 26 pounds on the trip down to Georgia earlier in the month.

We figured that since we were staying with our daughters — four days with one and four days with the other — and they both have washers and dryers, we could get away with taking a carry-on each plus our "personal items." My "personal item" was the aforementioned "purse," which contained my real purse, a laptop computer, three books, two magazines, Christmas card envelopes, my Christmas card address book, Steve's train radio and a spare pair of sunglasses.

Steve had his computer case, which contained his laptop and assorted accessories. His case weighed almost as much as mine.

This worked out fine until we bought a few items, the girls gave us Christmas gifts to take home and — I'm pretty sure — our carry-ons shrunk.

There wasn't enough room to take everything, so I borrowed a bag from oldest daughter and Steve paid



## Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*  
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the \$15 checked bag fee.

All was well leaving Augusta, but in Atlanta they changed our gate about one hour before take off. The new gate was in a different terminal. We made it just fine but apparently, no one told the baggage handlers. The checked bags apparently went to the C terminal while the plane went to A.

In Kansas City, we waited in vain for the borrowed bag to show. It didn't, so while Steve went off to get the truck out of long-term parking, I queued up to report the lost bag.

They were sorry. If we liked, they'd have it sent by a local delivery company, which went all the way to Manhattan. Nope, just send it by whatever national carrier you can get, I said.

Meanwhile, Steve was having a few problems of his own. The truck had a dead battery.

By the time he got a jump and I had gotten a supply of my favorite Kansas City barbecue sauce at a shop in the terminal, another plane had come in from Atlanta.

Taking a chance, I rushed back to the baggage claim and there it was: My bag full of Christmas presents, odds and ends and some dirty laun-

dry was going around in circles.

Steve got a new battery and I have my gift from youngest daughter, a Snuggie.

You know, those blanket-like things they advertise all the time on television and in magazines. They're supposed to make you all warm and cozy while sitting in your chair.

What they don't show is these things are really just fuzzy hospital gowns. They are like a cross between a blanket and a backwards robe with no ties in back. The front has a high collar and long sleeves, but the darn things gape open in the rear.

Next time you see one of those commercials, note that the people are always sitting down. They're never up fiddling with the television, getting themselves a snack or drink of water or hitting the restroom.

In a Snuggie, you snug. You don't move. For enjoying a movie or a good book, they're great. Just hope you don't need to get up and go do anything in a room with a ceiling fan. It could get a little breezy back there.

## She really is a French chef

One of my editors commented on last week's column about my desire to learn more French cooking. She even gave me a recipe for Beef bourgogne, only she spelled it differently. No matter. It still means "beef burgundy" in English. That refers to the bottle of red wine you are supposed to cook the beef in.

Now, who will I have to pay to go into the liquor store for me to purchase the booze? Just kidding. I'm not such a hypocrite that I can't buy my own wine.

All this talk of French cooking, however, did remind me that I actually do prepare some French cuisine. I have a crepe pan for making crepes (which are little more than super-thin pancakes), I made quiche for Jim's lunch just last week, and I make French toast all the time. So, maybe I'm more gourmet than I knew.

While growing up on the farm, I didn't think I liked French toast. My mother didn't like me to tell this story but, the reason I didn't like French toast was she always burned it. I guess I thought that was what it was supposed to taste like.

In her defense, she was always doing about 10 things at the same time and cooking was no exception. It seemed like I never got a piece of



## Out Back

By *Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts*  
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toast without it being blackened.

It wasn't until I was grown and married before I tasted a friend's French toast and learned how really delicious it could be. Her secret: a little oil, a little sugar, a little vanilla and a little cinnamon mixed in with the eggs and milk. For a special touch, I like to slather it with butter and then sprinkle powdered sugar over the top before serving.

Here it is Christmas week and I feel like I'm coasting. All the boxes are sent and the candy is mostly gone. Jim has requested one more batch of white fudge "just for him." Perhaps he hasn't noticed the caramel corn is all gone. If he does, he'll want more of that, too.

The outdoor lights are on timers and I plug in the Christmas tree at night. There is something about the soft glow that immediately lightens your spirit. I almost wish I could

keep a tree up year 'round. But then, it wouldn't be so special if I saw it every day.

—ob—  
Jim's dad underwent another surgery last week to replace the knee in his one good leg.

We visited him the day after his surgery and he was still a little "out of it." But when I caught him winking at me, I knew he was on the road to recovery. Jim told him he should try that on the nurses.

—ob—  
We plan a quiet day at home this Christmas. Maybe have a neighbor or two come for dinner, but nothing fancy. I think I'll even use paper plates and take a nap in the afternoon.

I hope you have a lovely Christmas day with your friends and family. And even though some still say it's not politically correct, I say, "Merry Christmas."

## Attacks bad for city, woman says

To the Editor:  
I felt compelled to share my dismay of the conduct of a few of the attendees at the last City Council meeting on Thursday, Dec. 17.

When I first walked into the meeting and saw the number of people there, I was impressed. I soon realized that the people attending were not there to praise the people of Oberlin for voting in favor of moving forward with our airport project, nor were they there to say how they were looking forward to working with the city in obtaining the goals of a functioning airport.

No! These so called "civic leaders" of our city took the podium, one

## Letter to the Editor

after the other, to maliciously and viscously attack our city administrator with half-truths and hearsay. He was asked time and again for his resignation.

I heard the rudeness of the audience, with sarcastic chuckling, laughter and conversation. This showed total disrespect for not only our administrator, but also to the council and the mayor as well.

The conduct of a few took an opportunity to build on a positive

and once again tainted it. We are, after all, human beings and should treat each other as such. This is not behavior conducive to building a better place for the citizens of Oberlin to live.

I, for one, was so disheartened. This is a time to work together. Shame on you!

May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Connie Riedel  
Oberlin

## Fund aids those in need

To the Editor:

During this time of the year, many people are in the spirit of giving. On behalf of the Decatur County Ministerial Association, I want to ask for contributions to the Decatur County Samaritan Fund, which is administered by this association.

This fund provides assistance for Decatur County residents who find themselves greatly challenged to pay their monthly rent or utility bill. It also provides assistance for transients.

Many people in Decatur County have responded with generous gifts

to the Decatur County Food Pantry, also sponsored by the association, of which we are grateful! Thank you!

Contributions to the Samaritan Fund or Food Pantry may be mailed to the alliance at Box 315, Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Thank you for your generosity.

In the spirit of love, hope, joy and peace at Christmas,

Pastor Charlotte Strecker-Baseler  
Treasurer, Decatur County Ministerial Alliance  
Oberlin

## From the Bible

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Matthew 1:21-23

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