

OPINION

The Storm Lake Times

EDITORIALS

Honesty in short supply

We are inundated with press releases from politicians and political causes every day. This one caught our attention for its irony: "Grassley calls for intellectual honesty about deficits, spending, entitlements." In the body of the release, Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, claims that Democrats have been writing "revisionist history" about how we reached record deficit levels.

Before we get to revisionist history, let's discuss "intellectual" honesty, or lack thereof.

Sen. Grassley claimed to be seeking a bipartisan health care reform plan when he hog-tied his good friend, Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., and proceeded to logroll health reform plans for months while Republicans, including Honest Chuck, lied about death panels and what the bill included.

He claimed to be bipartisan. In fact, he was following orders from the top Congressional Republicans to use health care to bring down Obama through his centerpiece legislation. Grassley single-handedly bought time for the lies to fester.

That's what amounts to "intellectual" honesty these days in Washington. All that drives Grassley's intellect is the desire to gain back the chairmanship of the powerful finance committee. Chuck Grassley is about power, not honesty or intellect.

Now to revisionist history.

Obama blames Bush for the deficits. Grassley says that Congressional Democrats went along with Bush. Yes, they did, including Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, who declared on National Public Radio his vote for the Invasion of Iraq as the worst of his career. It was the Iraq war that gave rise to deficits, not spending on food stamps or energy assistance or Grassley's beloved tax credits for wind turbine development. Not to mention the death of 5,000 American soldiers and more than 100,000 Iraqis in a civil war that our invasion unleashed, most of whom were innocents.

Deficits further ballooned when Obama continued the Big Bank Bailout kicked off by the Bush Administration. This after Bush kept his hands off Wall Street regulation thinking, as Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan did, that financial deregulation would work everything out.

It worked out all right. Right to the precipice of another Great Depression.

Obama and Congress — Democrat and Republican — had no choice but to continue the bailouts and hope that something sticks. Something did stick: We avoided another Great Depression, the Dow Jones is up more than 30%, and Midwest manufacturing is rebounding.

We realize that Grassley is playing the contemporary politics game, where you turn a lie into the truth if you repeat it enough. That's revisionist history defined. Grassley has become an expert at it. And we used to think him an honest man.

Biofuels find lifeline

The Environmental Protection Agency this week gave the green light to more production of corn-based ethanol and soy-based biodiesel by declaring the two fuels environmentally friendly enough, just barely. The EPA made certain that farm-state senators stayed aboard with climate initiatives by protecting their precious biofuels.

The ag lobby claims that existing biofuels are good for the environment. That is the subject of much debate, and you must have your doubts when you consider the petroleum base on which corn is grown, and the soil loss involving planting corn on corn.

We have never believed ethanol or biodiesel to be environmental elixirs.

They are national security keys.

That's the argument to make. Any plant scientist could figure that corn ethanol or biodiesel is a net plus to the environment, and other scientists could debunk the theory.

There is no question, however, that more than half of our geopolitical troubles involve oil. That's why we're in Iraq, it's why we defend despots in Saudi Arabia, and why we worry about Hugo Chavez of Venezuela becoming entirely unreasonable.

Biofuels are a small but important step in weaning ourselves from foreign oil — and oil altogether, someday.

They provide a marginal economic boost to rural workers and communities searching for a way forward. They are proving to be a good source of protein by-products for livestock.

Those are all good reasons to support biofuels, but not for their environmental benefit.

The EPA decision underscores how dependent on government this nascent industry is. Remember that when political winds change, so can the prospects for an industry on which Iowa has banked much.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32

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Congress shall make no law respecting an establishing of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America



FHC NEWS & NOTES

Change and challenge

BY CINDY WIEMOLD
*Executive Director
Faith, Hope & Charity*

The past year will be remembered as a unique year of change and a year of challenge for FHC.

2009 started with a change of leadership with new Executive Director; spring brought a new Development Director, and fall was ushered in with a new FHC Board President. Those decisions brought a change of perspective, a change in the way we look at some of the things we do, and perhaps — just maybe — a fresh look in the way we consider what's possible.

Most of us involved with FHC would agree that 2009 was also a year of unique challenge. (No doubt, the staff and board would probably agree that much of the challenge came from all the changes brought about by the new director!) Cer-

tainly, perhaps the most overshadowing challenge has come from the uncertainty with the state's budget problems, and the potential impact that has on FHC. That is a challenge that we will continue to deal with into this coming year.

All the way from five DIA auditors and a state fire marshal show up two minutes early, to an H1N1 pandemic and now, dealing with the worst winter in decades, (which isn't through with us yet), FHC has certainly faced some unique challenges this year.

The one thing I am confident that has not changed is this organization's dedication to its mission.

I'm certain that people have heard me say, more than once, the great respect I hold for the families who started organizations like FHC. I tip my hat to Rose Faine Blair and her son Rick, who along with the Mike

and Mary Smith family poured their hearts and souls into the idea and the dream of a better life and a future of hope for their daughters with special needs, Brenda and Mary. That idea, that dream, that mission, has not changed. FHC's commitment to improving the lives of special needs children, by promoting independence and individuality, is still strong after more than 40 years.

I have no doubts that the coming year will bring its own unique challenges. I also have no doubts that this organization will face those challenges with great commitment and integrity, and no doubt that there will be change, in order to address those challenges. That's what Faith, Hope and Charity has been doing for more than 40 years, and will continue to do.

Thank you all for your support of FHC's mission and for joining us in making a difference in the life of a child.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mind your own business

What if someone else minds your business and wants it to go away? Millions of dollars are being spent every year to regulate or even eliminate animal agriculture. Many people believe raising animals for food is wrong and want the rest of us to comply. Should you respond to this or ignore it?

All of us with a vested interest in pork production in Buena Vista County cannot afford to ignore this. Who will tell our side of the story? How about Buena Vista County Pork Producers, Iowa Pork Producers and National Pork Producers? Your membership in Buena Vista County includes the state and national organizations.

Take care of your business.
HARLAN GRAU
*President, Buena Vista
County Pork Producers
Newell*

A different morning

In the movie Groundhog Day, Bill Murray's character, Phil, wakes up each morning to discover it's still Feb. 2. Stuck in a time loop, he can't move forward with his life until he makes major changes to better himself and his community.

Lately it feels like Iowa is stuck in a loop, every week the morning news tells of another woman shot to death by her intimate partner. Nationally, the intimate partner homicide rate is dropping, but in Iowa it's going up. What will it take for our communities to move forward and make our homes safe for all Iowans?

Federal law prohibits anyone convicted of domestic abuse or who is subject to a restraining order from having firearms. Elsewhere firearm-related homicides have dropped since these restrictions were created.

However, in Iowa, according to the Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team, firearms are used in 67% of the homicides by an intimate partner and weapons seizure orders were never issued in most of the cases that would have required them. Iowa law does not match the federal statutes. Even though federal law trumps the state, without the matching changes to Iowa's Code, firearm restrictions are not being implemented.

The rest of the nation moves on while we drink our morning coffee over the story of a neighbor's death once more. Call your legislator. Demand that Iowa keep firearms out of the hands of abusers. Together we can wake up tomorrow to a different day.

RHONDA DEAN
*Executive Director
CAASA
Storm Lake*

Rep. King's political stunt

After a year of misinformation and absurdity surrounding health-care reform, it's saying something that few moments, if any, reached the heights of last week's half-witted political stunt by 11 House Republicans.

Led by Rep. Steve King, these conservatives unveiled the Declaration of Health Care Independence, an oversized document signed with permanent markers to underscore their opposition to health reform. Too bad for signatories that the "Declaration" actually endorses the government takeover of health care it warns against — and argues the same point of view as reform advocates.

Their document states that the health-care system, "as a matter of principle," must: "treat private citizens at least as well as political officials" and "empower, rather than limit, an open and accessible marketplace of health care choice and opportunity."

Overlooked, apparently, by King and his cohort is that they receive coverage through a government plan paid for by taxpayers, and that choice and opportunity undergird the public option they've spent months maligning.

These lapses call into question King's judgment, most certainly — but, as importantly, they reveal just how feckless and reckless he is with the well-being of Iowans.

More than 302,000 residents already live in fear of getting sick or injured because they lack health coverage, yet every day another 70 of our neighbors, friends and families fall into that vast pool of the uninsured. Many are children.

In "The State of Working Iowa 2009," the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project reports that between 2000 and 2007 Iowa was one of only four states to experience a double-digit loss in job-based health plans covering children, as 82,000 youths lost access to care. Some was the result of rising unemployment; in other cases, however, employers simply couldn't afford to continue providing coverage. As the Department of Health and Human Services reported last year, more than seven in 10 of Iowa's uninsured residents were in families with at least one full-time worker.

It's a situation that's unlikely to change anytime soon: The state already has lost around 42,000 jobs with health benefits, and experts predict that by the end of this year another 44,000 will be gone. Without reform that controls health costs and expands access to care, hundreds of thousands of Iowans will remain at risk.

Against this backdrop, King's opposition to health reform, never mind this latest cynical act, is as callous as it is indefensible. The people of Iowa deserve better.

NIEL RITCHIE
*Executive Director
League of Rural Voters
Minneapolis, Minn.*