

Letters to the Editor: Wednesday, March 24, 2010

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Two great losses

This is a sad time in the history of our country as it marks the beginning of the end of the greatest health care system in the world. Every day, patients travel thousands of miles to our country to see a doctor because the U.S. has the best health care facilities, the best medicines and the best physicians and surgeons. Unfortunately, the passage of President Obama's health care bill will mark the end of this great achievement and usher in the decline of a system that's taken years to create.

Most physicians agree that reform is needed in the health care system. Access to care for all patients, a system to deal with pre-existing conditions, portability of insurance coverage and other improvements that would make health care accessible for all citizens — all of these make sense. But rather than simply deal with these issues, the Obama plan is designed to invoke a government takeover of our health care system. There will be an end to the doctor-patient relationship as we've known it. Finally, at a time when our country's economy is at its lowest point since the Great Depression, the government is adding a tremendous financial burden.

Taxation on individuals and small businesses to pay for this plan will stymie any chance of reversing the downward trend of our economy. We've suffered two great losses — our great health care system and our chance at reviving our declining economy.

Kent H. Webb, M.D., Oklahoma City

Dwarfed by Obamacare

Health insurance distorts the doctor-patient relationship because the cost isn't an issue between the two. This distortion will be dwarfed by Obamacare, which will almost totally depersonalize the doctor-patient relationship, as it's done in England, Western Europe and Canada. The most sought-after doctors can opt out of Obamacare; by mandate, patients can't. You may think only the wealthy will pay to see these physicians, in addition to paying for Obamacare, but many people who can't afford to do so will insist on getting the very best care. I predict that many people will continue to go into debt to pay for health care.

John E. Poarch, M.D., Edmond

This is no defense

An unflinching characteristic of human nature is that when faced with evidence undermining their beliefs, people look first to excuses in the hope of deflecting the blow. Thus, Christian Towles (Your Views, March 19) discounted Oklahoma's relatively flat ACT scores despite rising spending for education, on the grounds that the ACT "was never meant" to be a "tool for evaluating the success of the common education system." According to an official ACT publication, "Consistent with (its co-founder's) intent, the ACT is an educational achievement test that measures the typical content and skills learned from college preparatory curricula. Consequently, the ACT can ... provide direct feedback to high school teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching."

Rick Miller (Your Views, March 19) tries to excuse Oklahoma's education productivity collapse by arguing that student achievement is limited while "the amount of money that can be potentially spent on education has no limit." Oklahoma taxpayers will be pleased to learn they have limitless financial resources, but this is no defense of the status quo. If it was foolish to think in 1990 that spending 40 percent more on a state monopoly school system would substantially improve student learning, then the same is presumably true today.

Finally, to answer Miller's question about the initial year of comparison in the graph accompanying Brandon Dutcher's March 15 Point of View, the year is 1990 — as could have been surmised by the fact that the reported changes for 1990 are both zero.

Andrew J. Coulson, Washington, D.C.

Coulson is director of the Cato Institute Center for Educational Freedom, which promotes school choice initiatives.

Not realistic

On his recent trip to Israel, Vice President Joe Biden was upset by the announcement that Israel would build more housing in east Jerusalem. Jerusalem is and always has been the undivided capital of Israel. King David ruled from there thousands of years ago. He bought the land on which the Jewish temple was eventually built. To expect Israel not to build homes in the capital city is unrealistic. How would we like it if a foreign nation told us to that couldn't build any new homes in Washington, D.C.?

Billie Thorndyke, Oklahoma City

A two-way street

I disagree that the U.S. reaction to Israel's continued West Bank expansion (and the

way it was announced) is an overreaction. It's clear that Israel will put its own best interests first, as it should. America should do the same. In this instance, where our interests aren't identical, the U.S. should be firm. Israel needs to be given an ultimatum to immediately stop the expansion until the Palestinian territory boundaries are settled. Friendship is a two-way street; Israel needs a firm reminder of that. If anything, our reaction hasn't been strong enough.

Raymond Johnson, Ada

Outrageous criticism

The Obama administration's recent criticism of Israel concerning the construction of new settlements is outrageous. Israel traditionally has been the only dependable U.S. ally in the Middle East; it deserves 100 percent support from our government. The U.S. should have opposed the stupid Palestinian state initiative from the outset. And we shouldn't give even the slightest hint of support to the Palestinians. The more land Israel gives up during the ill-named "peace process" while trying to be accommodating, the more the Hamas-led Palestinians want.

Israel is on the front line fighting Islamic terrorism from every direction with the U.S. Therefore, it should never be criticized by our government. Israel should have the right to do whatever it desires in its own territory. The Obama administration doesn't have a clue about what's right and what's wrong concerning Israel and the Palestinians. How sad.

Ray Gambill, Oklahoma City

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