



On medical care

By Charles S. Nicoll

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My eldest son and I entered a local hospital via the emergency room. We found that the staff at the hospital were excellent in every way imaginable, from the custodians and office staff to the nurses and surgeons.

Although our treatment while there was superb, both of us spent about three hours in the emergency room on the day of our admission before being seen by medical staff.

I have learned from others both here in Lake County and across the nation that such delays in emergency rooms are not unusual. The reasons for long delays are evident. Most hospitals are underfunded, and this results in the emergency rooms and some other departments being understaffed.

I recently learned that because of lack of funds this hospital recently laid off about 10 percent of its staff, including some nurses. In addition a clinic will soon be closed.

These problems pale in significance when compared to the evidence that our war veterans who have returned from service in Iraq or Afghanistan (and earlier wars) are receiving shoddy assistance and care.

The unemployment rate among these vets is considerably higher than that of civilians in many parts of our country, and many of them are homeless. When vets apply for financial aid, their applications often take months to process.

Some of them who need medical attention for conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder also have to wait for weeks or months to receive treatment.

Such deficient care apparently contributes to a high suicide rate among our vets. Some 18 vets kill themselves each day and it is estimated that more of our vets have killed themselves during the past 10 years or so than were killed in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As is the case with medical facilities that treat mainly non-vets, these deficiencies are due primarily to under-funding of the V.A. system, which results in understaffing, and other shortcomings.

Some of our politicians in Washington, D.C. are obsessed with the notion of reducing our national debt.

To achieve this goal, they propose to slash funding for social welfare programs, such as Social Security and Medicare.

However, I have not heard any one of these slashers propose that we reduce or even eliminate our very generous corporate welfare programs.

The Cato Institute estimated that our federal government spent \$92 billion on corporate welfare during fiscal year 2006.

By now, the sum is likely to be well over \$100 billion. Some economists estimate that in previous years, state and local governments provided an additional \$50 billion in corporate welfare.

Most of the corporations that receive such federal largesse pay little or no taxes to any of our government entities, and many of them are raking in record high profits.

I think that it is time to eliminate all forms of corporate welfare, and to divert most or all of those funds to aiding our vets, who are much more deserving and needy than any of the corporations that are enjoying huge profits.

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