

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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**OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS**

## Putting A Lid On Health Care Costs?

LOS ANGELES TIMES (Oct. 26): Critics of the 2010 Affordable Care Act complain that it doesn't do much to control the health-care costs that are becoming unsustainable for families and businesses. In fact, the law does many small things; the latest is the grant program announced last week to teach Medicare and Medicaid doctors new ways to offer higher-quality, better-coordinated, more cost-effective care. The four-year goal is to turn \$840 million in grants into \$5 billion in savings — a number that sounds big until it's compared with the nearly \$4 trillion in annual healthcare spending in the United States. The modesty of the effort reflects the reality that there's just no easy way to put a lid on healthcare costs.

The Congressional Budget Office projects that major federal health programs could cost 85 percent more in 10 years than they do today. That's because multiple forces are driving up healthcare expenditures, including new technologies and medications, the prevalence of chronic disease, and payment systems that give doctors and hospitals incentives to perform ever-more procedures.

Those forces can't be counteracted by simply slapping a limit on how much people spend on healthcare or how much doctors and hospitals charge. Such approaches would ration care, directly or indirectly. Instead, any effort to slow the growth in spending has to shift the incentives in the system so that doctors and patients alike are motivated to reduce the demand for care.

The 2010 law starts that process, but it's no mean feat to change the economics of the healthcare system. Part of the challenge is figuring out how doctors can prosper by delivering better care at lower cost. The grant program announced Thursday, which is funded by the 2010 law, aims to identify those techniques and spread them to roughly 150,000 doctors across America. To guard against waste, the program requires grantees to set explicit numerical goals and track their progress. Such statistics won't be the ultimate measure of the program or of the act's other cost-control initiatives, however. It will be whether doctors fundamentally change the way they do business, so the savings continue after the federal dollars expire.

**ON THIS DATE**

**By The Associated Press**  
Today is Thursday, Oct. 30, the 303rd day of 2014. There are 62 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Oct. 30, 1974, Muhammad Ali knocked out George Foreman in the eighth round of a 15-round bout in Kinshasa, Zaire, known as the "Rumble in the Jungle," to regain his world heavyweight title.

**On this date:** In 1735, the second president of the United States, John Adams, was born in Braintree, Massachusetts.

In 1864, Helena, Montana, was founded.

In 1921, the silent film classic "The Sheik," starring Rudolph Valentino, premiered in Los Angeles.

In 1938, the radio play "The War of the Worlds," starring Orson Welles, aired on CBS.

In 1944, the Martha Graham ballet "Appalachian Spring," with music by Aaron Copland, premiered at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., with Graham in a leading role.

In 1945, the U.S. government announced the end of shoe rationing, effective at midnight.

In 1953, Gen. George C. Marshall was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Dr. Albert Schweitzer received the Peace Prize for 1952.

In 1961, the Soviet Union tested a hydrogen bomb, the "Tsar Bomba," with a force estimated at about 50 megatons. The Soviet Party Congress unanimously approved a resolution ordering the removal of Josef Stalin's body from Lenin's tomb.

In 1972, 45 people were killed when an Illinois Central Gulf commuter train was struck from behind by another train in Chicago's South Side.

In 1984, police in Poland found the body of kidnapped pro-Solidarity priest Father Jerzy Popieluszko, whose death was blamed on security officers.

In 1989, Mitsubishi Estate Co. announced it was buying 51 percent of Rockefeller Group Inc. of New York. (However, amid a real estate slump, Mitsubishi ended up walking away from its investment in 1995.)

In 1997, a jury in Cambridge, Massachusetts, convicted British au pair Louise Woodward of second-degree murder in the death of eight-month-old Matthew Eappen. (The judge, Hiller B. Zobel, later reduced the verdict to manslaughter and set Woodward free.)

**Ten years ago:** The decapitated body of a 24-year-old Japanese backpacker (Shohei Koda) was found wrapped in an American flag in north-

western Baghdad; the militant group led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi later claimed responsibility. Grateful fans embraced the World Series champion Boston Red Sox, hailing the team as heroes during a jubilant parade. Actress-dancer Peggy Ryan died in Las Vegas at age 89.

**Five years ago:** Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was confronted repeatedly by Pakistanis as she ended a tense three-day tour of the country, chastised by one woman who said a U.S. program using aerial drones to target terrorists amounted to "executions without trial." Michelle Triola Marvin, who'd fought a landmark "palimony" case in the 1970s against former lover Lee Marvin, died in Malibu, California, at age 76.

**One year ago:** President Barack Obama claimed "full responsibility" for fixing his administration's troubled health insurance website, while on Capitol Hill, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius apologized to frustrated people trying to sign up, declaring that she was accountable for the failures but also defending the historic health care overhaul. The government said the deficit for the 2013 budget year totaled \$680.3 billion, down from \$1.09 trillion in 2012. The Boston Red Sox romped to their third World Series championship in 10 seasons, thumping the St. Louis Cardinals 6-1 in Game 6 at Fenway.

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Dick Gautier is 77. Movie director Claude Lelouch is 77. Rock singer Grace Slick is 75. Songwriter Eddie Holland is 75. Rhythm-and-blues singer Otis Williams (The Temptations) is 73. Actress Joanna Shimkus is 71. Actor Henry Winkler is 69. Broadcast journalist Andrea Mitchell is 68. Rock musician Chris Slade (Asia) is 68. Country/rock musician Timothy B. Schmit (The Eagles) is 67. Actor Leon Rippey is 65. Actor Harry Hamlin is 63. Actor Charles Martin Smith is 61. Country singer T. Graham Brown is 60. Actor Kevin Pollak is 57. Actor Michael Beach is 51. Rock singer-musician Gavin Rossdale (Bush) is 47. Actor Jack Plotnick is 46. Comedian Ben Bailey is 44. Actress Nia Long is 44. Country singer Cassidy Osborn (SHeDAISY) is 38. Actor Gael Garcia Bernal is 36. Actor Matthew Morrison is 36. Actor Shaun Sipos is 33. Ivanka Trump is 33. Actress Janel Parrish is 22. Actor Tequan Richmond is 22.

**Thought for Today:** "All men are almost led to believe not of proof, but by attraction." — Blaise Pascal, French philosopher (1623-1662).

**FROM THE BIBLE**

*But when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. John 16:21. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis*

**YOUR LETTERS**

**Great Job!**

**Michael "Moose" Welch, Yankton**

We often see letters to the paper that identify the perceived wrongdoings of public servants. I would like to take a moment to express my public gratitude for the ladies in the Yankton County Treasurers Office in their dealings with a license plate issue.

My son, a 2006 YHS grad, is serving active duty in the U.S. Marines and South Dakota is still his home address.

He recently bought a new Jeep and ordered special Combat Veteran license plates. The plates were significantly delayed at the state level and required renewal of the paper tags twice

and then when the metal plates did come there was an issue with the paperwork for the license plates and the annual decal.

The ladies at the counter pursued resolve and resolution as each new delay was encountered. Through the whole process they answered questions and contacted the state level offices and forwarded the answer immediately to us as we worked through getting his vehicle licensed while he was out of state at his duty station in California.

Not sure if the resolution would be so easily solved somewhere else. Next time you are in the court house thank the ladies for a job well done. They reflected great credit upon themselves, the Treasurer's Office and Yankton County.



**Writer's Block**

## The Power Of Voting

BY WILLIAM KERR

For the Press & Dakotan

It's time again to think about where we are economically and politically country wise and state wise. Are you happy with where we are, or do you feel that we need to change direction in one or more areas?

One thing I think we need to change is giving away our constitutional right to vote for specific people, watch what legislative action they support, or don't support, and then re-elect or un-elect them according to how what they support matches what you think should be done.

For decades now, the majority of voters have chosen to just vote for party and avoid picking the people to serve, thus letting the 1 percent decide who will be elected. How are you doing that? By not voting in the primaries, for one thing, to choose who will run for your party. Also by letting those candidates who allow the 1 percent to fund their campaigns, so they don't have to do the hard work of raising their own campaign funds, give the 1 percent in turn, the benefit of their vote on issues the 1 percent have a major interest in.

Then, on the election for office, voting just for the party rather than the individual people who you think will do the best job for you, and/or all of us. Not all party candidates follow their party lines 100 percent and you also often have an independent candidate, who might just be a better bet for getting what you think is best for us all than either party candidate. If you don't pay attention to what platform each candidate is running on, and vote according to which ones are running for the right thing in your opinion, you are allowing the party and/or the 1 percent choose who will govern us.

Guess why then we are in the shape we are in:

1. In the richest country in the world approximately 100 million of us are living in poverty, or near poverty.
2. Nine other countries' citizens have a higher purchasing power per person than do our citizens.



William KERR

3. Forty other countries have a higher average life expectancy than ours.

4. We aren't even listed on the "Lowest death rates" nor "Lowest infant mortality rates," but we are number three on the "Highest Obesity" rates.

5. We are below 18 other countries on "Quality of Life";

6. We are not even listed on the "Highest Economic Growth" list of 67 countries.

7. We now allow each citizen to donate up to \$3.8 million per candidate running for office. How can you hope to compete against those who can afford that much?

8. We are second highest on "Health Spending," but aren't even listed among the 49 countries with "Most Hospital Beds" per 1,000 citizens! Nor are we listed among the 19 countries listed in "Lowest population per doctor!"

9. Since the 2010 mid-term elections, 22 states have imposed new restrictions on voting. Most common is the requirement of presenting a government issued photo ID (like a driver's license) even if you are legally registered to vote! Eleven percent of voting-age Americans (that's more than 21 million citizens) do not have government-issued IDs.

If, then, you are happy with where we are now, then ignore this appeal to work for something better.

If not, then you may need to begin voting, if you have not been voting; or begin voting for individuals rather than just party if you have been voting for party only; and begin paying attention to what our elected representatives are supporting or not supporting if you have not been doing so. Only that way can we elect those we think will do a good job for us all, then un-elect those who do not.

It is a bit of work to be a good citizen, but if you don't wish to do that, then you are contributing to the slide back toward where our forefathers came from to begin this experiment called democracy: a society of nobles and peasants.

Is that really what you want? One percent nobles with total power and 99 percent peasants with no power?

## The People And The Pendulum

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — To paraphrase Roger Miller — and, indeed, to reveal my vast store of musical trivia — America swings like a pendulum do.

If projections, human nature and historical bent prevail next Tuesday, we may see a bit of topsy-turvy up on the benighted Hill. Anything still can happen, but it seems as though Republicans may command both the House and Senate beginning next year.

In this event, President Obama would be left alone with his pen and executive power. Wouldn't he rather just have a newspaper and a cup of coffee? Worst. Job. Ever.

Indeed, with the Islamic State, Ebola and the harsher realities of Obamacare on the rise, one wonders how the president will navigate the next two years — with or without Democratic support, which has been scarcer than lawyers' jobs in recent weeks.

As token consolations should Republicans succeed in taking back the Senate, Americans may no longer routinely peer into the funeral face of Senate leader Harry Reid. (I know, dear, take a tissue.) Rather they could be treated to the equally mirthless countenance of Mitch McConnell, the man who once said his goal was to limit Obama to one term.

Republicans are too smart to celebrate, yet, and Democrats, ever saddled with hope and — what was that other thing? — are too busy scrambling for unreliable midterm voters. Pundits, meanwhile, whose brilliance often shines in retrospect, have drummed their fingers to nubs waiting for Election Day as Brits do a royal birth.

Given the preceding qualifiers, weasel words and other verbal outlets favored by political prognosticators, permit me a few observations about the state of government, the people and the pendulum.

What seems clear is that the hope-and-change formula that catapulted a relative unknown into the presidency has lost its magic.

This isn't intended as an indictment of Obama's performance, which speaks for itself, but this election surely is a referendum on his presidency as much as it is anything else. The pendulum that swung hard leftward in 2008 — notwithstanding Obama's rhetorical flourishes about unifying the country — is now gaining momentum on its inevitable return toward the right.

It is nearly axiomatic that Democrats have

become the Republicans they despise, using social concerns as wedge issues. Whereas Republicans used to summon voters with the prospect of, say, homosexuals wanting to marry each other and settle down with mortgages and other marital miseries, they're now relatively relaxed with a recent Supreme Court move making such marriages possible in many states.

It's Democrats who now want to talk about these awful wedge issues as bait for Republicans who seem finally to have found their big(ger) brains. As predictably as the pendulum's swing, victors usually become the people and practices they once loathed. How quickly the grass-roots movement becomes the bureaucracy; how soon the oppressed become the oppressors.

Victorious Republicans would be at risk of reading this election's results as a mandate for conservatism, which would be just as mistaken as Democrats who read Obama's election and re-election as a mandate for Just Everything! What's happening this time is that people feel unmoored. The world may not be scarier than ever, but we're more aware than ever.

There's nothing like a few beheadings to put things in perspective.

Thus, I suspect that a ballot cast in the midterms is less a vote for a person or policy than it is a vote against the void so many perceive in the presidency. When two of the four horsemen of the biblical Apocalypse come galloping out of Hell's gate — Death/Ebola and War/Islamic State — one can hardly rely on the hoppers to sort things out. It's doer time. Or, Dewar's, if you please.

It would be nice, should Republicans indeed take charge, if they would skip the hubris course and buckle down with their Democratic counterparts to make wise, not goal-prancing, decisions. The people will be entrusting to the victors their fates and their children's future — no trifling matters.

What our political pendulum tells us, meanwhile, is that we the people are neither hard right nor hard left, if every now and then an exemplar of either wins favor long enough to remind us of this fact.

What we are is a nation of sensible sorts, most of whom come home each day to rest where the pendulum do. May the victors, both Democrat and Republican, remember this fact and keep it close to their conscience.

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