

CAPE COD TIMES

The Cape and Islands' Daily Newspaper
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IN OUR VIEW

Bedside manner

■ The new 110th Congress could restore some integrity by attending to health care needs.

It's the New Year and we can say good-bye to the 109th Congress, reviled as the worst ever and certainly the laziest, meeting only 218 days in two years, apparently a record low.

This was the Congress that interfered in the sad Terry Schiavo story, played with Jack Abramoff, winked at Mark Foley's escapades, refused to closely monitor the situation in Iraq, or approve spending bills for the current fiscal year.

Debate over Social Security funding, over immigration policy, over energy policy ended in a whimper. But the 109th did take one thing seriously – with a quarter of its 383 bills it gave names to federal buildings, CNN reported.

Let's put the sour smell of failure behind. Maybe this new Congress will tackle some of the basic problems of American life – none of which is more basic than health care. Polls repeatedly show that, aside from the war in Iraq and amorphous worries about the economy, this is our chief concern.

It's been a long time since we made a real run at health care policy; that would be the effort led by Hillary Clinton in 1993-94 to solve all problems with one big sticky gumball that proved too big to digest. Since then, the cost of health care has grown, the number of uninsured Americans has grown, and support for a single-payer universal system has grown into a majority.

Here are two facts:

People in developed nations with universal health care enjoy at least as good health and longevity as we do, at roughly half the cost.

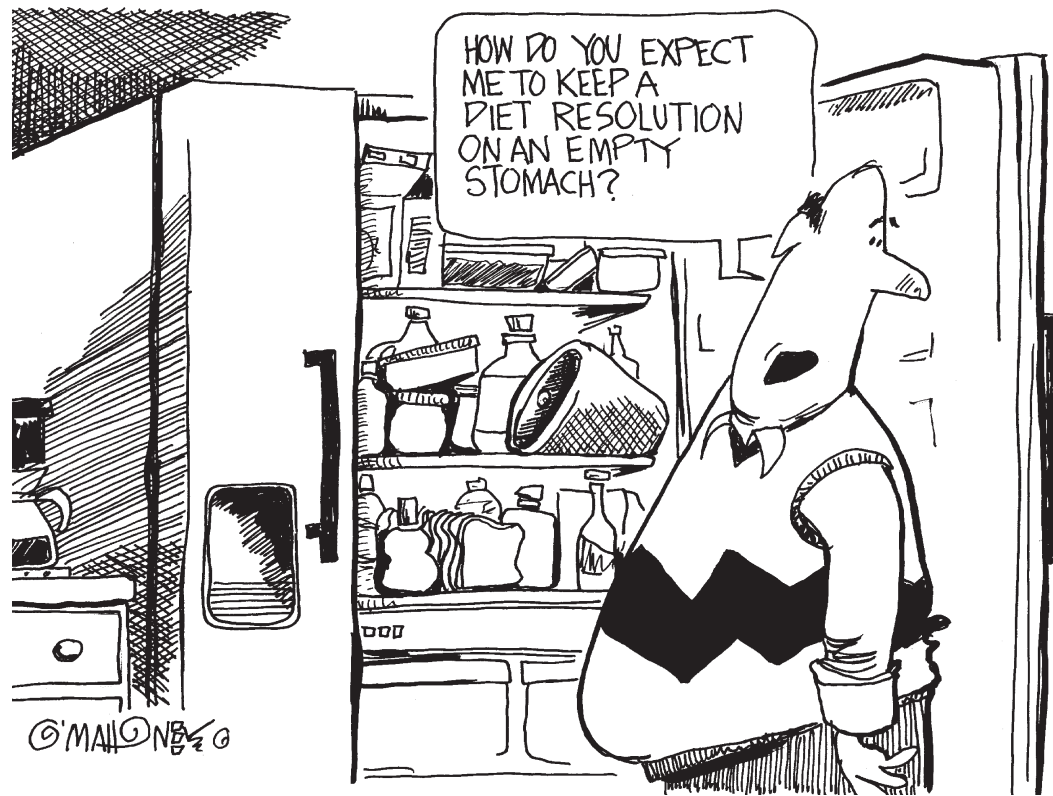
American industries that compete globally are at a big disadvantage because they must cover their employees' health care in the price of their products, a burden their foreign competitors do not carry.

We will no doubt move, over time, from employer-based health care to some kind of broad-based health care, but it's a move best taken in modest steps. The new Democratic majority in Congress is said to have a taste for advances on several fronts: stem cell research, Medicare prescription drug prices, drug safety performance at the Food and Drug Administration.

These matters are important but peripheral to the evolution of a health care system. More central are expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, an avenue to assuring adequate medical care for all America's children, which is expiring. Also, agreement on a protocol for storing and communicating medical information, which seems possible, would greatly facilitate health care.

Health care, of course, is only one of many challenges for the 110th Congress. It needs to police its own ethics, settle immigration issues, ramp up energy conservation efforts, readjust No Child Left Behind, revise the handling of "illegal enemy combatants" and protect American viability in the global economy. Not to mention Iraq, the national debt and much more.

But nothing will make Americans feel more personally secure than movement in Congress toward health care that is less costly and accessible to all.



QuoteUNQUOTE

FROM TODAY'S MAILBAG

“

When Katie Couric's last day on 'Today'...is chosen in the top 10 most memorable TV moments in 2006, one can only conclude that the TV-watching world is in a deplorable state.

”

J. DAVID JANICK
Harwich

LETTERS

Where gun is aimed may alter response

The current debate relative to the roadside memorial for David Hill forces us to evaluate our attitudes toward a number of critical social issues challenging our individual value systems.

David Hill shot into a police station, forcing us to place a value on the life of a policeman. Questions: What if he had shot into a homeless shelter? What if he had shot into an abortion clinic? What if he had shot into a black person's home? What if he had shot into a synagogue? What if he had shot into a mosque?

In each case killing is the potential, but, we fear, all too often our labeling one a "caring person" or "murderer" depends on whom the bullets are aimed at!

LAFOREST and JUDITH SMITH
Eastham

Regifting's main star has one more fan

Hooray for Marion Prendergast ("It isn't Christmas without a fruitcake," Letters, Dec. 27). I thought I was the only one left in captivity who was a devoted fan of fruitcake.

Marion, I'll take any that you care to give away. Fruitcake is a delicious holiday treat!

ELAYNE Z. STOCKWELL
Harwich

America preventing peace in the Mideast

America is the real danger in the Middle East. I'm not talking about the war in Iraq, though. I am talking about America in concern to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This controversy is the main reason for instability in the Middle East. European political leaders and media are highly critical of America's position. The voices of Jerusalem dominate our media and many are unaware of the arguments disputed outside America.

Few Americans sympathize with Palestinians' search for their country. Horrific propaganda is painted of the PLO, Palestinian leaders, their methods, etc., within our media. The argument is extremely one-sided in America.

While everyone cries over our problems in Iraq, the real travesties are being committed in and

around Israel. In an opinion poll by the International Herald Tribune, Israel was considered to be the top threat to peace (ahead of North Korea and Iran).

America has used its veto in the U.N. Security Council more than 40 times to block resolutions critical of Israel and has shown a lack of effort to resolve the Palestinian issue. This lack of urgency has led to anti-American sentiment and terrorist activity throughout the Mideast, Europe and the Islamic world.

America's position in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is the real obstacle to peace.

NICOLE WARREN
Yarmouthport

Science undermines 'climate tax' notion

Boulder, Colo., recently adopted the nation's first "climate tax" by adding an extra fee for electricity use, with all proceeds going to fight global warming. The reasoning is that people will reduce their electricity use because of the added city-imposed fee, and this will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released to the atmosphere from the fossil fuel burned to produce the electricity.

Boulder's mayor has said that if his small city can make a difference in global warming, so also can larger municipalities, and it need not cost that much.

The fallacy in this argument is the generally accepted premise that man has caused global warming by burning fossil fuels. Mankind's annual contribution to the total CO₂ in the atmosphere is less than 1 percent. If by some means all man-made emissions of CO₂ on the globe could be eliminated, the reduction in CO₂ would be less than 1 percent.

Not very exciting, is it? Would you like to pay more on your electric bill for this drop in the bucket? I think not. And when you consider how much CO₂ Mother Nature puts in the atmosphere on an annual basis, you will be humbled by how insignificant man is on this planet we call Earth.

ED GULACHENSKI
Hyannis

Cape septic systems outpoison tungsten

While your articles concerning the tungsten and chemical spills due to Guard activity on the Cape are both true and interesting, I feel your emphasis on what is wrong with our waters is misdirected.

So far the Times has resolutely avoided any discussion of the larger problem, which is that all of us using the septic systems on the Cape are polluting the groundwater – not only with nitrogen, but with phosphorus, fertilizer, hormones and medicines the body doesn't use, as well as the sundry heavy metals present in food we eat and which passes through to the wastewater.

The tonnage of pollutants from us, estimated at 80 percent of the load, far outweighs both in toxicity and amount what is attributable to the Guard's mistakes.

The solution that should be written about is the immediate sewerizing of the Cape wastewater streams, complete with central waste treatment systems. While I know today's cost is staggering, do we really think that in 10 years the cost won't at least double, and continue to double every 10 years thereafter?

We need to at least start now, before the Cape no longer is the reason people come here.

LLOYD ALLEN
Mashpee

TV induces nostalgia for old test patterns

It has always been my contention that, with few exceptions, television offers very little that is worthwhile watching except for sports and news, and even the news is frequently not presented very well.

Then I noticed the feature article titled "Tube tops" in the Lifestyle & Arts section of your Dec. 22 edition – and guess what? My opinion has been confirmed!

When Katie Couric's last day on "Today" and Rosie O'Donnell's debut on "The View" are chosen in the top 10 most memorable TV moments in 2006, one can only conclude that the TV-watching world is in a deplorable state.

J. DAVID JANICK
Harwich

Images of Saddam traumatize viewers

My adult daughter with Down syndrome called me Dec. 29 and said, "They're going to hurt him bad tonight." All over the TV, radio and Internet the moment-by-moment description of Saddam Hussein's last hours was laid out before us all.

I thought about what to say to her. I told her to turn off the TV, because that is what her dad and I were going to do.

I contrasted that with the events of the following day, when our former president's state services were begun. The camera at one time flashed into the car with Betty Ford gently wiping her eyes. The reporter apologized for the lack of respect for privacy for the family, which I thought reflected the sensitivity of the media.

Then the next day, after a short blurb on President Ford's public funeral, was a much longer segment starting with Saddam standing on the gallows with a noose around his neck. I thought how insensitive the media were to respecting the family of the viewing public.

I think there are times when the public needs to have information tempered for its impact on the viewing population. At least give us a heads-up on what is about to be viewed.

JEAN M. ROMA
Cotuit

WRITE US

The Times welcomes letters. We reserve the right to edit for content and length. Please include a street address and telephone number for verification.

Letters should:

- be pertinent to current events;
- comply with our 200-word limit;
- avoid generalizations, gratuitous insults and personal gripes.

Writers are limited to one letter in a 30-day period.

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MY VIEW

Maternal depression support available

By MARY WILSON

This is written in response to a recent letter written by Ed Michaels, "Psychology irrelevant in why mothers kill."

Last January several mental health and health care professionals met at the Cape Cod Community College to host a forum on maternal depression. There were several guest speakers including two mothers who had experienced significant postpartum depression. These mothers also told of their experiences and frustrations of trying to navigate a complicated mental health system in search of help and support.

The goal of the forum was to develop a community action plan to address the needs of families experiencing maternal depression. Through this forum it was realized that there is a very large

need on Cape Cod and the Islands to develop programs and provide a means of dispersing information about this often little-known or -understood topic.

Research has shown that women who develop postpartum depression have no control over the symptoms that can occur. These can include anger, depression, anxiety and overwhelming sadness, especially at a time when society expects that a woman should be happy bringing home her newborn.

Research has also shown that there is no one cause or reason for postpartum depression. However, there are many factors that can contribute to its onset: changes

in hormone levels after delivery, medical problems with the mother or baby, chronic sleep deprivation, lack of support from friends or family, previous history of postpartum depression or other type of depression, or high expectations of the mother for herself.

The Maternal Depression Task Force of Cape Cod, made up of several organizations and agencies, has created packets for women that

include information about postpartum depression, and resources for getting help and support. These packets will be distributed to women and families through various community programs. The task force is also sending informational

letters to obstetricians that include a hot line they can access to get the most up-to-date treatment for treating depression in women who are pregnant or have delivered.

The goal of the task force is that through education and greater public awareness, women will know they are not alone, that there is help for them, and that in turn they will be able to care for themselves and their children.

Anyone interested in getting more information on maternal and postpartum depression may contact me at Cape Cod Child Development by calling 508-775-6240, ext. 512.

Mary Wilson is coordinator of the Maternal Depression Task Force of Cape Cod. This commentary represents the views of the task force as a whole.