

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Police, hospital staff were stellar

In the early morning hours of Aug. 15 I was in the St. Peter Hospital's emergency room where my 82-year-old mother, who has cardiac problems and severe dementia, was being treated.

We were in an E.R. exam room a few doors down from where the fatal shooting occurred.

In this tragic and frightening situation the E.R. staff's care and professionalism was exceptional. Throughout the entire time we were there, they were attentive to our needs and fears despite the fact they, themselves, were undoubtedly frightened as well.

I would like to thank the St. Peter emergency room staff, as well as the police officers that morning who kept a bad situation from becoming even worse, and for the stellar treatment we received.

It is very comforting to know that we have such dedicated and well-trained people caring for us in emergency situations.

EDITH RIGGS

Lacey

Climate bill is pivotal

Bravo to Congressmen Brian Baird, Norm Dicks, Jay Inslee, Rick Larsen, Jim McDermott, Dave Reichert and Adam Smith for managing, just barely, to pass the American Clean Energy and Security Act through the House of Representatives by a slim margin of 219-212.

Our nation is now closer than it has ever been to passing a bill that will address our dependence on foreign, climate-altering fuels, while strengthening our nation's economic sovereignty and creating jobs all at the same time.

However, the deal is far from being sealed. This bill faces tough opposition in the Senate based on the short-term interests of big coal and oil.

Furthermore, a mistrust of climate science has allowed many of the staunch opponents of this bill to downplay just how crucial it is that we act quickly and decisively to avoid catastrophic (yes, even for Americans) climate disruption.

This bill is our last chance before international climate talks in Copenhagen to show the world that the United States is ready to lead the world in addressing the greatest challenge of our time.

Let's please take a moment this week to call or write Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell to stand up for a strong federal climate bill this year.

JEREMY EPSTEIN

Olympia

Peeler will wean port from tax subsidy

The Port of Olympia continues to depend on tax subsidies to stay afloat.

The 2008 audit, from the state auditor, shows that the port had total operating revenues of \$6.8 million, and operating expenses of \$9.9 million, for a loss of \$3.1 million.

In addition to the operating loss, the port incurred \$1.3 million in interest expense, and \$2.3 million in environmental costs, cleaning up mistakes from the past.

It stayed afloat financially only with the help of \$1.5 million in grants (taxpayer subsidies), plus \$4.4 million in local property taxes (more taxpayer subsidies).

The biggest money pit is the marine terminal, used by Weyerhaeuser to ship raw logs (and the jobs they could create) overseas. The marine terminal also gets subsidies from the federal government, which pays for dredging with our federal tax dollars.

One port candidate, Dave Peeler, has said he will make the port report its finances honestly, and will work to wean the port off of property taxes.

Peeler is a retired state agency manager with the time and expertise to help put our port on a sound financial path.

The other candidate, Jefferson Davis, is a longshoreman. As such, he could be voting for taxpayer subsidies for the money-losing marine terminal. In effect, he might be voting to subsidize his own job. I think that should be illegal.

At a minimum, it would be improper.

I will vote for Dave Peeler for port commissioner in the November election.

JIM LAZAR

Olympia

Residents ready to move downtown

Financial times are tough for the city of Olympia and downtown businesses. In the 23 years that my wife and I have lived here, we've never known the city to have more revenue than it needs or the downtown merchants to have excessive profit, even in good times.

So it's puzzling to us when the city makes it difficult for us to pay more taxes.

We represent a sizable and growing number of people throughout Thurston County whose kids have left the nest. We are willing and able RIGHT NOW to sell our houses and move downtown. The problem is there are no handicapped accessible, market-rate condos for us to buy, and there are people within government and without who want to make building them difficult.

If several hundred of us were to move downtown, we would be paying more property and sales taxes and buying more merchandise from downtown businesses. This would have a substantial positive impact on city revenues and merchant viability, in good times and tough.

In addition, Olympia taxpayers who don't want to live downtown would find their tax burden lightened by us. We represent a solution, not a problem.

So, to the Olympia City Council and candidates we say: Let us help you create a more vibrant downtown economy. Let us help pay for more parking and other capital projects. Let us move downtown. Please.

JERRY BARNEY

Olympia

OUR VIEWS

Shutting schools won't stop spread of H1N1

Parents who are sending their children back to South Sound classrooms next week have an extra worry this school year – the swine flu.

Many colleges and universities are already under way and officials across the country are seeing spikes in the number of students with suspected cases of swine flu.

In the first week of classes at Washington State University in Pullman, 200 people reported flu symptoms, raising fears of a widespread swine flu outbreak.

At Georgia Tech in Atlanta, university officials reported 150 suspected cases of the highly contagious H1N1 virus, commonly known as swine flu. At the University of Kansas, officials said they had 100 suspected cases, 50 at the University of Alabama, 10 at Texas Christian, etc.

What are parents and students to do?

A little patience and trust, said Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. She said massive school closings won't stop the spread of the virus. The nation's best hope are vaccinations that will become available in mid-October, but likely won't be widely distributed until nearer Thanksgiving.

Troubling, but understandable given the amount of time it takes to develop a safe and reliable vaccine. Government officials have pressured drug manufacturers to move as quickly as possible.

A recent White House report is disquieting. The report says up to half the population will be stricken with the flu and up to 90,000 could die.

Dr. Thomas Frieden, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said while the

swine flu seems quite easy to catch, it so far hasn't been more deadly than the flu strains seen every fall and winter. Close genetic tracking of the new virus as it circled the globe over the past five months so far has shown no sign that it's mutating to become more virulent, Frieden said.

Panic is not an option. The best defense against the flu is to follow the advice of health professionals and trust that the coming vaccines will do their job.

To their credit many colleges have done what they can to minimize the number of students who get sick. They have stocked up on hand sanitizing gel and Tamiflu – an anti-viral pill – while others have designated empty dorms to isolate sick students. Some campuses have developed "flu kits" with items like tissues, thermometers and box lunches for students in isolation.

Students have been getting regular e-mails from administrators reminding them to wash their hands frequently, stay away from sick friends and isolate themselves if they develop flu-like symptoms.

Sebelius said, "What we know is that we have the virus right now traveling around the United States. ... What we learned last spring is that shutting a school down sort of pre-emptively doesn't stop the virus from spreading."

Sebelius' advice is sound. Those first in line for the vaccine should be people who have pre-existing medical conditions, pregnant women and health care industry workers. Patients with neurological disorders or respiratory impairment, diabetes, or severe obesity are at high risk, along with certain populations, such as Native Americans.

Sebelius said people should immediately get their regular seasonal flu vaccine to bolster their immune system. "Seasonal flu vaccine is ready at the beginning of September," she said. "We want the population that is most at risk to begin their seasonal flu vaccine now."

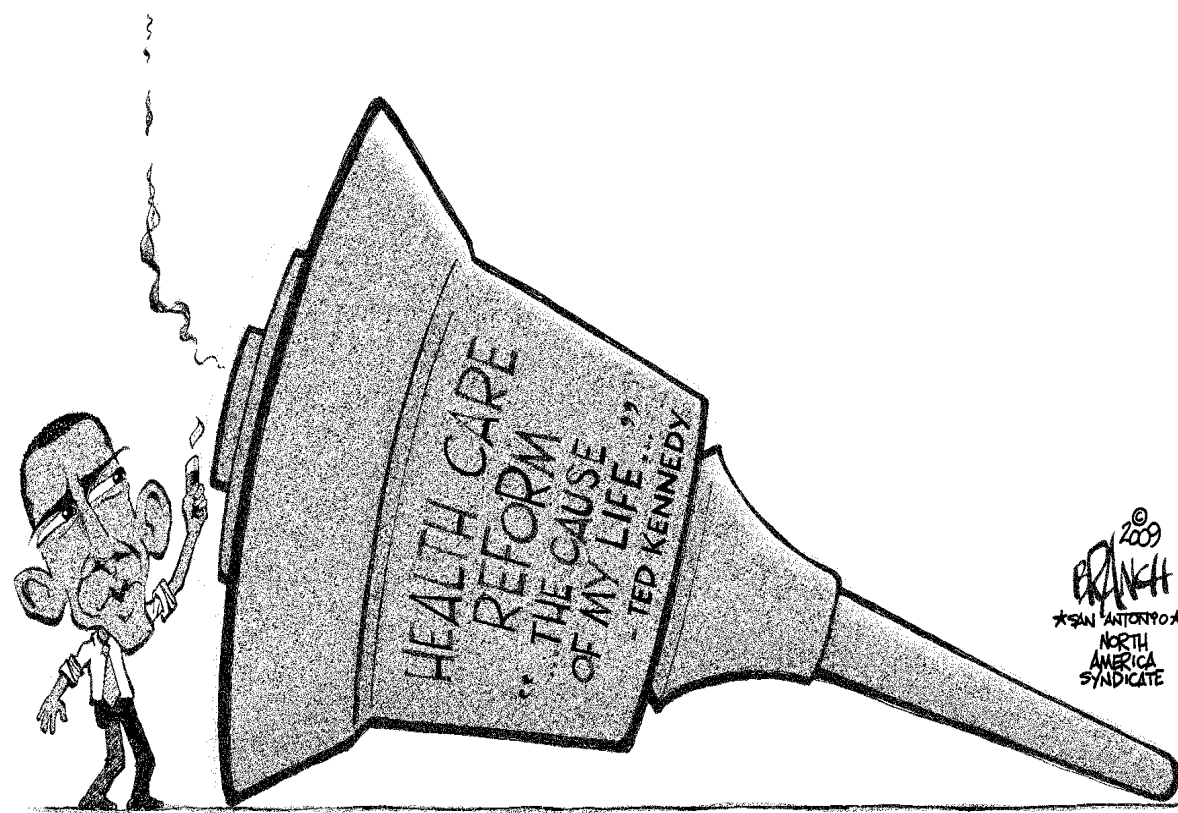
"I don't want people to believe it is any more serious than any other influenza," said Dr. Diana Yu, Thurston County's health officer. "Every year we have 36,000 to 40,000 people who die in the U.S. due to complications from influenza." The first swine flu deaths in Thurston County came in July, Yu said.

Influenza symptoms are the same, whether it is seasonal flu, or swine flu. They include a sudden onset of fever more than 101 degrees, severe body aches and a sore throat in most cases, lasting four to five days. Coughing and fatigue might last a week or two. Some individuals might also have headaches, vomiting and diarrhea.

The best defenses, other than the vaccine, are clean hands and staying away from people who are sick, coughing and sneezing. Have clean hands, use hand sanitizer, keep your hands away from your mouth and eyes and don't share food, water or cigarettes with others. Yu said regular swine flu updates from the Health Department are available by calling 360-709-3080.

It's essential that we each assume responsibility for personal hygiene and that our national, state and local public health officials continue their public education efforts. It's also imperative that our elected and appointed officials be open and honest with the public about swine flu and its toll on American lives.

THE TORCH HAS BEEN PASSED AGAIN



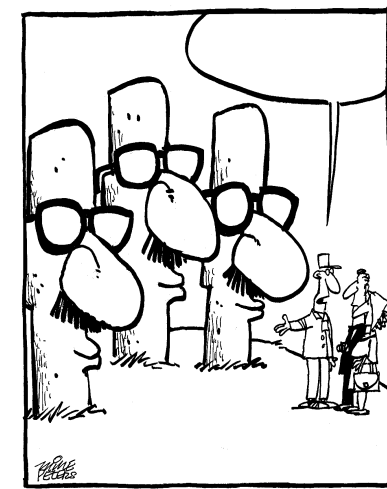
YOU WRITE THE CAPTION

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HOW IT WORKS: Each Sunday, a captionless cartoon appears on The Olympian's Web site.

WE INVITE READERS to submit their best captions between Sunday and 8 a.m. Friday.

WE'LL SELECT THE TOP CAPTION and on Saturday we'll print the winning caption in both The Olympian and the online opinion page. The winner's name will be listed.



This week's cartoon

OTHER VIEWS

Lifelong Learning Accounts good for both workers, employers

While it's back-to-school time for children, their parents and teachers, we should note that school isn't just for our kids. Education should be a lifetime endeavor, with opportunities for everyone to learn and grow throughout their working lives.



ELENI PAPANAKIS

And now, Thurston, Mason, Grays Harbor, Lewis and Pacific county employers have a unique opportunity to partner with their employees to help them reach their full potential through an exciting new program that reduces the financial burden of heading back to class.

Working adults – particularly low-wage working adults – face many barriers to lifelong learning. How does someone who is working, raising a family and barely making ends meet find the time or money to pay for courses? And yet, without a post-high school credential of any kind a person is hard pressed to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

That's where Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs) can make the difference. LiLAs are educational savings accounts, where employees make

educated, happier and more productive employee only benefits us and our business. It becomes a win-win, really."

At the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, we pursue strategies that help hard-working adults get to their next financial rung in partnership with business and labor. LiLAs create that partnership and are supported by the Association of Washington Business as well as the Washington State Labor Council.

And for good reason. Currently, 1.6 million Washington adults have a high school diploma or less as their highest educational attainment.

Most of these adults work in low-wage jobs that lack benefits, which means many of the workers are an illness or injury away from a financial crisis. Workers need more education to move into higher-wage positions that offer financial security. Washington's businesses, meanwhile, are in need of more highly skilled workers to fill existing openings, even during an economic downturn.

Since LiLAs launch this summer,

four companies have signed on and more are expressing interest every day. Employers who have participated in this program elsewhere in the country have reaped benefits that include more productive and satisfied workers, savings from retaining good employees and easier recruiting of new employees.

The pay-off is clear: a more energized, higher skilled workforce that is as invested in the company as the company is in them.

Employers who want to attract and retain a dedicated, talented, better educated workforce should contact the training board. Those who do will be part of a national initiative that is breaking new ground and changing lives in as little as six months' time.

Eleni Papadakis is executive director of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, a state agency committed to helping Washington workers get the education needed to obtain family-wage jobs. Get more information about lifetime learning accounts at www.lila.wa.gov or call 360-664-4232.

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FIRST AMENDMENT

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment 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."