

# OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER  
founding editor, 1963

## AT ISSUE

Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma has ended a health-care-for-life perk given to state representatives.

## OUR POINT

The move was a good one that will save the state a great deal of money.

## Bosma right in ending special insurance plan

The Daily Journal

The Indiana General Assembly convenes in "short" and "long" sessions in alternating years.

This is in keeping with the belief that Hoosier legislators should be part-time lawmakers, spending most of the year at home, doing other work, mixing with ordinary folks.

But these part-time legislators were enjoying a perk full-time workers in Indiana would covet: insurance coverage for life. And it's not just for them, but for the whole family, even ex-spouses.

The program costs the state between \$3,826 and \$5,174 a year to pay the premium for an individual legislator and between \$10,711 and \$14,511 a year for a family plan. Legislators pay less than a quarter of the insurance cost.

The state's share of current retired lawmakers' insurance premiums has been estimated at \$300,000 a year. House Speaker Brian Bosma has put an end to the program for members who will serve beyond Nov. 7.

In making the announcement, he said, "As you may realize, the speaker of the House is given the sole responsibility as employer for House members to determine many of the provisions of this benefit and may revise prior determinations by previous speakers."

He called the decision very difficult but added that it's "a decision I believe to be important for our institution and for the citizens of the state of Indiana."

He said future House retirees will be covered under the federal Medicare program "in the same manner as virtually every other Hoosier."

Bosma's move was the right one. Serving in the state legislature is an important responsibility, but it is also a privilege. Legislators enjoy many benefits the voters who elected them don't, but open-ended medical care should not be one of them.

It's unclear how the benefit even came about. Political writer Brian Howey has written that Senate President Pro Tem Robert Garton, R-Columbus, says it was passed about the time of Gov. Frank O'Bannon, but he couldn't be more specific.

Howey said he could find no statehouse long-timer who could remember any hearings about the proposal.

The program is finished in the House, now. Bosma recognized the inequity and undue cost to the state.

Tony Samuel, a spokesman for Bosma, stated the issue clearly when he said: "Folks never voted for this issue specifically."

Now Garton needs to show the same leadership in the Senate.

## Focus: Palestine

Free elections put U.S. in awkward position

Scripps Howard News Service

The problem with free and fair elections is that there's always a chance the wrong people will win. And from the standpoint of the United States and Israel, the wrong people did win — and win convincingly — in Wednesday's Palestinian elections.

Hamas took 76 seats in the 132-seat parliament with 60 percent of the vote, ousting the corrupt and inefficient Fatah government with a praiseworthy platform of honest government, improved public services and law and order. Politics the way it's supposed to be.

Unfortunately, Hamas is committed to the destruction of Israel and has tried to bring that about through terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings on Israelis. The United States and Europe classify Hamas as a terrorist organization and, with respect to Israel, Hamas has never claimed that it isn't.

All of this is very awkward now that Hamas will govern Palestine. It is critical to the Palestinians that they have a government that can negotiate international agreements and abide by the terms. However, Hamas in principle is opposed to negotiations with the Israelis and says that it will not, as the United States and Israel have insisted, disarm its militant, terrorist wing.

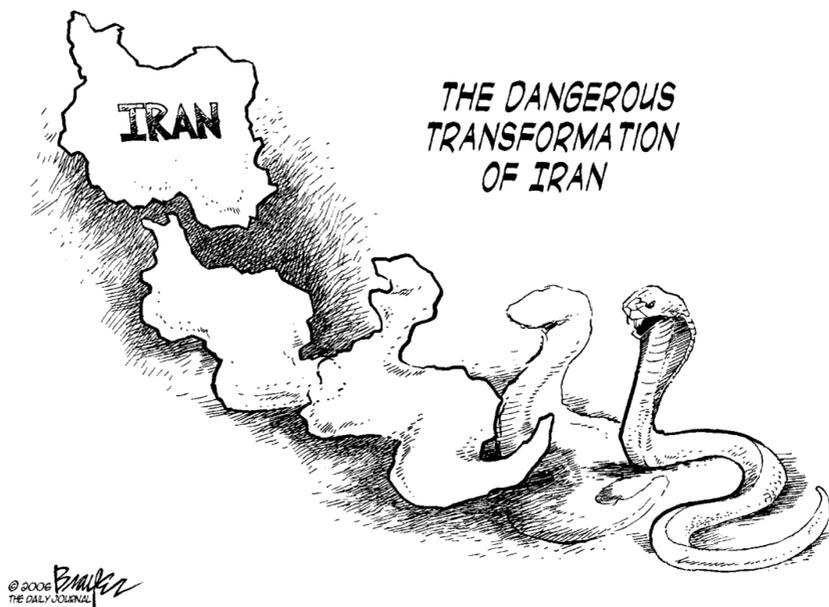
President Bush hopes to see his moribund road map to Mideast peace revived. But that would entail dealing with Hamas, and the president's position is simply, "Not until you renounce your desire to destroy Israel will we deal with you." For its part, Israel says it will not deal with a terrorist organization.

For the moment, this is a Catch-22 situation, complicated because, even if there were negotiations, there is nobody on the Israeli side to negotiate with until a successor government takes over from incapacitated Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Hamas is not just a terrorist organization. Its popularity at the polls was due in part to the extensive network of hospitals, schools and charities it runs. And history is full of examples of violent outsiders being domesticated by the responsibilities of having to govern.

Bush probably did not have Hamas in mind when he talked about bringing democracy to the Mideast, but there it was: A peaceful transfer of power through free and fair elections in an Arab land.

Maybe it's a start.



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## Reality bites: Dentists don't like patients to view charts

I had never read my own dental chart before. Being somewhat familiar with laws governing privacy, I pretty much assumed that what was going on inside my mouth was really none of my business.

The government is very picky about these things.

Once when I was in the hospital I called the nurse's station and asked the attendant how the patient in 407 was doing.

She said he was recovering nicely, but she wanted to know who she was talking to.

"I am the patient in 407," I told her, "and you're the first person who's given me any reliable information."

So the other day I was at my dentist's office, and there's my chart sitting right smack in front of me.

I had been getting bored with a 1989 issue of *Periodontist Monthly*, so I glanced at the folder and realized it was a running account of my mouth since 1983, when I first came to Indy.

I've gotten pretty long in the tooth since then, so I assumed there would be a pretty exhaustive detailing of all my choppers.

What I didn't expect was the number of personal observations made by the dental hygienists over the years, remarks about me as a patient that were included in the permanent record.

Here were some of the notations



Dick Wolfsie

along with a personal rebuttal, an opportunity I was not afforded at the time.

April 1987: Does not like to be probed

No, I don't. In fact, just last year when I was abducted by aliens, this funny-looking creature with six eyes said pretty much the same thing about me.

August 1994: Has a small mouth I found this odd, especially since it's in direct contradiction to all my references from previous employers.

February 1998: Won't floss This sounds like I had some hissy-fit with the hygienist. It wasn't like that at all.

"Dick, you must floss."

"I won't floss."

"You will floss."

"Make me."

September 1998: Was a bit grumpy today

I had a glob of something in my mouth the size of a hairball, OK?

A dental hygienist being upset because her patients are in a bad mood is like a professional burglar perplexed that he isn't more welcome in a new neighborhood.

June 2002: Doesn't talk much OK, I know this is a lame excuse, but when you have a fist, a pair of pliers, three balls of cotton and a small vice in your mouth, you're just not in a chatty mood.

November 2004: Doesn't like dental videos

Gee, how can they say that? I even watched one about diseased, receding, bleeding gums. But I must admit, I thought it was a "CSI" rerun.

December 2005: Is tough to numb

It's about time they figured this out.

Maybe that's why I've been screaming at the top of my lungs since April of '87.

The hygienist came in and caught me reading my own chart.

"You can't read that stuff."

Certain parts of that are private."

"Wait a second, aren't those my private parts?"

I wish I had phrased that a little differently, because apparently that is not the kind of thing you yell at dental hygienists.

Considering the commotion I caused that day, I couldn't figure out why they agreed to keep me as a patient.

Then I remembered the final notation.

January 2006: Pays promptly

Television personality Dick Wolfsie writes this weekly humor column for the *Daily Journal*. Send comments to [letters@thejournalnet.com](mailto:letters@thejournalnet.com)

## It does take village to raise a child, but not kind former first lady meant

As a single mom of four young children, I've seen firsthand that it does take a village to raise a child.

So I wasn't surprised to come across the report, "Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities," published by the Institute for American Values in New York City.

Now back up — a village? You bet.

Only, not the kind of village that Hillary Rodham Clinton seems to envision, one with lots of federal spending and government programs and day care. That kind of stuff is easy. It doesn't really ask anything of us.

I mean the kind of village where adults are committed to sacrificing of themselves for their own children and children in the community. A village where we recognize that the needs of children are not for federal dollars or programs, but for human and spiritual connection, connection to something bigger than themselves.

That's what's too often missing in our communities, say the members of the Commission on Children at Risk who authored "Hardwired," a panel of leading children's doctors and research scientists combining both the physical and social sciences in a major report on children.

Here's what the commissioners found: "One of every four adolescents in the U.S. is currently at serious risk for not achieving productive adulthood, 21 percent of U.S. children ages 9 to 17 have a diagnosable mental disorder or addiction, 8 percent of high school students suffer from clinical depression and 20 percent of students report seriously having considered suicide in the past year."

Just consider this startling finding: "By the 1980s, U.S. children as a group were reporting more anxiety than did children who were psychiatric patients in the 1950s."



Betsy Hart

One of the most interesting conclusions of the report was that as a society we typically focus only on treating the individual youth with the problem, instead of better comprehending that those youths with individual pathologies are, generally speaking, really just the tip of a large iceberg.

Perhaps that's because this would require the village to confront and finally challenge the social changes that in many cases are producing these pathologies, and that seems to be something the village does not want to do.

As the commissioners put it, unfortunately "the bias (in our culture) is consistently against recognizing and confronting those dimensions of a problem that are structural, systemic, and social, and in favor of interventions that are clinical, highly targeted, and oriented to individual pathology."

Bottom line? We need to move from a culture that just focuses on illness in some youths (which, of course, needs to be treated) and emphasizes instead promoting wellness throughout a generation currently at risk.

The commissioners used the term "authoritative" to mean deliberately created communities that provide warmth and structure.

First and foremost is the two-parent, married biological or adoptive family. Flash: We must finally admit that this is the best environment for raising children, and that its demise is directly related to the rise in social pathologies among youths.

Yes, sometimes that demise is inescapable and, of course, these pathologies can be overcome — but that's a lot harder to do when we don't first admit to the tragedy of broken families, the tragedy they are for all the children in the village.

Another major finding? That we are biologically primed to be spiritual people, and that "the human brain appears to be organized to ask ultimate (spiritual) questions and seek ultimate answers."

No surprise here, the commissioners also discovered that "religiosity and spirituality significantly influence well being."

Conversely, "denying or ignoring the spiritual needs of adolescents may end up creating a void in their lives that is filled by other forms of quests and challenges, such as drinking, unbridled consumerism, petty crime, sexual precocity or flirtations with violence."

In other words, the more secular our society becomes, whether in the public or in the private square, the more we put our children at risk.

Is the village ready to tackle that problem?

The commissioners came up with a list of recommendations for individuals, neighborhoods, workplaces and private and public resources.

"Integral to the (proposed) efforts," said one commissioner, "is a philosophical commitment that young people are resources to be developed, not problems to be solved." And, he might have added, that takes real, personal sacrifice and commitment — not just federal dollars and government programs — from the village.

Betsy Hart is the author of "It Takes a Parent: How the Culture of Pushover Parenting is Hurting Our Kids — and What to Do About It." Send comments to [letters@thejournalnet.com](mailto:letters@thejournalnet.com)

## YOUR VIEWS

### Letter writer wrong about cause of accident

To the editor:

This is in regard to Dr. Dick Huber's letter ("Not recognizing alcohol as drug is dangerous," *Daily Journal*, Jan. 21). I understand what you are saying. Alcohol is a drug, and it does kill people. But before you go writing a story and using people in it for an example, you should have all your facts straight.

I am talking about the Bargserville man who was killed Dec. 17. That man is my uncle. Yes, he did have alcohol in his system, but alcohol was not the cause of the accident.

See, if you would have had all your facts together you would have known that there was ice on the road and that a deer did indeed run out in front of him. That's why there were skid marks on the road. Or did you think that the skid marks just magically appeared on the road?

And about him not wearing his seatbelt: As to my knowledge, in a truck, or in any vehicle that has truck plates on it, you do not have to wear a seatbelt. There is no law that says you do.

Also there was marijuana found on him, but not in his system. The way you have written your letter, it looks like you are trying to make my uncle look like a drug abuser and a bad person. But for someone who has known him for 20 years, I think I would know if my uncle is a drug user.

Did you ever think that he could have been getting it for a friend or for someone else? No, you just jumped to the conclusion that it was for him.

Next time you decide to write about a person, get all the facts together and think of the family members, who are still mourning over the loss of a loved one.

My uncle could have had that alcohol in his system way before the accident happened. You don't know that he had been drinking right as the accident happened. But you are the doctor, right? You know everything there is to know about this stuff. But in my opinion, I don't think you do. You just read what is in the paper and go from there.

You said that you are tired of hearing police officers say if you have money or a good attorney you might be able to beat these charges. Well, I am tired of people like you who think they know everything and don't like to have all the facts about a story.

So, next time if you decide to write a letter about something or someone make sure you have all the facts about the thing or person you are going to write about. Family members who are still mourning over their lost loved one do read the paper and do get upset when something wrong is said.

Jennifer Logsdon  
Franklin

### Using ISTEP to evaluate teachers would be unfair

To the editor:

Good for Jerry Wilson. He spelled it out so clearly that our legislators will understand it. Teachers should not be evaluated by test scores. ("ISTEP scores are wrong tool to rate teacher performance," *Daily Journal*, Jan. 17.)

Believe me, teachers are pressured enough to teach state standards that they don't need test scores to be included in their evaluation. Even the two- or three-year trend that State Sen. Teresa Lubbers, R-Indianapolis, acknowledges is needed is not fair. Teachers do use those test scores to see the areas that are weak in their classroom over a period of time, not in a glance at one year.

Merit pay for ISTEP scores is another dumb idea, and, as Jerry says, ISTEP is designed to measure how much students have learned, not the performance of their teachers. Teachers in low-performing schools need additional money and help to try to get their students to the level they should be, not punishment because they are below that level.

I agree that teacher evaluation should be left to teachers and administrators, not to the politicians in the General Assembly. Thanks for telling it like it is, Jerry.

Dorothy Short  
Greenwood

## WRITE A LETTER

The Daily Journal invites readers to submit letters, opinion columns and e-mail comments for the opinion page.

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